PERCEPTIONS OF ECUMENICAL EFFORTS IN RESOLVING CHURCH DIVISIONS: THE CASE OF KARONGI DISTRICT, RWANDA

BY

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Declaration

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my lovely wife, Virginia KUBWIMANA, my lovely daughter Emma Mary TURISHIMYE, and my lovely son Aimee Josue ARINATWE.

Acknowledgement

I thank my Almighty God for his love and support during this research journey. I recognize the determination of my supervisors, Dr. Julius K. Kithinji and Dr. Sammy Githuku, God bless them, and without them, my journey would have been difficult for me. I also want to thank my church leadership, who allowed me to study this program, and AACC leadership, who gave me the scholarship. God bless all of them. I appreciate my mother for her prayers and words of encouragement to me. Finally, I appreciate my wife and my two children.

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List of Abbreviations

AACC: All Africa Council of Churches

CCA: Christian Conference of Asia

ESV: English Standard Version.

HIV/AIDS: Human Immunodeficiency Virus

IMC: International Missionary Council

ISERC: Institutional Scientific and Ethics Review Committee

MINAGRI: The Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources

MINEDUC: Ministry of Education

MININFRA: The Ministry of Infrastructure

NCC: National Council of Churches

NISR: National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda.

NISR: The National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda

NIV: The New International Version

REB: Rwanda Basic Education Board.

RIC: Rwanda Inter-religious Council

SPU: St. Paul's University

TRC: Truth and Reconciliation Commission

WCC: World Council of Churches

ABSTRACT

The ecumenical movement seeks to promote unity and cooperation among Christian denominations by fostering mutual understanding, dialogue, and collective action on both social and spiritual matters. Its overarching aim is to reduce divisions and encourage a visible, collaborative expression of the Christian faith. However, despite various national and regional efforts in Rwanda, persistent theological, doctrinal, and cultural differences continue to challenge collaboration among churches in Karongi District. Furthermore, historical mistrust, competition for congregants, and resistance to change have hindered the effective implementation of these initiatives. The study explored church members' perceptions of the effectiveness of ecumenical efforts in resolving divisions within this context. It was guided by three objectives: to assess past ecumenical initiatives, identify the key challenges they face, and propose practical strategies for fostering greater unity. To achieve this, a mixed-methods research design was employed, combining structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with 55 purposively selected participants, including church leaders, lay Christians from ten denominations, and members of the Rwanda Inter-religious Council (RIC). The findings highlighted a significant disconnect between rhetorical support for unity and its practical realization. Nonetheless, joint worship services, inclusive leadership, and shared community outreach emerged as key elements that help build trust, promote reconciliation, and encourage collaboration. Therefore, the study emphasized the need for grassroots involvement, sustained inter-denominational dialogue, and reconciliation-oriented strategies such as truth-telling and forgiveness. Grounded in Ubuntu Philosophy, Palaver Theory, Conflict Theory, and Reconciliation Theory, this research offered culturally grounded recommendations to promote lasting church unity and harmony within the Karongi District of Rwanda.

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by presenting the background of the study, which situates the concept of ecumenism in global, African, and Rwandan contexts. It then outlines the statement of the problem, highlighting the key issues motivating the research. Following this, the chapter presents the general and specific objectives of the study, as well as the research questions that guide the investigation. The assumptions underpinning the study are discussed, followed by the justification and the significance of the research. The chapter also outlines the delimitation and limitations encountered during the research process. Finally, key concepts are defined to clarify the terminology used throughout the study.

1.2 Background of the Study

Ecumenism is a movement within religion to promote unity between different denominations of a particular faith. Specifically, it is a movement within Christianity that seeks understanding, agreement, and unity among different Christian denominations. Ecumenism is the effort to encourage unity and collaboration among World's Christian churches (Oxford English Dictionary, 2023: 142). It refers to efforts to bridge theological, cultural, and institutional divides among Christian denominations to achieve a shared community and cooperation (Sider, 2007: 125).

1.2.1 Ecumenism in a Global Perspective

Ecumenism, the movement toward Christian unity, has evolved over centuries in response to the theological, political, and cultural divisions that have fragmented the Christian church. The term itself derives from the Greek word *oikoumene*, meaning the "whole inhabited world," reflecting the ambition to unify Christianity globally. The roots of the ecumenical movement trace back to the early Christian church, but its modern form emerged more prominently in the 20th century. The earliest ecumenical efforts were marked by the creation of various regional councils, interdenominational forums, and dialogues aimed at reconciling differences that had accumulated over centuries, especially after the Great Schism of 1054 and the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century (Sider, 2007: 128). Historically, these movements sought to address doctrinal divisions between Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestant denominations, with varying levels of success.

The formation of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1948 marked a pivotal moment in the global ecumenical movement. The WCC's establishment was a response to the theological and political divides exacerbated by both world wars. Its formation sought to promote Christian unity through dialogue and common action in global issues such as poverty, human rights, and education, particularly in the aftermath of World War II (Volf, 2005: 49). In this period, ecumenism shifted from addressing purely theological disagreements to practical, collaborative efforts aimed at transforming society. The WCC became the largest and most inclusive ecumenical organization, bringing together Protestant, Anglican, Orthodox, and, more recently, Catholic communities, although tensions between Catholics and Protestants persisted in certain regions (Volf, 2005: 55).

A landmark development in the history of ecumenism was the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). The Catholic Church, which had once been hesitant to engage in ecumenical dialogue, recognized the significance of unity and reconciliation. Vatican II's Unitatis Redintegratio underscored the necessity of collaboration for Christian unity, thereby redefining Catholicism's approach to ecumenism (Benedict, 2007: 18). This transformative period fostered cooperation across denominations, particularly in social justice, humanitarian aid, and peace building efforts. By the late 20th century, ecumenical initiatives increasingly centered on tackling urgent global challenges such as economic disparity, racial injustice, and the spread of conflict.

1.2.2 Ecumenism in Africa from Colonialism to Post-Independence

The African context presents a distinct and complex backdrop for the development of ecumenism. Colonization played a significant role in shaping the religious landscape of Africa, with Christianity often being used as a tool for colonial control. Missionary work was central to colonial expansion, and various European powers established churches aligned with their national interests. This resulted in the establishment of denominational divides, where Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox churches often operated independently, catering to different ethnic and political groups (Volf, 2005: 57). Thus, the introduction of Christianity, while transforming indigenous societies, also created deep divisions among African Christians, who were largely influenced by the religious traditions of the colonial powers.

Post-independence Africa witnessed the growth of religious pluralism, with the proliferation of indigenous African churches alongside established Christian denominations. These developments, combined with the complex political and ethnic divisions in many African countries, posed significant challenges to religious unity. Ecumenism in Africa, therefore, has always been closely tied to socio-political realities, including the quest for peace, justice, and reconciliation after the colonial rule. The All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), founded in 1963, emerged as one of the most significant ecumenical bodies on the continent, uniting Protestant, Anglican, and Orthodox churches across national borders. The AACC played a key role in fostering cooperation among African Christians in the areas of social justice, poverty alleviation, and human rights (AACC, 2009: 136).

In regions like East and Central Africa, where ethnic and political conflicts have been pervasive, the AACC and other ecumenical organizations have worked tirelessly to promote peace-building initiatives. The AACC's engagement in promoting peace and reconciliation has been particularly important in regions affected by armed conflict, where religious communities often find themselves torn between ethnic loyalties and their shared Christian identity. As such, the African ecumenical movement is often not only about doctrinal reconciliation but also about addressing broader societal issues, including the devastating effects of war, poverty, and political oppression (Volf, 2005: 59).

1.2.3 Ecumenism in Rwanda: Aftermath of the Genocide

Rwanda's post-genocide experience highlights the critical role of ecumenism in healing and reconciliation. The 1994 genocide left deep scars, with the Christian Church implicated in its lead-up and struggle to rebuild trust among ethnically divided denominations (Kamanzi, 2015: 74). Ecumenical efforts, notably through the Rwanda Inter-religious Council (RIC), established in 2002, became central to reconciliation, fostering dialogue, peace-building, and mutual understanding (Rwanda Inter-religious Council, 2015: 91).

National reconciliation was linked closely with ecumenism, as religious communities were called to promote unity. Successes coexisted with challenges, as denominations often prioritized ethnic identities over religious solidarity. Karongi District exemplified such fragmentation, where

theological, historical, and ethnic barriers continued to impede unity despite various ecumenical initiatives (Kamanzi, 2015: 85).

Rwanda's example offers lessons for other post-conflict nations, showcasing how ecumenism can bridge divides, promote peace, and rebuild trust. However, challenges such as doctrinal divisions, ethnic tensions, and the legacy of religious complicity remain significant obstacles (Kamanzi, 2015: 78). Understanding Karongi church members' perceptions provided valuable insights into ecumenical efforts, offering foundations for unity in similar fragmented contexts.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The ecumenical movement aims to foster unity among Christian denominations through dialogue, mutual understanding, and joint action on spiritual and social issues. Despite national and regional efforts in Rwanda, particularly in Karongi District, longstanding theological, doctrinal, and cultural divisions continue to hinder meaningful collaboration among churches. Historical mistrust, competition for congregants, and resistance to change further obstruct the implementation of ecumenical initiatives.

Tensions between new Pentecostal and mainline churches, especially regarding views on the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts, exacerbate these divisions. Many church leaders prioritize congregational growth over unity, weakening the spirit of ecumenism (Kamanzi, 2015:85). Moreover, national initiatives often fail to effectively engage local communities (Mutebi, 2008:192). Participation in ecumenical activities such as the Week of Christian Unity remains low, with many local Christians either unaware of or indifferent to its goals (Kamanzi, 2015:81). This gap between national efforts and grassroots realities undermines progress (Sider, 2007:135).

This study, therefore, seeks to explore the perceptions of church members and leaders in Karongi District, to assess the actual impact of ecumenical efforts and to identify practical ways to enhance church unity.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study was to examine the perceptions of church members regarding the effectiveness of ecumenical efforts in resolving church divisions in the Karongi District of Rwanda.

1.4.1 Specific Objectives

The study sought to achieve the following specific objectives:

i. To evaluate the effectiveness of current ecumenical efforts on resolving church division in Karongi District, Rwanda
ii. To assess the challenges facing ecumenical efforts in resolving church division in Karongi District, Rwanda
iii. To propose strategies for strengthening ecumenical efforts to resolve church division in Karongi District, Rwanda

1.5 Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following questions:

i. What are the effects of current ecumenical efforts on resolving church division in Karongi District?
ii. What are the challenges facing ecumenical efforts on resolving church division in Karongi District?
iii. What are the strategies for strengthening ecumenical efforts in resolving church division in Karongi District

1.6 Assumptions of the Study

The study was based on several assumptions. It assumed that ecumenical efforts in Karongi District have a measurable impact on resolving church divisions and that church members and leaders have perceptions shaped by their experiences with these initiatives. It presumed that challenges such as theological disagreements, mistrust, and competition for congregants significantly hinder these efforts.

Furthermore, the study assumed that church members and leaders were aware of ecumenical initiatives to varying degrees and could provide valuable insights into potential improvements.

Additionally, it is assumed that implementing new strategies, such as enhanced leadership training, innovative reconciliation approaches, community-driven projects, digital platforms for inter-denominational dialogue, and educational programs on ecumenism, could effectively address existing barriers and foster sustainable unity among denominations in Karongi District. Finally, the study assumed that a combination of these strategies, along with addressing grassroots engagement, will strengthen ecumenical efforts and promote reconciliation and long-term collaboration.

1.7 Justification of the Study

This study sought to address the pressing need to evaluate the effectiveness of ecumenical efforts in fostering unity among Christian denominations in Karongi District, Rwanda. By focusing on grassroots perceptions, it identified challenges such as theological disagreements, resource competition, and limited local engagement, offering actionable strategies for improvement. The research supports organizations like AACC and RIC in refining their efforts, bridging the gap between national-level initiatives and local realities. Furthermore, the study aligns with Rwanda's broader goals of reconciliation and peace-building in the post-genocide era, providing valuable insights that can guide similar initiatives in other regions facing religious and social divisions.

1.8 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its ability to provide critical insights into the effectiveness of ecumenical efforts in fostering church unity within Karongi District, Rwanda, a region marked by theological differences and historical tensions. By examining grassroots perceptions, it highlights both challenges and opportunities, offering actionable recommendations to improve collaboration and reconciliation among Christian denominations. The findings are valuable for organizations such as the AACC and RIC, equipping them with context-specific strategies to enhance their efforts. Additionally, the study supports Rwanda's broader goals of post-genocide peacebuilding, reconciliation, and social cohesion, while also offering transferable lessons for other regions facing similar divisions, contributing to the global dialogue on ecumenism and unity.

1.9 Delimitations of the Study

This study targeted Christian denominations within Karongi District, Rwanda, specifically focusing on Bwishyura Sector and Rubengera. It examined the effectiveness of contemporary

ecumenical efforts aimed at fostering unity and reconciliation among actively collaborating denominations. Non-Christian groups, historical ecumenical initiatives, and broader theological debates were excluded to maintain focus on current, context-specific activities. While employing a mixed-method approach, the study combined qualitative interviews with church members and leaders and quantitative surveys to capture both in-depth narratives and statistical data. Themes of collaboration, grassroots participation, and inter-denominational engagement were prioritized. These delimitations ensured a comprehensive yet targeted evaluation of ecumenical efforts within the specific sociocultural context of Karongi District.

1.10 Limitations of the Study

This study faced several limitations. It focused exclusively on Christian denominations in Karongi District, specifically in Bwishyura Sector and Rubengera, which may not fully capture the diversity of religious perspectives within the region. While the mixed-method approach enhanced the robustness of the study by combining qualitative and quantitative data, the findings' generalizability to other contexts remained limited, as the study primarily addressed perceptions specific to Karongi. The reliance on interviews and surveys with church members and leaders provided valuable insights, but introduced potential bias due to the subjective nature of participants' experiences and opinions. Additionally, the study did not delve into broader theological debates or historical ecumenical initiatives, as its scope was limited to contemporary efforts at church unity. Despite these constraints, the combination of qualitative narratives and quantitative analysis succeeded in yielding a comprehensive understanding of ecumenical efforts in Karongi District and contributed meaningfully to addressing the study's objective.

1.11 Definitions of Key Concepts

This section defines the major concepts used in the study to ensure clarity, consistency, and shared understanding throughout the research. Given the context of Karongi District in post-genocide Rwanda, where church divisions have historical, ethnic, and theological roots, it is important to clearly explain what each key term means in relation to this specific setting. Defining these concepts helps guide the interpretation of findings and supports the analysis of how ecumenical efforts contribute to church unity in a divided but healing community.

Ecumenism

Ecumenism refers to the movement that seeks to promote unity and cooperation among Christian denominations. The World Council of Churches (2006) defines it as efforts toward "unity, cooperation, and common witness" among churches. Wainwright and McPartlan (2021:375) emphasize that ecumenism is not only theological but also practical, involving collaborative worship, service, and mission. In the Rwandan context, ecumenism bears a restorative character, aiming to overcome past divisions by building mutual understanding and healing relationships (Eregare et al., 2017).

Church Division

Church division, or schism, refers to the separation and lack of cooperation between Christian denominations, often caused by doctrinal differences, leadership disputes, and historical conflict (Braaten, 1998:17-32). In Karongi District, these divisions are rooted in Rwanda's political and ethnic past, which spilled into ecclesiastical structures, affecting how churches relate and collaborate (Radner, 1998:123-164).

Ecumenical Efforts

Ecumenical efforts are deliberate grassroots actions taken by churches to build unity. These include joint worship services, reconciliation programs, and community development projects. The Oxford Handbook of Ecumenical Studies frames such efforts as expressions of "reconciled diversity" and "conciliar fellowship" (Wainwright & McPartlan, 2021:555– 685). In Karongi, they serve as healing tools and relational bridges in a community shaped by mistrust and fragmentation (Hovorun, 2012:19).

Inter-Denominational Dialogue

Inter-denominational dialogue involves structured conversations between churches aiming to clarify theological differences and rebuild trust. Pratt (2010: 88) asserts that such dialogue is vital for addressing historical grievances and fostering spiritual empathy. Scrima's reflections, as noted by Boicu (2021:113), present dialogue as an ascetical and spiritual encounter that opens pathways to understanding and transformation.

Reconciliation

Reconciliation is the process of restoring broken relationships through truth-telling, forgiveness, and healing. Lederach (1997:29– 44) describes it as the intersection of peace, justice, mercy, and truth, especially in post-conflict societies. In Rwanda, reconciliation is also theological where churches become agents of healing by publicly acknowledging past wrongs and engaging in collaborative ministry (Hamber & Kelly, 2004:108 –123).

Church Unity

Church unity is the desired outcome of ecumenism, where churches maintain their distinct identities but work together in mutual respect and love. Meyer (2004) uses the concept of "unity in reconciled diversity" to explain how theological and practical differences can coexist. In African settings, Smit (2021:511) emphasizes that visible unity among churches contributes not only to spiritual health but also to social peace and national development.

Grassroots Participation

Grassroots participation highlights the importance of including ordinary believers, not just clergy, in unity-building efforts. Hietamäki (2023:76) emphasizes that ecumenical engagement must be inclusive, bottom-up, and sustainable. In Karongi, grassroot involvement ensures that ecumenism is anchored in lived community experiences, not just institutional agendas.

1.12 Conclusion

This chapter has established the foundation for the study by contextualizing ecumenism globally, regionally, and within post-genocide Rwanda, with a focus on Karongi District. It has outlined the central problem of persistent divisions among churches despite national ecumenical initiatives and framed the study's objectives, questions, assumptions, justification, and significance. By defining key concepts and clarifying the study's scope and limitations, the chapter sets a clear direction for the research. Ultimately, it positions the study to contribute to understanding and enhancing ecumenical efforts aimed at fostering sustainable church unity and reconciliation in Karongi District.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of literature relevant to ecumenical efforts in addressing church divisions. It begins with an empirical literature review, which examines previous studies on the effectiveness of ecumenical initiatives, the challenges encountered, and strategies proposed to promote unity. The chapter then presents a theoretical literature review, outlining key frameworks that guide the study, including Ubuntu Philosophy, Palaver Theory, Organizational Theory, Conflict Theory, and Reconciliation Theory. These theories offer critical insights into the dynamics of church unity and division. Finally, the conceptual literature review integrates both empirical and theoretical insights to construct a framework illustrating the relationship between ecumenical efforts, inter-denominational dialogue, and the resolution of church divisions.

2.2 Ecumenism and Faith-Based Reconciliation in Post-Genocide Rwanda

After the genocide against the Tutsi in 1994, churches in Rwanda faced serious moral and spiritual challenges. Many were accused of failing to protect people, or worse contributing to the violence. Scholars such as Longman (2010:43) and Carney (2015:17) explored how religious institutions remained silent or aligned with political forces that allowed ethnic hatred to grow. Their work calls for a transformation in ecclesial identity from passive complicity to active pastoral responsibility. This context makes ecumenism churches working together across denominations not merely optional but essential. It is a response to shared failure and a pathway toward rebuilding public trust and witness.

Faith-based reconciliation has emerged as a powerful tool for healing social divisions. King (2019:4-6) studied the Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities (HROC) program, where survivors and former perpetrators sit together, share stories, and rediscover human connection. Her findings show that when these encounters are supported by Christian values and local traditions, they lead to lasting emotional restoration. Musengimana (2024:245-248) examined Rwanda's justice mechanisms such as Gacaca courts and community service programs (TIG), showing how these systems foster moral rehabilitation when grounded in repentance and forgiveness as

theological principles. Carney (2015:790-802) described the Catholic Church's efforts using liturgy, community-based healing, and lay leadership to promote reconciliation. He identified five key themes ritual, dialogue, forgiveness, community, and grassroots leadership as the building blocks of reconciliation.

However, cooperation between churches remains a challenge. Grant (2018:23) points to tensions between Pentecostal and Catholic leaders, especially during public commemorations and national events. These groups often present conflicting theological messages, which undermine their shared moral witness. This reveals the fragile nature of ecumenism in Rwanda one shaped not only by theology but by history and politics.

Recent Rwandan theologians have made valuable contributions to this discourse, rooting ecumenism and reconciliation in Rwanda's cultural and spiritual realities. Fr. Uwineza (2023:145:159) offers a theological memoir that calls for truth-telling, liturgical honesty, and renewed sacramental anthropology. He views human dignity as both wounded by genocide and redeemable through theological reflection and confession. Kamanzi (2023:212-218) proposes that both churches and human bodies are sacred spaces, places where trauma is held and memory is reimagined. His work invites theology to not only preach truth but to sanctify memory and rebuild meaning. Nsengimana (2023:81-91) explores how rituals during genocide commemoration services serve as moments of collective healing. These liturgical acts connect historical pain with theological hope, turning grief into sacred remembrance.

Church leadership also plays a central role in Rwanda's reconciliation journey. Cardinal Antoine Kambanda (2023:45-52) emphasizes Eucharistic theology as a foundation for spiritual renewal, urging the Church to guide moral conscience through public worship and pastoral formation. Augustin Karekezi (2023:178-185) insists on ethical leadership grounded in repentance and catechesis. He advocates for public acknowledgment of past failures and teaching that promotes moral transformation. Ntaganda and Hakizimana (2025:34-42) examine how adult faith formation using Rwandan storytelling and proverbs can create meaningful change in behavior and community ethics. Ganza (2023:223-230) brings a focus on lament, teaching that unspoken grief must be given space within sacred rituals. He sees hope emerging from spiritual accompaniment and a shared eschatological vision.

Together, these Rwandan scholars affirm that post-genocide ecumenism is not simply a meeting of theological ideas it is an embodied practice. It involves truth, forgiveness, cultural wisdom, pastoral responsibility, and shared liturgical life. Reconciliation in Rwanda must therefore be visible across denominations, expressed in shared rituals, ethical teaching, and deep theological honesty. The Church's calling is not only to unify doctrine, but to walk alongside wounded communities in the daily work of healing.

2.3 Empirical Literature Review

An empirical literature review is a summary and evaluation of existing research studies that have employed empirical methods to investigate a specific research question or topic (Johnson, 2008: 37). This section reviews empirical studies focusing on the effectiveness of current ecumenical efforts in resolving church division, the challenges faced by ecumenical efforts in addressing church division, and the strategies for strengthening these efforts toward resolution.

2.3.1 Effectiveness of Ecumenical Efforts in Resolving Church Divisions

Research shows that the effectiveness of ecumenical efforts in resolving church divisions depends on several critical factors that work together to promote unity and cooperation. At the heart of ecumenical initiatives is the pursuit of unity, which is best, fostered through practices such as truth-telling, reconciliation, and shared worship. For instance, Tutu's (1999:52) work with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission demonstrates how restorative justice can deepen collaboration among churches. In a similar vein, Banda (2017:56) and Turner and Smith (2019:113) highlight that interfaith services play a vital role in building trust among congregants.

In addition to these efforts, active participation is a key element for success. According to MacLennan (2018:75), involving the grassroots level encourages greater engagement from church members, thereby enhancing the impact of ecumenical activities. Moreover, Kamanzi's (2014:106) study reveals that inter-denominational fellowship and joint community projects significantly contribute to social cohesion among diverse congregations.

Furthermore, addressing past obstacles is essential for effective unity. As Gatwa (2005:37) explains, confronting historical grievances and denominational disputes is necessary for rebuilding trust and encouraging collaboration. Similarly, Kamanzi (2014:106) warns that congregational

hesitation often stems from unresolved past conflicts, especially when churches fail to acknowledge previous roles in division.

Managing doctrinal and cultural differences is another important aspect. Villa-Vicencio's (1999:127) work on structural reforms shows that adapting liturgical practices to reflect diversity promotes cooperation. Likewise, Banda (2017) emphasizes that bridging theological divides enhances inclusive engagement.

Equally important is leadership and governance. As noted by Villa-Vicencio (1999:127), visionary leadership acts as a catalyst for institutional reform and helps ensure that ecumenical efforts are well-organized and inclusive. Leadership not only guides these initiatives but also ensures continuity in reconciliation processes.

Finally, social, cultural, and economic factors greatly influence the success of ecumenical movements. When these efforts address real-life needs such as poverty, healthcare, and education, they become more impactful and relevant. As highlighted by Harrison and O'Connor (2020:98) and Kibicho (2006:94), ecumenical collaboration that promotes social justice not only strengthens interfaith relationships but also boosts the wider community's trust in unity-building efforts.

In summary, the effectiveness of ecumenical efforts rests on a combination of key components: fostering unity, encouraging active participation, addressing past conflicts, managing diversity, promoting strong leadership, and responding to societal challenges. Together, these elements form a solid framework for meaningful ecumenical engagement and lasting reconciliation.

2.3.2 Challenges Facing Ecumenical Efforts

Ecumenical efforts aimed at fostering unity among Christian denominations continue to face a range of significant challenges. These barriers are not only theological but also historical, structural, and practical in nature, limiting the extent to which churches can successfully collaborate.

A central challenge to ecumenical collaboration is the fear of doctrinal compromise. This concern is grounded in apprehensions surrounding sacraments, church governance, and theological

interpretation. As Tutu (1999:83) illustrated through the case of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), many churches hesitated to join unity efforts due to perceived threats to their doctrinal distinctiveness. MacLennan (2018:75) supports this observation with findings from Nigeria, Uganda, and Kenya, where church leaders expressed reluctance toward ecumenical partnerships for similar reasons. This consistent pattern reveals how theological exclusivity, where doctrinal purity is prioritized over unity, remains a major barrier to interdenominational cooperation.

Closely tied to doctrinal issues is the challenge of historical mistrust, particularly in post-conflict regions such as Rwanda. Gatwa (2005:37) found that congregants remained skeptical of ecumenical movements when churches failed to acknowledge their past roles in conflict. Kamanzi (2014:112) reinforced this by showing that churches that avoided transparent reconciliation processes struggled to gain credibility in unity movements. However, his research also noted that churches participating in joint community initiatives experienced increased trust, indicating that reconciliation must go beyond words and include visible acts of unity.

Another pressing issue is competition for congregants, where churches fear losing members to other denominations involved in unity efforts. Harrison and O'Connor (2020:98) found that this competitive mindset led many churches to prioritize institutional survival over collaboration. Similarly, Banda (2017:56) identified leadership resistance where denominational leaders feared losing authority as a cause of delays or failures in ecumenical initiatives. These findings underline that internal power dynamics and institutional interests often outweigh the pursuit of unity.

In addition, resistance to change is common, especially among traditionalist denominations and older congregants. Turner and Smith (2019:113) discovered that while younger members were more open to ecumenical worship, older individuals were skeptical and viewed such changes as a dilution of longstanding traditions. Njoroge (2015:72) added that lack of ecumenical education further compounded this challenge; denominations with little or no structured theological training were less likely to support unity efforts, indicating that education plays a vital role in shaping openness to ecumenism.

Equally important are financial limitations, which frequently hinder the success of ecumenical movements. Kibicho (2006:94) showed that financially unstable churches often deprioritized unity initiatives, fearing that joint projects could threaten their individual funding sources. This highlights the necessity for sustainable financial models that support ecumenical goals without undermining the autonomy or stability of participating churches.

In summary, the literature identifies several interconnected challenges to ecumenical cooperation: doctrinal rigidity, theological exclusivity, historical mistrust, competition for congregants, leadership struggles, resistance to change, lack of theological training, and financial insecurity. Scholars such as Tutu (1999), Gatwa (2005), and Kamanzi (2014) stress the need for truth-telling and historical acknowledgment, while others like MacLennan (2018), Banda (2017), Turner and Smith (2019), and Njoroge (2015) point to leadership reform, generational understanding, and theological education as key enablers of unity. Furthermore, Harrison and O'Connor (2020) and Kibicho (2006) underline the importance of resource mobilization and social justice as pathways to sustainable ecumenical collaboration.

Therefore, addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted strategy including intentional reconciliation processes, grassroots engagement, adaptive theological dialogue, and reliable financial planning to ensure the long-term effectiveness and impact of ecumenical efforts in Karongi District and beyond.

2.3.3 Strategies for Strengthening Ecumenical Efforts

Empirical studies have consistently identified a cluster of strategic interventions capable of strengthening ecumenical efforts and addressing divisions among Christian denominations. Central to these strategies is leadership development, which serves as a catalyst for unity across ecclesial contexts. Tutu (1999:75), drawing from his experience with South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, emphasized the transformative role of leaders who embody humility, truth-telling, and restorative justice qualities that foster reconciliation and ecumenical collaboration. MacLennan (2018:63) builds upon this by showing that leadership training programs focused on interfaith cooperation actively reduced resistance and nurtured theological openness among church leaders. Equally vital is the role of conflict resolution training, which

equips churches to navigate tensions and build sustainable relationships. Banda (2017:56) demonstrates the power of structured reconciliation workshops in enhancing cohesion through inter-denominational dialogue, while Gatwa (2005:45), writing in the Rwandan post-genocide context, affirms that peacebuilding mechanisms embedded in theological discourse strengthen support for unity. Together, these findings reveal that effective leadership and intentional conflict resolution are indispensable foundations for durable and inclusive ecumenical movements.

Closely linked to conflict resolution are reconciliation programs, which have also proven vital. Kamanzi (2014:101) demonstrated that initiatives such as truth commissions, public apologies, and community healing ceremonies promoted trust and reduced skepticism. These findings align with Harrison and O'Connor (2020:104), who showed that congregants were more receptive to unity when reconciliation was visibly practiced. Moreover, collaborative community projects serve as practical tools for promoting unity. According to Harrison and O'Connor (2020:104), programs addressing shared social concerns such as poverty alleviation, healthcare, and education strengthened inter-denominational ties and increased the perceived relevance of ecumenical movements. These social justice efforts help build relational trust across denominations by meeting tangible needs.

Another essential approach is inter-denominational dialogue. Njoroge (2015:72) found that churches engaged in structured theological discussions experienced greater mutual respect and cooperation. Turner and Smith (2019:113) echoed this in their study of worship-based ecumenism, noting that shared services featuring diverse liturgical traditions helped reduce doctrinal tensions and strengthened unity.

Finally, inclusivity is a cornerstone of successful ecumenical efforts. Kibicho (2006:94) emphasized that churches emphasizing social justice and community activism were more effective in maintaining ecumenical momentum. This is supported by Harrison and O'Connor (2020:98), who observed that mission-driven ecumenism, focused on collective action rather than strict theological agreement, was more successful in building lasting cooperation.

In summary, ecumenical efforts are significantly enhanced through a combination of leadership training, conflict resolution mechanisms, reconciliation-focused programs, collaborative social

initiatives, open dialogue, and inclusive practices. Tutu (1999), Banda (2017), and Gatwa (2005) stress the importance of leadership and peacebuilding strategies, while MacLennan (2018) and Kamanzi (2014) highlight conflict resolution and healing as central to unity-building. Harrison and O'Connor (2020) and Kibicho (2006) reinforce the role of social justice in ecumenical effectiveness, while Njoroge (2015), along with Turner and Smith (2019), demonstrate how dialogue and worship inclusivity foster deeper cooperation.

Therefore, for ecumenical movements to succeed in contexts like Karongi District, churches must intentionally develop capable leaders, invest in reconciliation, support inter-denominational dialogue, and champion inclusive, community-oriented worship and service. Future research should continue to evaluate the long-term outcomes of these strategies to further enhance the sustainability and impact of church unity efforts.

Although many scholars have written about ecumenical efforts across global, regional, and national levels, there is still a lack of focused studies on how these efforts work at the local level, especially in rural and post-conflict areas like Karongi District, Rwanda. This study identifies several key gaps in the existing literature, as summarized in the table below:

Table 2.1: Research Gap

No.	**Research Gap**	**Description**
1	Lack of local studies on the Karongi District	Most studies are done at national or international levels, not at the local level like Karongi.
2	Weak focus on implementation challenges	Few studies discuss real problems like a lack of money, resources, or support that affect unity efforts.
3	Little attention is paid to ordinary church members	Many studies focus on leaders only and ignore the views of church members who are also part of the church.
4	Lack of long-term (follow-up) studies	It's not clear if unity efforts last long, because most research does not follow up over time.
5	Limited study on political or government influence	Studies don't show how local politics or government actions affect unity between churches.

No.	Research Gap	Description
6	Few studies on digital or media-based ecumenism	There's little research on how social media or online tools are used to support church unity.
7	Missing information on the emotional and social effects of division	We don't know much about how church division affects people's feelings, relationships, or social lives.

These gaps show that more research is needed to understand how ecumenical efforts work at the local level. Many past studies mainly focused on church leaders, leaving out the voices of ordinary church members. Also, there is limited research on the practical problems churches face when trying to work together, especially in rural areas like Karongi. Political factors, technology use, and the emotional impact of church division are also often ignored. This study helps to fill these gaps by focusing on the real experiences of both leaders and members of different Christian denominations in Karongi District.

2.4 Theoretical Literature Review

In the context of this study, the Theoretical Literature Review refers to an in-depth examination of the existing theories, concepts, and frameworks that help to understand the issues of ecumenism and church divisions. This section provides the theoretical foundations upon which the research is built and aims to explore how theoretical perspectives can guide the understanding of the factors influencing church unity and the effectiveness of ecumenical efforts.

2.4.1 Ubuntu Philosophy

The Ubuntu philosophy, commonly expressed in the Zulu maxim *"Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu"* ("a person is a person through other persons"), is one of the most profound indigenous African worldviews, centered on relationality, community, and mutual responsibility (Tutu, 1999: 31). At its core, Ubuntu affirms that human identity is not defined in isolation, but about others; the self becomes meaningful only within the context of the collective. According to Gade (2011:306), Ubuntu represents both an ethical orientation and an ontological perspective that sees individual well-being as inextricably linked to the well-being of the group. It calls for solidarity, empathy,

compassion, and forgiveness, values that are central to healing, conflict resolution, and social cohesion.

In theological discourse, Ubuntu has been increasingly recognized as a constructive African Christian ethical framework. Tutu (1999:34), a prominent advocate of Ubuntu theology, asserts that this philosophy reflects key biblical teachings on love, justice, and reconciliation. Ubuntu does not merely advocate peaceful coexistence; it actively requires individuals to work for the healing and restoration of broken relationships, be they interpersonal, communal, or institutional. This makes Ubuntu an especially relevant lens through which to interpret church unity and ecumenical processes in post-conflict societies such as Rwanda.

In the specific context of church divisions, Ubuntu challenges sectarianism and denominational exclusivity by reasserting the primacy of communal integrity over institutional identity. As divisions often undermine the relational ethos of the church, Ubuntu theology positions such schisms as moral failures that erode the spiritual and social fabric of the Christian community (Battle, 2009:42). Ecumenical initiatives, therefore, are not simply administrative efforts at cooperation but are acts of moral and spiritual repair. These initiatives, when guided by Ubuntu principles, become channels for re-humanizing one another across ecclesial lines, affirming shared humanity and a common Christian calling.

Rwanda's socio-political and ecclesial context further underscores the value of Ubuntu. In the aftermath of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, the imperative for social healing and reconciliation has extended into every facet of life, including religious institutions. The churches in Rwanda, some of which were complicit in the violence, have a responsibility not only to seek internal healing but also to model reconciliation publicly. Ubuntu, in this context, offers both a theological and cultural framework that legitimizes ecumenical efforts as redemptive acts for restoring communal trust (Nussbaum, 2003:25).

Church members' perceptions of ecumenical efforts may thus be significantly shaped by the extent to which these efforts reflect Ubuntu values. If unity initiatives are viewed as performative or institutionally driven, they may fail to resonate with communities seeking deep moral and spiritual reconciliation. Conversely, when ecumenical processes emphasize restorative justice, empathy,

mutual accountability, and inclusiveness, they are more likely to be perceived as authentic, effective, and spiritually resonant (Metz, 2011:537). Ubuntu provides a language and ethic by which these efforts can be interpreted and validated within a culturally familiar and theologically robust framework.

In summary, Ubuntu theology contributes meaningfully to both the conceptualization and practice of church unity. It challenges churches to transcend denominationalism in favor of a shared, relationally grounded faith identity, and it empowers believers to become active agents in processes of reconciliation and healing. As such, it serves as a critical theoretical lens for assessing the effectiveness and moral legitimacy of ecumenical efforts in Rwanda and beyond.

2.4.2 Palaver Theory

The Palaver theory originates from traditional African mechanisms of conflict resolution, particularly prevalent in West and Central African societies, and provides a culturally embedded model for understanding communal dialogue, reconciliation, and justice. The Palaver, also referred to as the palabre in Francophone Africa, is more than a meeting or negotiation; it is a deeply participatory process of consensus-building, truth-telling, and moral restoration, typically conducted in a communal space under the guidance of respected elders or leaders (Zartman, 2000:231). Central to this tradition is the belief that conflict is not inherently destructive but rather an opportunity for restoring balance and reinforcing social cohesion when addressed with transparency and inclusion.

The Palaver process prioritizes deliberation over coercion, dialogue over judgment and reconciliation over retribution (Abugbilla, 2023:197). It reflects an ethic of communalism, where the resolution of disputes is not limited to the conflicting parties but involves the entire community, thus ensuring that decisions are rooted in shared values and collective wisdom. This participatory ethos resonates strongly with ecumenical theology, particularly in African contexts where traditional systems of governance and spirituality continue to influence Christian social ethics.

In relation to ecumenical efforts in resolving church divisions, the Palaver theory provides both a conceptual framework and a methodological analogy. Ecumenical dialogues, particularly those focused on healing historical denominational rifts, can be interpreted as a modern form of Palaver,

whereby different Christian groups come together in a symbolic "village square" to share grievances, seek understanding, and work toward mutual reconciliation. Such gatherings, when informed by Palaver principles, create space for active listening, collective discernment, and rebuilding of spiritual trust among denominations.

In post-genocide Rwanda, where reconciliation has become a national imperative, the Palaver model offers significant insights. The Gacaca courts, though different in structure and purpose, drew upon similar traditional principles of community engagement and restorative justice. These community-based processes were instrumental in promoting truth-telling, forgiveness and healing after the atrocities of 1994 (Clark, 2010:98). Within the ecclesial sphere, similar methods can be harnessed to foster ecumenical unity, not only as a theological goal but as a moral response to communal trauma and fragmentation.

Church members' perceptions of the effectiveness of ecumenical efforts are likely influenced by the degree to which those efforts reflect Palaver values such as inclusivity, openness, respect for all voices, and a commitment to mutual accountability. If ecumenical initiatives are seen as top-down or institutionally driven, they may be regarded with skepticism or indifference by lay congregants. Conversely, when unity efforts are dialogical, participatory, and culturally resonant, they are more likely to be embraced as authentic and spiritually meaningful (Afolabi, 2023:229).

Furthermore, Palaver theory calls attention to the importance of moral leadership in facilitating unity. In traditional settings, elders played the role of moral guides, drawing from wisdom and experience to steer communities toward reconciliation. Similarly, in the ecumenical context, religious leaders must embody humility, moral integrity, and a commitment to the common good to effectively guide interdenominational dialogue. As Zartman (2000:232) notes, successful Palaver processes are marked by "a suspension of ego for the sake of the collective."

In summary, Palaver theory provides a culturally grounded framework for understanding and evaluating ecumenical processes in African contexts. It highlights the value of participatory dialogue, communal healing, and culturally embedded moral reasoning. For church communities in Karongi District, where unity is not just a theological ideal but a social necessity, Palaver-

inspired ecumenism may offer a powerful model for healing past divisions and building a shared Christian future.

2.4.3 Organizational Theory

Organizational theory, which focuses on the structure and functioning of organizations, is valuable in understanding the dynamics of church divisions. According to organizational theory, institutions like churches are shaped by both internal and external factors that influence their development, hierarchy, culture, and operations. Churches, as social organizations, tend to develop distinct identities, leadership structures, and doctrinal positions that often lead to separation or division (Harrison & O'Connor, 2020:102).

In the context of church divisions, organizational theory highlights how churches become segmented over time due to differing views on theology, governance, and worship practices. This segmentation can be reinforced by competition for resources, the emergence of distinct leadership factions, and a lack of clear communication channels between denominations. Organizational theorists such as Weber (1968:67) argue that churches, like other institutions, may become bureaucratic, with formal structures that emphasize internal control and hierarchy, which can inadvertently promote division rather than cooperation.

In rural areas like Karongi District, churches may operate with limited resources and leadership training, which can exacerbate existing organizational divisions. The competitive nature of denominational growth can further complicate efforts at unity, as church leaders may prioritize the survival and expansion of their own churches over collaborative efforts with other denominations (Turner and Smith, 2019:109). Organizational theory, therefore, provides a lens through which to understand how church structures, cultures, and leadership can either promote or hinder ecumenical unity.

2.4.4 Conflict Theory

Conflict theory, particularly as developed by Karl Marx and later applied to religious studies, posits that societal and institutional divisions are often a result of power imbalances, competition, and social inequality. When applied to church divisions, conflict theory argues that theological disagreements, doctrinal differences, and struggles for dominance between denominations are often rooted in broader societal power struggles (Turner & Smith, 2019:115).

From a conflict theory perspective, church divisions can be seen as an outcome of competition for followers, control over religious practices, and access to resources. In many cases, church leaders and denominations may engage in power struggles that are not only theological but also political and economic (MacLennan, 2018:35). In regions like Karongi District, where historical tensions between ethnic groups and economic inequality persist, church divisions may be amplified by these societal dynamics. This highlights the broader context in which church conflicts are situated, where denominational loyalty may sometimes be intertwined with social, cultural, and political identities.

Conflict theory also emphasizes the role of historical injustice and mistrust in sustaining divisions. In post-genocide Rwanda, for example, the church has struggled with deep divisions due to its involvement in the violence and the mistrust that arose between denominations. Church leaders and members may carry residual tensions from past experiences, making ecumenical reconciliation efforts more difficult to achieve (Kamanzi, 2014:115). Conflict theory underscores the need for addressing these underlying power imbalances and historical grievances as part of the reconciliation process in ecumenical efforts.

2.4.5 Reconciliation Theory

Reconciliation theory focuses on the processes and mechanisms through which divided groups can move toward healing and unity. Reconciliation is a central theme in post-conflict societies and is particularly relevant in the context of church divisions in regions like Rwanda, where churches have been deeply affected by social and political tensions. Theories of reconciliation, such as those proposed by Lederach (1997:32), emphasize the importance of dialogue, forgiveness, and trust-building in overcoming divisions.

In the context of church divisions, reconciliation theory suggests that efforts at unity must go beyond doctrinal discussions to address relational and emotional aspects of division. Reconciliation involves the recognition of past wrongs, the willingness to forgive, and the creation of spaces for open dialogue. Lederach's approach to reconciliation highlights the need for grassroots involvement, community engagement, and the active participation of both clergy and laypeople in the healing process. This is particularly relevant for churches in rural areas like Karongi, where the social fabric may have been torn by historical conflicts, and where rebuilding relationships requires deep and sustained efforts at reconciliation.

Reconciliation theory also suggests that ecumenical efforts should include practices that promote healing, such as shared worship, joint community projects, and joint social initiatives that foster trust and cooperation (Harrison & O'Connor, 2020:110). In Rwanda, ecumenical organizations like the Rwanda Interreligious Council (RIC) have used reconciliation-based approaches to bring together Christian denominations that were historically divided by ethnicity, politics, and even complicity in the genocide (RIC, 2017:65).

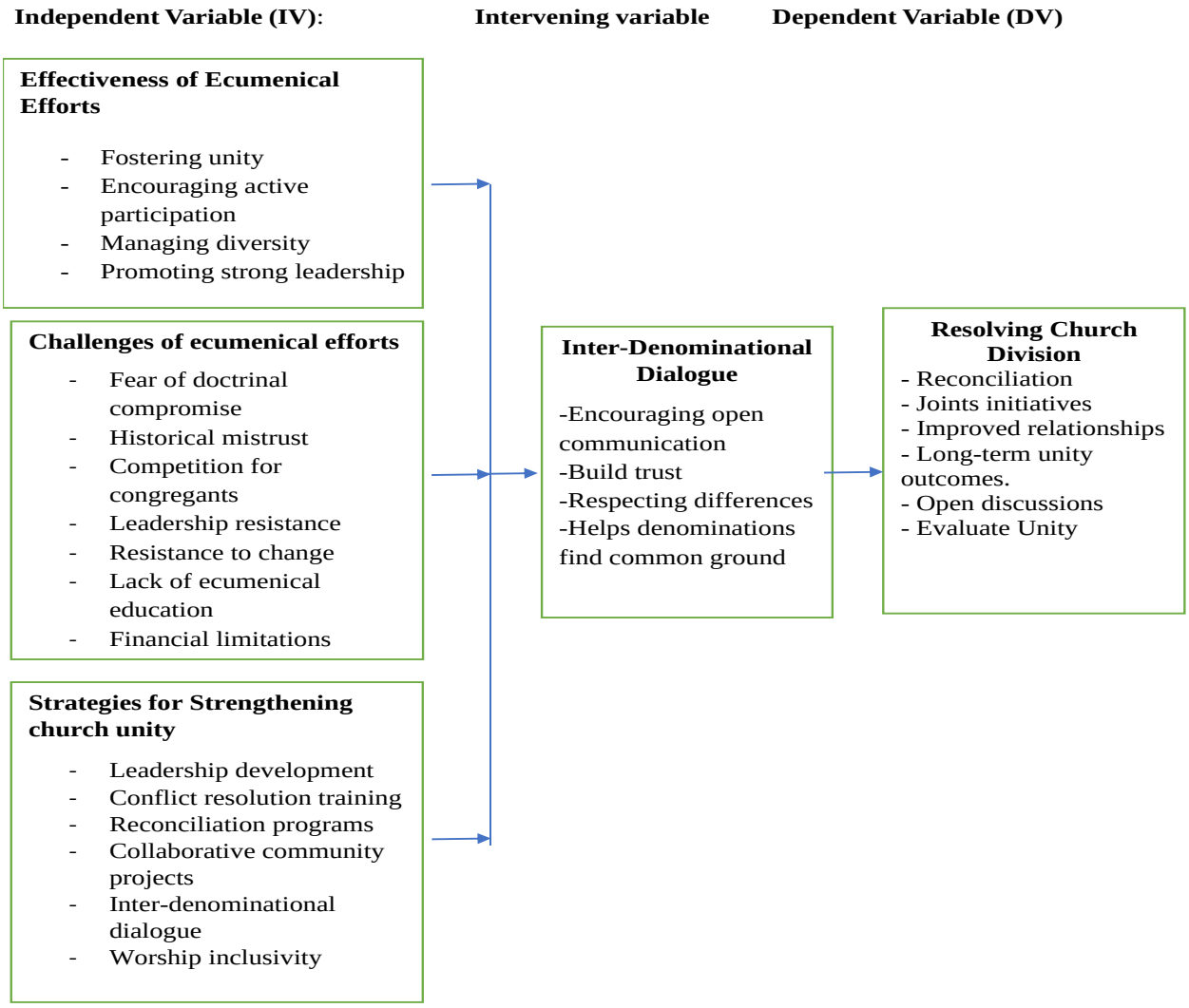
The theoretical framework underpinning this study integrates Ubuntu Philosophy, Palaver Theory, Organizational Theory, Conflict Theory, and Reconciliation Theory to provide a holistic understanding of church members' perceptions regarding ecumenical efforts in Karongi District, Rwanda. Ubuntu and Palaver theories, rooted in African communal ethics, emphasize relationality, dialogue, and moral restoration as culturally resonant paths to unity. Organizational theory offers insights into how structural and institutional dynamics within churches may reinforce division or facilitate cooperation. Conflict theory highlights the underlying power struggles, historical grievances, and socio-political tensions that shape denominational fragmentation. Reconciliation theory presents practical strategies for healing, emphasizing forgiveness, dialogue, and grassroots engagement. By integrating these theories, ecumenical efforts can be more effective in addressing the causes of church divisions and promoting lasting unity.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

This study is guided by a conceptual framework that illustrates the relationship between ecumenical efforts and the resolution of church divisions in Karongi District. The framework is developed based on the study’s objectives and supported by empirical literature reviewed in this chapter. It highlights how the effectiveness of ecumenical initiatives (independent variable) influences the resolution of church division (dependent variable), with inter-denominational dialogue serving as an intervening variable that facilitates this relationship.

The framework assumes that when ecumenical activities such as joint worship, reconciliation initiatives, and shared community projects are implemented effectively and supported by consistent dialogue among denominations, they contribute to healing historical grievances, reducing doctrinal tensions, and promoting sustainable unity among churches.

Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework



Source: Author, 2025

i. **Effectiveness of Ecumenical Efforts (Independent Variable):** The efforts include activities like worship, leadership collaboration, and practical outreach. When effective, they are expected to increase church unity.

ii. **Inter-Denominational Dialogue (Intervening Variable):** This acts as a link between ecumenical efforts and the resolution of divisions. Dialogue helps resolve misunderstandings and promotes mutual respect, making ecumenical efforts more likely to succeed.

iii. Resolving Church Division (Dependent Variable): This is the result you are measuring. If the ecumenical efforts are effective and dialogue is active, you expect to see stronger unity, fewer conflicts, and healthier inter-church relationships.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed both empirical and theoretical literature related to ecumenical efforts and church unity. The empirical literature review explored studies on the effectiveness of ecumenical initiatives, common challenges faced, and practical strategies aimed at promoting inter-denominational collaboration. The theoretical literature review examined five key frameworks: Ubuntu Philosophy, Palaver Theory, Organizational Theory, Conflict Theory, and Reconciliation Theory, which offered critical insights into the causes of division and the pursuit of unity within church settings. Lastly, the conceptual literature review brought together these perspectives to construct a framework that illustrated the relationship between ecumenical efforts, inter-denominational dialogue, and the resolution of church divisions, particularly within the context of Karongi District.

CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodological framework employed to explore church members' perceptions of the effectiveness of ecumenical efforts in resolving church divisions in Karongi District, Rwanda. It begins by outlining the research design and methods that guide the study, followed by a description of the study area to provide geographical and contextual background. The chapter details the target population, sampling techniques, and sample size chosen to ensure the representativeness and credibility of the findings. Furthermore, the chapter explains the data collection procedures and the approaches used for analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data. Given the mixed-methods approach adopted in this study, particular attention is paid to the integration of quantitative and qualitative findings to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the ethical considerations that govern the study, ensuring integrity, confidentiality, and respect for all participants throughout the research process.

3.2 Research Design

This study adopted a mixed-methods research design, which involves the systematic integration of both quantitative and qualitative approaches within a single study to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem. Mixed-methods designs are particularly effective when the researcher seeks to benefit from the strengths of both methodologies while offsetting their limitations (Creswell, 2014:4).

The quantitative component consisted of structured questionnaires administered to selected members of various churches within Karongi District. This method enabled the collection of standardized data regarding participants' experiences, attitudes, and perceptions toward ecumenical initiatives and inter-church cooperation. Quantitative data helped identify trends and allowed for broad generalizations within the study area (Bryman, 2012:628).

The qualitative component, in contrast, involved semi-structured interviews with church leaders and ecumenical leaders, who were purposively selected due to their leadership roles and direct

engagement in ecumenical activities. This qualitative approach provided deeper insights into the theological, historical, and contextual aspects of church unity efforts that could not be fully understood through surveys alone (Silverman, 2013:216).

Integrating the two approaches facilitated triangulation, which increase the validity and credibility of findings by comparing results from different data sources (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2010: 455). This approach ensured that the research outcomes reflected both the measurable dimensions of ecumenical cooperation and the rich narratives surrounding reconciliation and church unity in post-genocide Rwanda.

The use of a mixed-methods design was therefore appropriate for addressing the study's objectives, as it offered flexibility in data collection and enabled a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

3.3 Study Area

Karongi District, situated in Rwanda's Western Province, is renowned for its scenic landscapes, cultural richness, and significant contribution to the national economy. According to the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR, 2022:5), the district is home to approximately 374,319 residents. The majority of the population engages in agriculture, particularly the cultivation of tea and coffee, supported by the region's fertile soil and favorable climatic conditions. Agroforestry is also widely practiced, contributing both to household income and environmental conservation (MINAGRI, 2021:12). Furthermore, tourism constitutes an important economic pillar, with Lake Kivu attracting visitors to its tranquil shores. Key locations within the district include Bwishyura, also known as Kibuye, which is well known for its tourism attractions and genocide memorials, and Rubengera, recognized as an educational and administrative hub (Rwanda Education Board, 2021:18).

Religion plays a central role in the socio-cultural life of Karongi's population. Both Catholic and Protestant denominations have a strong historical and social presence. Despite this, inter-denominational collaboration remains limited, often hindered by theological differences, denominational competition, and leadership conflicts, which pose challenges to sustained ecumenical engagement (Uwimana, 2022:23).

While Karongi District is endowed with various strengths, it continues to face several developmental challenges. Rural poverty remains pervasive, with inadequate road infrastructure that becomes especially problematic during the rainy season (MININFRA, 2020:30). In addition, access to essential services such as clean water, electricity, and internet connectivity remains inconsistent in some areas, despite ongoing government initiatives to improve service delivery. The issue of youth unemployment persists, particularly among those not engaged in agricultural activities. Moreover, the education sector is affected by shortages of trained teachers and insufficient learning materials (MINEDUC, 2022:11).

Nonetheless, Karongi District holds significant potential for sustainable development. With its abundant natural resources, resilient population, and strategic geographic location, the district is well-positioned to make continued progress toward long-term socio-economic growth and inclusive development.

3.4 Target Population

The target population for this study consisted of church members from Bwishyura and Rubengera sectors in Karongi District, representing both urban and rural contexts. Participants were purposively selected based on their active engagement in church-related activities and responsibilities. These included church leaders and ecumenical leaders at the Karongi District level, as well as congregants with consistent participation in the daily life of the church.

This composition allowed for the inclusion of diverse experiences and perspectives relevant to ecumenical practices and inter-denominational cooperation. By incorporating insights from both leadership and active lay members, the study aimed to capture a comprehensive understanding of local-level ecumenical dynamics and the role of the church in addressing division.

Creswell (2014:152) emphasizes that purposive sampling is appropriate when selecting individuals who can provide rich, detailed data on the subject of inquiry. Similarly, Babbie (2010:190) affirms that a well-defined target population ensures that the findings of the study are both contextually valid and aligned with the research objectives.

3.5 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

This study employed purposive sampling, a method well-suited for selecting participants who possess relevant knowledge and experience with the research topic. According to Patton (2002:230), purposive sampling enables the selection of "information-rich cases" that yield in-depth understanding and meaningful insights. The total sample consisted of 55 participants drawn from both Bwishyura (urban) and Rubengera (rural) sectors of Karongi District. These participants were carefully chosen to reflect a diversity of denominational affiliations and active engagement in church and ecumenical life.

The study included church members from ten Christian denominations, with five represented in each sector. In Bwishyura Sector, the selected denominations were the Catholic Church, Anglican Church, Pentecostal Church, Restoration Church, and Gate Right Church. In Rubengera Sector, the denominations included Zion Temple, Seventh-day Adventist Church, Methodist Church, Believers Center, and the Presbyterian Church. From each denomination, five individuals were purposively selected based on their leadership responsibilities and consistent participation in church life. These included the church leader (pastor or priest), the elder leader, the deacon leader, the choir leader, and the youth leader. This approach ensured a wide representation of perspectives across both hierarchical and lay positions within the church structure.

In addition to the 50 church-based participants, the study included five ecumenical leaders operating at the Karongi District level. These individuals were selected for their direct involvement in interdenominational cooperation, particularly through structures such as the Rwanda Interreligious Council (RIC). Their perspectives were crucial in understanding how formal ecumenical initiatives intersect with local church practices and contribute to addressing divisions within the Christian community.

The overall sample of 55 participants was deemed adequate for achieving data saturation, providing both depth and breadth of information necessary for exploring the nature and effectiveness of ecumenical efforts in fostering church unity within diverse urban and rural contexts.

3.6 Data Collection Instruments and Procedure

The study utilized both quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments: Structured Questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data from 40 church members. The questionnaires consisted of closed-ended questions designed to capture participants' perceptions of ecumenical efforts, perceived unity, and participation in collaborative initiatives.

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect qualitative data from 10 church leaders and 5 ecumenical leaders. These interviews allowed participants to freely express their views, experiences, and challenges related to inter-denominational collaboration. All interviews were audio-recorded (with consent) and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

3.7 Data Analysis and Methods

This study employed both quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods, consistent with the mixed-methods approach used in data collection. The goal was to gain a comprehensive understanding of church members' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of ecumenical efforts in addressing church divisions in Karongi District.

3.7.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to 40 church members from 10 different denominations (4 respondents from each denomination). The responses were carefully coded and categorized to identify trends and summarize participant views. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and percentages, were used to analyze the data.

Findings were presented in tables to enhance clarity and facilitate interpretation. Each table was accompanied by a detailed explanation and interpretation of the results. Furthermore, the quantitative findings were discussed about existing literature to provide a broader context and assess alignment with previous studies on ecumenical cooperation and church unity.

3.7.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data were gathered through face-to-face interviews with 10 church leaders and telephone interviews with 5 ecumenical leaders. The interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' consent, then transcribed verbatim for analysis. A thematic analysis approach was used to identify recurring patterns and emerging themes related to ecumenical initiatives, challenges, and successes.

The themes were categorized based on key areas of the study and were interpreted in light of previous academic research. This allowed for a deeper understanding of how local experiences align with or differ from broader ecumenical practices and theories.

3.7.3 Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

Both data sets were analyzed independently, then merged during the interpretation phase to compare and integrate findings. Areas of convergence and divergence were identified, allowing for a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the research problem. The integration of data enhanced the validity of the study and helped to draw conclusions grounded in both statistical trends and lived experiences.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were central to the planning and execution of this study. In line with standard academic research protocols involving human participants, appropriate measures were taken to ensure the protection of participants' rights and the integrity of the research process.

Approval and Permission

Before data collection, ethical approval was obtained from St. Paul's University, Kenya. An official introductory letter from the university was presented to ten church leaders and five ecumenical leaders who participated in the study. Since formal clearance from the Rwandan government was not a prerequisite for this academic research, the university's official letters were deemed sufficient to proceed with fieldwork in Karongi District.

Informed Consent

All participants were informed about the objectives, scope, and purpose of the study. Consent forms were provided, and participation was strictly voluntary. Participants were assured that they could withdraw from the study at any point without any negative consequences. The study also clarified that no financial or material compensation would be offered in exchange for participation.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

To protect the privacy of respondents, all data were treated with strict confidentiality. Participants' names and personal identifiers were excluded from all reporting. Pseudonyms or general identifiers were used to ensure anonymity. Audio recordings and transcripts were stored securely and accessed only by the researcher for academic purposes.

Voluntary Participation

Participants were not coerced into participating. Church members, church leaders, and ecumenical leaders took part voluntarily and were free to refuse to answer any question they felt uncomfortable with. This ensured that the data collected was based on genuine, willing responses.

Cultural and Religious Sensitivity

Considering the faith-based context of the study, careful attention was paid to the language used in the research tools and during interviews. The researcher maintained respect for all religious beliefs and traditions represented by the participants.

Integrity of Data Use

All data collected were analyzed and reported truthfully, with direct quotations used appropriately to support themes and findings. The data were used solely for academic purposes in fulfillment of the requirements for the Master's degree in Theology in Ecumenical Leadership. Through these ethical procedures, the study upheld the dignity, rights, and confidentiality of all participants, ensuring the research was conducted responsibly and respectfully.

3.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter outlines the research methodology used to assess church members' perceptions of ecumenical efforts in resolving church divisions in Karongi District. A mixed-methods approach was adopted, combining quantitative data from structured questionnaires with qualitative insights from semi-structured interviews.

The study focused on Bwishyura and Rubengera sectors, selected for their active ecumenical engagement and denominational diversity. A total of 55 purposively sampled participants, 40 church members and 15 leaders, contributed to the study.

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis to ensure a balanced interpretation. Ethical standards were strictly followed, including informed consent, confidentiality, and cultural sensitivity. This methodological framework laid a strong foundation for the presentation and discussion of findings in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR
RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the findings derived from both quantitative and qualitative data collected from church members, church leaders, and ecumenical leaders in Karongi District. The purpose of this chapter is to address the research objectives by exploring how church members perceive the effectiveness of ecumenical efforts in resolving church divisions. The data are gathered using questionnaires (administered to 40 church members from 10 different denominations) and interviews (conducted with 10 church leaders and 5 ecumenical leaders). The analysis follows a mixed-methods approach, providing a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Quantitative data are presented in tables and interpreted in light of the research objectives, while qualitative data are organized thematically, with excerpts from interviews illustrating key points. The findings are then compared and integrated, and, where relevant, discussed in the context of existing literature.

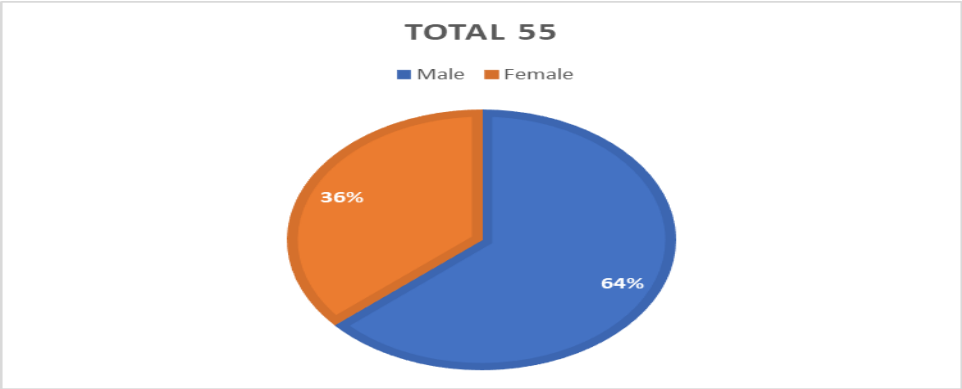
4.2 Response Rate

The 55 participants identified for data collection all fully participated, achieving a perfect response rate of 100%. This exceptional level of engagement underscores the participants' commitment and strengthens the quality and reliability of the data collected. Such an outcome significantly enhances the validity of the study's findings.

4.2.1 Composition of the Respondents by Gender

The data for this study were collected from a total of 55 interviewers, consisting of 20 females and 35 males, with the number of males being higher than the females. This diverse group provided valuable insights into the perceptions of church members and staff committee members of the Rwanda Interreligious Council in Karongi District regarding ecumenical efforts to resolve church divisions.

Figure 4.1: Respondents by Gender

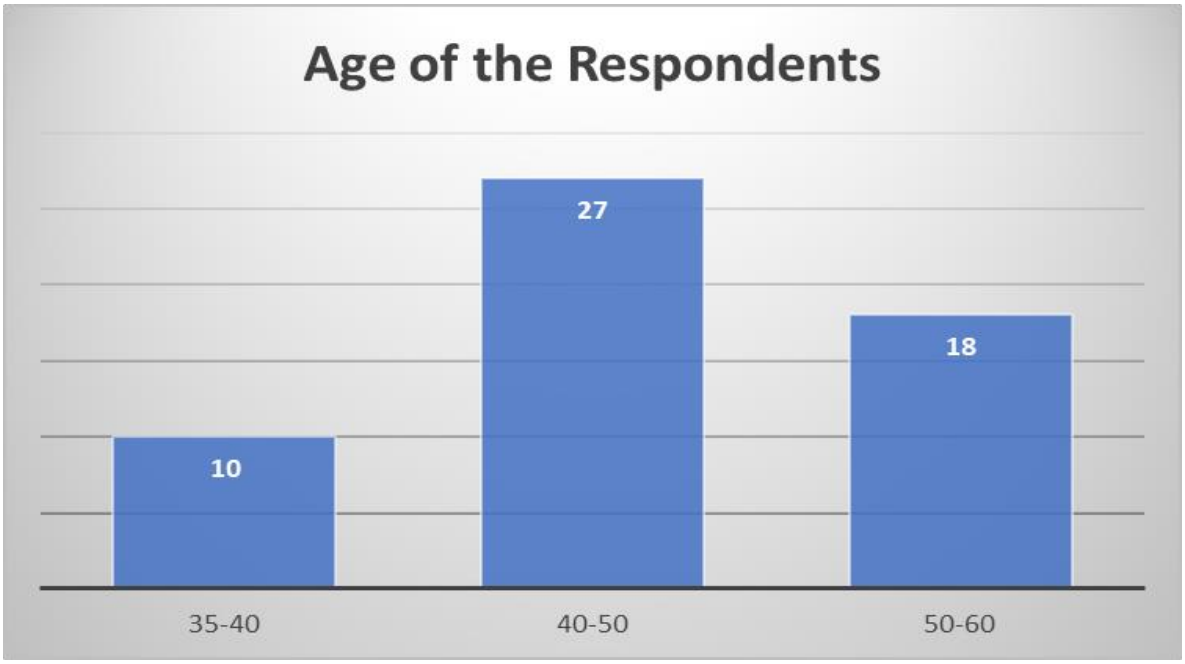


Source: Research Data (2025)

4.2.2 Age Range

The age distribution of the respondents shows that the majority fall within the 40–50-year range, with 27 participants, making it the largest group. This is followed by the 50–60-year range, which includes 18 respondents, indicating a significant portion of participants are in their later career stages, offering a wealth of experience. The smallest group is the 35–40-year range, with 10 respondents, representing the younger end of the spectrum. Overall, 81% of the respondents are between the ages of 40 and 60, suggesting that the sample consists mainly of mature, experienced individuals who likely have a deep understanding of church issues and ecumenical efforts.

Figure 4.2: Respondents by Age Range

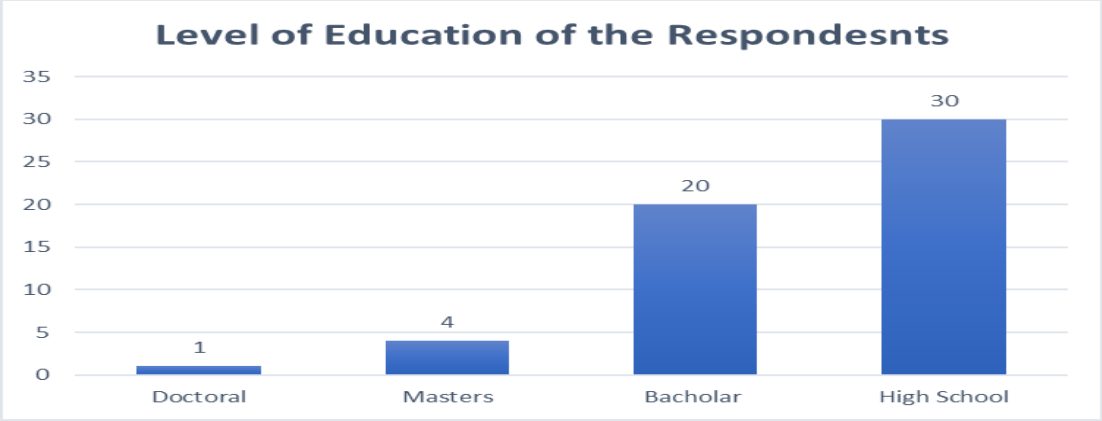


Source: Research Data (2025)

4.2.3 Level of Education of the Respondents

The education levels of the 55 interviewees varied, with participants holding a range of qualifications. One participant held a doctoral degree, four had completed master's degrees, 20 had bachelor's degrees, and the remaining 30 interviewers had attained a high school education. This diversity in educational backgrounds provided a broad spectrum of perspectives, enhancing the richness of the data collected for the study.

Figure 4.3: Level of Education

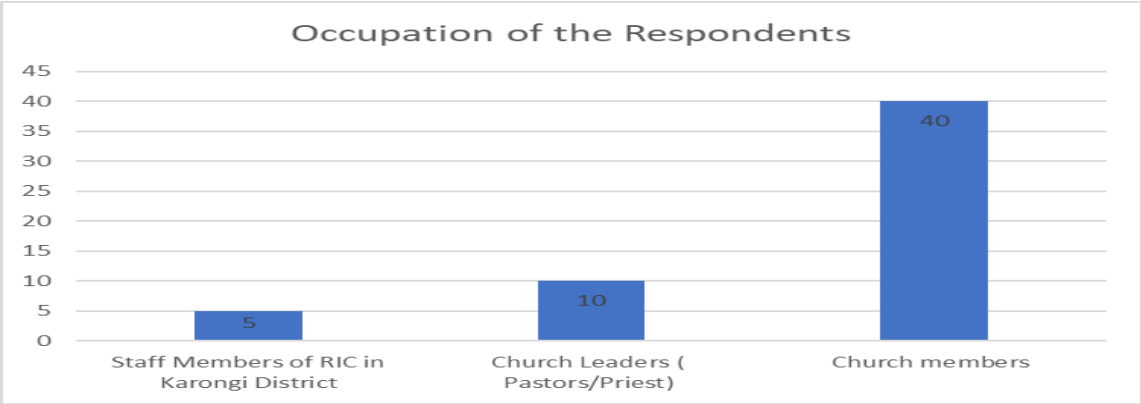


Source: Research Data (2025)

4.2.4 Occupation of the Respondents

Out of the 55 respondents, 5 were RIC staff, 10 were church leaders, and 40 were church members. This distribution provided a balanced mix of institutional, leadership, and grassroots perspectives on ecumenical efforts in Karongi District.

Figure 4.4: Occupation of the Respondents

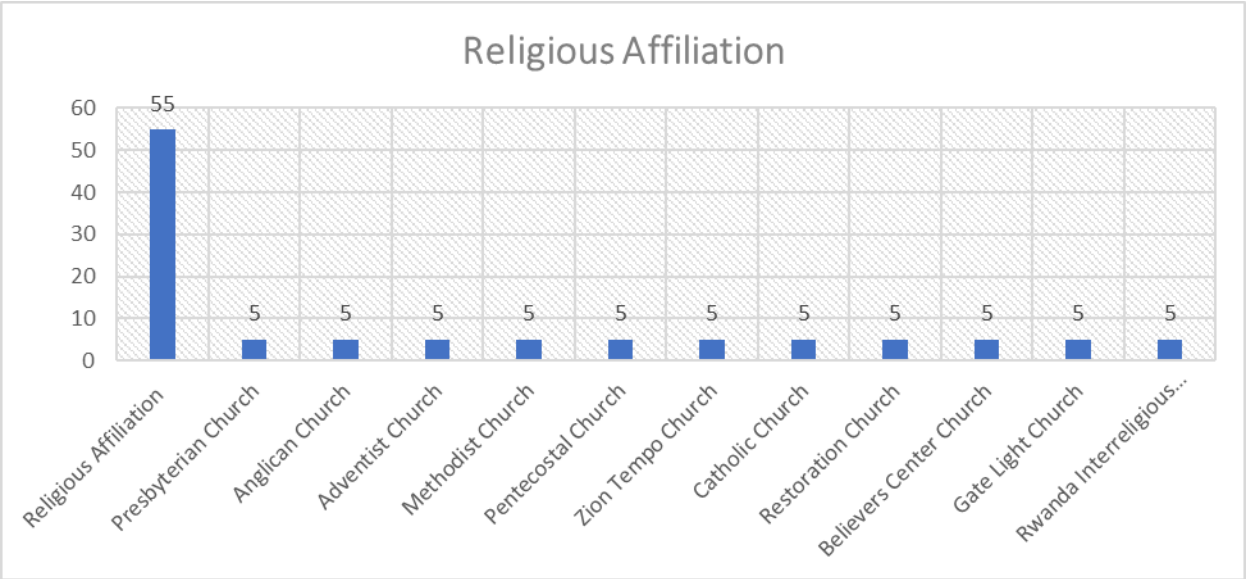


Source: Research Data (2025)

4.2.5 Religious Affiliation of the Respondents

The religious affiliation of the participants reveals a balanced representation across various Christian denominations and interreligious organizations in the study. Each of the 10 Christian denominations, Presbyterian, Anglican, Adventist, Methodist, Pentecostal, Zion Temple, Catholic, Restoration, Believer's Center, and Gate Light Church, contributed 5 participants, highlighting an equal and diverse spread of beliefs. Additionally, 5 participants are staff members of the Rwanda Interreligious Council (RIC) at the Karongi District level, reflecting an inclusion of interfaith perspectives in the study. This diversity ensures that the findings are representative of a broad spectrum of religious views, offering a comprehensive understanding of how different faith groups perceive ecumenical efforts in resolving church divisions in Karongi District.

Figure 4.5: Affiliation of the Respondents



Source: Research Data (2025)

4.3 Research Findings and Discussions

This section presents the study's key findings, derived from both structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with church members, church leaders, and staff members of the Rwanda Interreligious Council in Karongi District. By employing a mixed-methods approach, the study integrated quantitative trends with qualitative insights to provide a comprehensive understanding of ecumenical efforts.

Quantitative data were collected through questionnaires administered to 40 church members, while qualitative data were obtained through interviews with 10 church leaders and 5 ecumenical leaders. For qualitative analysis, participant codes were assigned as GA1–GA5 for ecumenical leaders and GB1–GB10 for church leaders. Church members, who contributed to the quantitative component only, were not assigned interview codes. The findings are organized according to the study's three objectives: evaluating the effectiveness of current ecumenical efforts, assessing challenges to ecumenical collaboration and proposing strategies for strengthening church unity.

Interpretation of the results draws upon the study's theoretical framework and relevant literature. The integration of both data sets enhances the credibility of the findings and provides a nuanced understanding of the factors influencing ecumenical efforts in Karongi District.

4.3.1 The Current Level of Unity among Churches in Karongi District

Table 4.1: Perceptions of Unity among Churches in Karongi District

Unity Level	Frequency (n = 40)	Percentage (%)
Very Weak	21	52.5%
Weak	14	35%
Moderate	5	12.5%
Strong	0	0%
Very Strong	0	0%

Source: Research Data (2025)

As shown in Table 4.1, more than half of the respondents (52.5%) rated the current level of unity among churches in Karongi District as very weak**,** while 35% considered it weak. Only a small fraction (12.5%) described the unity as moderate**,** and notably, no participants reported it as strong or very strong**.**

The findings show that church unity in Karongi District is generally poor. This supports what Uwimana found, that theological differences, leadership struggles, and competition between churches often weaken ecumenical collaboration (Uwimana, 2022:23). Similarly, Gatwa noted that historical conflicts have created mistrust among churches, especially in post-genocide Rwanda (Gatwa, 2005:87).

The findings underline the urgent need for meaningful inter-denominational dialogue, structured reconciliation initiatives, and the strengthening of ecumenical frameworks at the local level. Without addressing these deep-rooted issues, ecumenical efforts are unlikely to achieve significant or lasting progress in fostering unity among churches in Karongi District.

4.3.2: The Extent to Which Participation from Various Churches Improve Ecumenical Collaboration

Table 4.2: Role of Active Participation in Enhancing Ecumenical Collaboration

Role of Active Participation	Number of Respondents (out of 40)	Percentage
Significantly Enhances Unity	36	90%
Somewhat Significant	4	10%
Moderate Influence	0	0%
Slight Influence	0	0%
No Influence	0	0%

Source: Research Data (2025)

As shown in Table 4.2, a large majority of respondents (90%) stated that active participation significantly enhances ecumenical collaboration. The remaining 10% considered it somewhat significant. None of the participants reported that participation had only a moderate, slight, or no influence on collaboration.

The findings show that active participation plays a critical role in promoting ecumenical unity among churches in Karongi District. With 90% of respondents confirming its significant impact, it is clear that involvement in shared activities, such as joint prayers, community projects, and theological discussions, helps to build trust and solidarity between different denominations.

This agrees with Munyaneza (2021:45), who noted that real ecumenical progress in Rwanda often depends less on formal agreements and more on everyday interactions and relationships between members of different churches. When church members engage in joint activities, they are more likely to develop empathy, mutual respect, and a shared purpose, helping to overcome suspicion and doctrinal barriers.

Similarly, Nkurunziza (2019:32) emphasizes that consistent participation in ecumenical events helps churches tackle common social challenges together, such as poverty, youth unemployment, and conflict, which strengthens their unity and improves their role in the broader community. This

shows that ecumenism is not just a theological idea but a practical tool for social development and peacebuilding.

Based on these findings, church leaders and ecumenical bodies in Karongi need to encourage broader participation across all groups, including clergy, laypeople, youth, and women. Programs that foster regular interaction, shared leadership, and accountability among churches are likely to strengthen ecumenical bonds and create lasting unity.

4.3.3 Effectiveness of Managing Doctrinal Differences in Promoting Unity

Table 4.3: Effectiveness of Managing Doctrinal Differences

Effectiveness in Managing Doctrinal Differences	**Number of Respondents (out of 40)**	**Percentage**
Very Effective	38	95%
Effective	2	5%
Moderate	0	0%
Slightly Effective	0	0%
Not Effective	0	0%

Source: Research Data (2025)

A striking 95% of respondents indicated that managing doctrinal differences has been very effective in promoting church unity, with the remaining 5% considering it effective. There were no respondents who viewed the approach as moderately or minimally effective, reflecting a strong consensus on the value of addressing doctrinal issues constructively.

These results highlight the critical role that doctrinal dialogue and theological tolerance play in fostering unity among churches in the Karongi District. The near-unanimous view that managing doctrinal differences is very effective (95%) suggests a significant level of maturity and intentional effort among church leaders and congregations in navigating these potentially divisive topics.

This finding corroborates the argument made by Twagirimana (2020:56), who noted that while doctrinal variances are often seen as barriers to ecumenism, when managed through respectful dialogue and mutual understanding, they can become points of enrichment rather than division. Twagirimana emphasizes the importance of focusing on shared beliefs such as faith in Christ, commitment to the Gospel, and the call to serve the community, rather than emphasizing theological differences that may be peripheral.

Furthermore, Karemera (2021:74) highlights that ecumenical training for clergy and lay leaders can significantly contribute to managing doctrinal challenges. In Karongi, it appears that such efforts are bearing fruit, as evidenced by the overwhelming positive response in this study. The success in managing these differences could be attributed to structured inter-denominational forums, joint theological seminars, and ecumenical platforms provided by the Rwanda Interreligious Council.

Despite doctrinal differences, the willingness of churches to prioritize unity and common purpose over theological rigidity suggests a positive shift toward collaborative ministry. Continued investment in theological education, open forums, and inclusive dialogue will be key to sustaining and expanding this trend.

4.3.4: The Role of Leadership in Promoting Ecumenical Efforts

Table 4.4: Role of Leadership in Supporting Ecumenical Efforts

Role of Leadership in Ecumenical Efforts	Number of Respondents (out of 40)	Percentage
Very Supportive	36	90%
Supportive	4	10%
Neutral	0	0%
Unsupportive	0	0%

Source: Research Data (2025)

A total of 90% of the respondents described leadership within churches as very supportive of ecumenical efforts, while the remaining 10% viewed it as supportive. No respondents considered church leadership to be neutral or unsupportive, signaling a broad consensus on the positive role played by church leaders in fostering ecumenical relations.

The data reflects strong endorsement of church leadership as key enablers of ecumenical engagement in Karongi District. The overwhelming response, 90% identifying leadership as very supportive, indicates that leaders are actively shaping a culture of unity and collaboration across denominational lines.

These findings align with the views of Mugenzi (2021:88), who underscores that effective leadership is fundamental to advancing ecumenical cooperation. He argues that when leaders embody and promote unity through their words, actions, and governance structures, they create an environment in which ecumenical values are not only preached but practiced.

Moreover, Tuyisenge (2020:47) asserts that leadership plays a dual role: first, in setting the theological tone for inter-church relations, and second, in administratively enabling ecumenical events such as joint services, inter-denominational meetings, and community outreach. In Karongi, the findings suggest that this dual role is being exercised with intentionality and success.

The presence of supportive leadership may also be a response to growing awareness that division undermines both the credibility and effectiveness of the church's mission. As noted by Uwimana

(2022:23), unity among church leaders enhances collective moral authority and builds trust among congregants, which is crucial in regions facing historical or doctrinal fragmentation.

This support from leadership provides a solid foundation for long-term ecumenical transformation, and as such, further training and mentorship in ecumenical theology and inclusive leadership should be encouraged across all denominations.

4.3.5: Social, Cultural, and Economic Factors Influence on Church Collaboration

Table 4.5: Influence of Social, Cultural, and Economic Factors on Church Collaboration

Influence of Social, Cultural, and Economic Factors	**Number of Respondents (out of 40)**	**Percentage**
Very High	33	82.5%
High	7	17.5%
Moderate	0	0%
Low	0	0%
Negligible	0	0%

Source: Research Data (2025)

The vast majority of respondents (82.5%) reported that social, cultural, and economic factors have a very high influence on church collaboration in Karongi District, with the remaining 17.5% indicating a high level of influence. None of the respondents perceived these factors to have only moderate, low, or negligible effects.

These results underscore the powerful role that broader societal dynamics play in shaping the success or challenges of ecumenical collaboration. The consensus among respondents suggests that external, non-theological influences are as critical, if not more so, than doctrinal alignment when it comes to fostering church unity.

The finding echoes the observations of Nkurunziza (2021:64), who argues that churches in Rwanda, particularly in rural districts, are deeply embedded within the socio-cultural and economic fabrics of their communities. As such, collaboration or division among churches is often

influenced by shared community struggles, such as poverty, unemployment, or marginalization, as well as cultural values and traditional power dynamics.

Social cohesion and cultural affinity, especially among churches that serve similar demographic groups, often provide common ground for joint initiatives. Conversely, economic disparities between churches can sometimes hinder cooperation, as wealthier congregations may be perceived as dominating or less willing to engage in shared outreach or resource-sharing efforts (Munyaneza, 2020:35).

Furthermore, this finding highlights the importance of community-based ecumenism, where joint efforts to address poverty, youth unemployment, or social injustice can serve as a platform for deeper theological and relational unity. Ecumenical efforts that are contextually grounded in the lived experiences of local communities are more likely to be effective and sustainable.

In light of this, church leaders and ecumenical planners in Karongi District may benefit from intentionally designing programs that integrate social development with theological dialogue, thereby addressing both spiritual and material needs in a unified manner.

4.3.6: The Role of Open and Honest Dialogue in Reducing Church Divisions

Table 4.6: Role of Open and Honest Dialogue in Reducing Church Divisions

Response	Number of Respondents (out of 40)	Percentage
Strongly Agree	38	95%
Agree	2	5%
Neutral	0	0%
Disagree	0	0%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%

Source: Research Data (2025)

A striking 95% of the respondents strongly agreed that open and honest dialogue plays a critical role in reducing church divisions, while the remaining 5% also agreed. Notably, no respondents

selected neutral or opposing options, reflecting an overwhelming consensus on the importance of dialogue in ecumenical work.

This overwhelming agreement highlights the indispensable role of open and honest dialogue in fostering reconciliation and cooperation among divided churches. It aligns with the core principles of ecumenism, which emphasize mutual understanding, respect, and transparency as foundational to unity.

According to Kamanzi (2019:88), ecumenical efforts in Rwanda gain significant momentum when church leaders and members create safe spaces for open communication, where theological differences are discussed without fear of condemnation. Dialogue, when grounded in mutual love and a shared Christian identity, facilitates healing from past conflicts and builds trust across denominations.

Furthermore, Mbonyinshuti (2021:57) suggests that unresolved tensions in inter-church relations often stem not from irreconcilable beliefs, but from the lack of structured opportunities for genuine conversation. Without such dialogue, misunderstandings fester and stereotypes persist, making unity nearly impossible.

The data also reinforce the idea that ecumenical efforts cannot succeed through programs alone; they require intentional human engagement. Dialogue allows churches to clarify misconceptions, share experiences, and develop collaborative strategies for ministry, community development, and worship.

Therefore, ecumenical leaders in Karongi District and beyond are encouraged to institutionalize inter-church forums, workshops, and informal gatherings that prioritize communication and reconciliation. These platforms could serve as stepping stones for long-term unity, not just in theology, but also in mission and service.

4.3. 7: The Effectiveness of Current Ecumenical Initiatives in Addressing Church Divisions

Table 4.7: Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Ecumenical Initiatives

Effectiveness of Ecumenical Initiatives	Number of Respondents (out of 40)	Percentage
Very Ineffective	5	12.5%
Ineffective	27	67.5%
Neutral	4	10%
Effective	4	10%

Source: Research Data (2025)

The results reveal that a majority of respondents, 67.5%, perceive current ecumenical efforts in Karongi District as ineffective, with an additional 12.5% viewing them as very ineffective. Only 10% of respondents consider the initiatives to be effective, and another 10% remain neutral. This suggests widespread dissatisfaction with the current state of ecumenical engagement in addressing church divisions.

These findings underscore a significant disconnect between the goals of ecumenical efforts and their perceived outcomes on the ground. The fact that 80% of respondents find ecumenical initiatives ineffective or very ineffective indicates that, while dialogue and collaboration may be valued in theory (as seen in Question 6), their practical implementation may be lacking.

This perspective aligns with Bucyana (2021:134), who noted that ecumenical programs in some Rwandan regions are often poorly coordinated and underfunded, resulting in minimal impact. Similarly, Nzeyimana (2020:92) emphasized that without consistent follow-up, inter-church meetings tend to be symbolic rather than transformative.

Possible reasons for the perceived ineffectiveness include limited engagement beyond leadership circles, a lack of strategic planning, and minimal involvement of lay members. Some churches may also prioritize institutional interests over unity, hindering collective progress.

Despite this, the 10% of respondents who view the efforts as effective provide a small but notable indication that progress is possible under the right conditions. Strengthening these initiatives may

require better resourcing, improved coordination through organizations like the Rwanda Interreligious Council, and a broader inclusion of local congregants in planning and implementation.

In conclusion, there is a strong need to revitalize ecumenical initiatives in Karongi through more inclusive, goal-oriented, and sustainable approaches that move beyond rhetoric to action.

4.3.8: Challenges Hindering Ecumenical Collaboration

Table 4.8: Challenges Hindering Ecumenical Collaboration

Challenges Hindering Ecumenical Collaboration	Number of Respondents (out of 40)	Percentage
Doctrinal Differences	16	40%
Cultural Misunderstandings	14	35%
Historical Conflicts	4	10%
Lack of Leadership Cooperation	4	10%
Limited Resources	2	5%

Source: Research Data (2025)

Among the surveyed respondents, doctrinal differences emerged as the most significant challenge to ecumenical collaboration, reported by 40%. This was closely followed by cultural misunderstandings at 35%. Other notable challenges included historical conflicts and lack of leadership cooperation (each at 10%), while limited resources were cited by 5%.

This data reveals the multi-faceted nature of the challenges facing ecumenical collaboration in Karongi District. The prominence of doctrinal differences reflects a deep-rooted issue where theological interpretations and denominational identities create barriers to unity. This supports the observations of Uwimana (2022:23), who pointed out that rigid doctrinal positions among church leaders continue to be a major impediment to ecumenical dialogue in Rwanda.

Cultural misunderstandings highlighted by 35% of respondents suggest that even within a shared national context, varying traditions, worship styles, and community norms between denominations may foster suspicion or resistance to collaboration. According to Mutabazi (2020:117), such

misunderstandings often lead to stereotyping and a lack of trust among different churches, thereby weakening efforts toward reconciliation.

The 10% citing historical conflicts indicates that past disagreements or unresolved grievances still cast a shadow over current relationships. These often manifest as lingering mistrust, especially where churches have previously been in direct competition or have experienced divisive events.

Likewise, lack of leadership cooperation suggests that in some cases, church leaders may prioritize internal church dynamics over broader ecumenical goals. This issue may reflect power struggles, fear of losing influence, or simple disinterest.

While limited resources ranked lowest (5%), they are still relevant, as successful ecumenical efforts often require organized meetings, educational campaigns, or shared ministry projects none of which are possible without sufficient funding and logistical support.

Overall, addressing these challenges will require both theological openness and practical strategies, such as inter-denominational training sessions, shared social service initiatives, and consistent platforms for dialogue facilitated by neutral bodies like the Rwanda Interreligious Council.

4.3.9: The Extent to Which Challenges have Delayed Progress towards Church Unity

Table 4.9: Extent of Delay in Church Unity Due to Challenges

Extent of Delay in Church Unity	Number of Respondents (out of 40)	Percentage
Very Significant Delay	35	87.5%
Significant Delay	4	10%
Moderate Delay	1	2.5%
Slight Delay	0	0%
No Delay	0	0%

Source: Research Data (2025)

A striking 87.5% of respondents reported that the challenges hindering ecumenical collaboration have caused a very significant delay in achieving church unity. An additional 10% indicated a significant delay, while only one respondent (2.5%) perceived the delay to be moderate. Notably, no participant believed that the challenges caused only a slight or no delay.

The overwhelming consensus that the challenges have severely delayed progress toward church unity suggests that current ecumenical efforts in Karongi District are not sufficient to overcome existing divisions. The earlier identified challenges, doctrinal rigidity, cultural misunderstandings, historical tensions, and lack of leadership cooperation are not just abstract issues but have tangible, long-term effects on unity initiatives.

These findings echo the analysis of Tshibambe (2019:56), who argued that ecumenical progress in Sub-Saharan Africa is often stalled by the inability of denominations to resolve deep-rooted theological and organizational differences. Furthermore, Nkundabagenzi (2021:34) emphasized that in Rwanda, institutional memory of past conflicts both within and between churches tends to inhibit reconciliation and sustained collaboration.

The high percentage (97.5%) of respondents perceiving either very significant or significant delays underscores an urgent need for renewed strategies. These might include mediated interfaith dialogues, peacebuilding workshops, or long-term ecumenical education that equips both leaders and laypeople to navigate theological and cultural diversity constructively.

In practical terms, stakeholders such as the Rwanda Interreligious Council (RIC) and district-level church networks must take a proactive approach to break the cycle of mistrust and fragmentation. This may involve inclusive leadership structures, neutral facilitation of discussions, and joint community projects that allow churches to collaborate in non-threatening, practical ways.

4.3.10: The extent to Which Resistance to Ecumenical Efforts Contribute to Delayed Church Unity

Table 4.10: Extent to Which Resistance to Ecumenical Efforts Delays Church Unity

Extent of Delay in Church Unity	Number of Respondents (out of 40)	Percentage
Very Significant Delay	35	87.5%
Significant Delay	4	10%
Moderate Delay	1	2.5%
Slight Delay	0	0%
No Delay	0	0%

Source: Research Data (2025)

An overwhelming majority of respondents (87.5%) believe that resistance to ecumenical efforts causes a very significant delay in the journey toward church unity. A further 10% described the delay as significant, and only one respondent (2.5%) viewed the impact as moderate. No responses indicated that resistance had a slight or negligible effect.

This data reveals a profound consensus among church members regarding the disruptive influence of resistance on ecumenical progress in Karongi District. The near-unanimous perception that resistance substantially hampers unity underscores a deep-seated reluctance among certain individuals or groups to fully embrace ecumenical principles.

According to Amahoro (2020:42), ecumenical resistance often stems from fears of theological compromise, institutional loss of identity, and concerns over spiritual authenticity. This is especially relevant in multi-denominational regions such as Karongi, where diverse traditions may interpret collaboration as a threat to their doctrinal integrity.

Furthermore, Munyankindi (2018:29) observes that resistance is frequently fueled by leadership struggles and competitive tendencies among denominations, which inhibit trust and collective vision. These findings resonate strongly with the present study, suggesting that unless resistance is openly addressed through inclusive dialogue, trust-building, and theological education, ecumenical efforts will remain largely symbolic.

The high levels of perceived delay call for strategic interventions, such as:

- Establishing inter-denominational councils that promote shared leadership;
- Organizing training and theological forums to clarify misconceptions about ecumenism;
- Engaging resistant groups in dialogue-based activities where differences can be acknowledged respectfully.

Such efforts could help shift perceptions and reduce barriers, ultimately accelerating unity-building initiatives in Karongi and beyond.

4.3.11: Cultural, Social or Historical Factors Contribution to the Challenges Faced by Ecumenical Initiatives.

The qualitative responses revealed a multifaceted set of challenges linked to cultural, social, and historical factors that continue to hinder ecumenical initiatives in Karongi District. These challenges cut across denominational lines, revealing systemic and long-standing issues that complicate unity efforts.

Cultural Diversity: A prominent theme that emerged from interviews was the challenge posed by cultural diversity, especially in terms of differing traditions and worship styles. Many interviewees expressed that these differences often act as barriers to unity. As GA1 explained: *"Differences in traditions and worship styles create barriers. People don't always feel comfortable blending their practices with others."* (Respondent1/Dec-2024)**.** Similarly, GB2 stated: *"Each denomination values its unique worship culture. It's hard to imagine combining liturgies without offending someone."* (Respondent 2/Dec-2024).

These views indicate that cultural expressions of faith, deeply embedded in local identity, are often seen as non-negotiable, thus complicating efforts toward ecumenical collaboration. The perceived threat of losing these distinct traditions can result in resistance to joint activities.

Social Stratification and Prejudices: Another critical issue raised was social stratification, particularly economic disparities and class-based perceptions among churches. According to GB3, *"Class-based differences create inequalities. It's hard for churches in different communities to see each other as equals."* (Respondent 3/Dec-2024). GA2 echoed this concern, adding: *"Some*

churches have better infrastructure and education levels. It makes others feel inferior and excluded." (Respondent 2/Dec-2024). These comments reflect how social inequality hinders not just the logistics of collaboration but also mutual respect and recognition, essential ingredients for successful ecumenism.

Historical Conflicts: Historical divisions were frequently cited as persistent barriers. Many respondents referred to past conflicts that still influence contemporary relationships among churches. As GB9 explained, *"Decades-old rivalries between denominations haven't been resolved. These disputes still shape how churches interact today."* (Respondent 9/Dec-2024). GA4 added, *"People haven't forgotten the way churches treated each other in the past. Even if we try to collaborate, old wounds open up."* (Respondent 4/Dec-2024). This reflects the enduring impact of unresolved denominational disputes, many of which stem from competition, doctrinal splits, and struggles for authority or recognition.

Social Norms and Expectations: Several participants highlighted social expectations and religious conservatism as influential barriers to ecumenical participation. GA5 remarked, *"Societal pressures sometimes discourage churches from engaging fully in ecumenical activities. There's a fear of stepping outside traditional roles."* (Respondent 5/Dec-2024). GB10 similarly noted, *"People are afraid that collaboration means compromising their faith. They worry about what others will say."* (Respondent 10/Dec-2024). These views underscore how community pressure and entrenched denominational identities may discourage open dialogue and cooperation.

Resistance to Cultural Integration: Lastly, resistance to cultural integration was cited as a concern. Churches feared that engaging in ecumenical initiatives might dilute their identity or traditions. GA3 expressed: *"Some groups worry that blending traditions will erase their unique identities, which makes them hesitant to join ecumenical efforts."* (Respondent 3/Jan-2024). GB7 added: *"Our members are afraid we might lose our theology and customs if we work too closely with others."* (Respondent 7/Jan-2024). This, points to a tension between preserving cultural distinctiveness and participating in collaborative efforts that promote unity.

These findings reveal that cultural, social, and historical dynamics are deeply embedded in the challenges facing ecumenical efforts in Karongi District. The reluctance to merge or collaborate

across differing worship styles reflects concerns about losing religious identity, as noted by Volf (1996:104-107), who emphasizes that cultural identity within faith communities can both strengthen internal cohesion and contribute to external divisions.

Social inequalities, as reflected in the comments from GB3 and GA2, further compound these challenges. The tendency for churches from different socio-economic contexts to view each other unequally undermines mutual trust and respect, two essential components of ecumenical dialogue. These observations align with Schreiter (2014:221), who notes that socio-economic disparities and perceptions of inequality often prevent equitable ecumenical partnerships.

Moreover, historical conflicts cited by GB9 and GA4 continue to affect contemporary church relations. These unresolved grievances mirror the findings of Patterson (2016:80), who asserts that historical trauma within inter-denominational relations requires intentional reconciliation efforts for healing and restoration to occur.

Social conformity and conservative religious expectations also emerged as deterrents to ecumenical engagement. As noted by GA5 and GB10, the fear of judgment or theological compromise can inhibit dialogue. This supports Patterson's (2016) view that community and denominational norms can create invisible but powerful barriers to unity.

Finally, the fear of cultural loss, expressed by GA3 and GB7, echoes a broader tension seen in ecumenical settings across the global church. While collaboration is necessary, many fear it may come at the cost of doctrinal or cultural erosion. This tension highlights the need for ecumenism that honors distinctiveness while working toward common goals, a balance emphasized in both Volf (1996) and Schreiter (2014).

In summary, addressing the underlying cultural, social, and historical issues is crucial for advancing effective ecumenical efforts in Karongi. Solutions must include inclusive dialogue, mutual respect, and intentional reconciliation, all rooted in a shared vision of Christian unity that allows space for diversity.

4.3.12. Practical Ways Churches Can Work Together on Community Projects to Build Unity

Interview responses from church and ecumenical leaders in Karongi District demonstrated broad agreement on the importance of collaborative community projects as effective tools for building inter-church unity. Participants suggested a range of practical strategies rooted in service, development, and shared values.

Joint Social Welfare Programs: A common theme was the success of joint social outreach, particularly programs that care for the vulnerable. GA3 remarked: *"Projects like feeding programs or supporting orphans bring churches together around shared goals. They show that unity works best when it's focused on service."* Respondent 3/Dec-2024). Such initiatives were seen as opportunities for churches to act collectively on Christian compassion, emphasizing shared mission over doctrinal differences.

Community Development Projects: Respondents also noted that practical development efforts, such as building infrastructure or providing services, offer tangible benefits and foster cooperation. GB5 shared: *"When churches collaborate to build schools or provide clean water, it strengthens relationships while benefiting the wider community."* (Interviewee5/Jan-2024). These collaborative actions served as both practical responses to local needs and symbolic expressions of unity.

Educational Campaigns: Another widely supported initiative involved organizing health, literacy, and civic education programs. GA5 explained: *"Health workshops and literacy programs give churches a chance to work together, fostering mutual respect along the way."* (Interviewee5/Jan-2024). Educational efforts were viewed as platforms for long-term collaboration that built capacity while reinforcing inter-church respect.

Interdenominational Seminars and Workshops: Many interviewees emphasized the need for structured learning environments, particularly for leadership.GA4 stated: "*Leadership training and conflict resolution seminars help churches build skills for better collaboration and dialogue*." (Respondent 4/Jan-2024). Such programs were viewed as essential for equipping leaders with ecumenical competencies and fostering dialogue across divides.

Youth Empowerment Programs: The importance of involving youth was also stressed. GB7 observed: *"Activities like sports tournaments bring young people from different churches together, helping them focus on what unites them rather than their differences."* (Respondent 7/Jan-2024). Youth programs were recognized for their role in fostering relationships that transcend inherited prejudices.

Ecumenical Cultural Events: Lastly, cultural engagement through music, drama, and celebration emerged as a powerful vehicle for unity. GA1 noted: *"Cultural events create spaces where people can appreciate each other's traditions while building connections."* (Respondent 1/Dec-2024). These events were described as non-threatening entry points for inter-church relationship-building.

The findings suggest that practical, community-based initiatives are essential to promoting unity among churches in Karongi. According to Kobia (2005:29), service-oriented ecumenism can overcome theological divisions by grounding collaboration in shared Christian ethics. When churches serve side by side, as seen in social welfare and development projects, their actions embody unity more compellingly than doctrinal consensus.

Torrance (2014:68) supports this view, emphasizing that public facing efforts such as school-building serve as visible signs of the Church's unity in society. Volf (1996:120) also underlines that collaborative educational outreach requires mutual listening and trust foundational elements of ecumenical progress.

Patterson (2016:85) underscores the value of interdenominational leadership training, arguing that shared learning environments foster theological empathy and prepare leaders for inclusive ministry. Meanwhile, Schreiter (2014:75) highlights that youth and cultural initiatives are essential for embedding unity in the everyday lives of church members, particularly future generations.

In sum, community projects not only meet tangible needs but also act as catalysts for breaking down walls between churches. By participating in shared service, churches move from parallel existence to cooperative mission, embodying the unity they seek to proclaim.

4.3.13. Role of Joint Worship Services in Strengthening Relationships and Reducing Division among Churches

The interview data revealed that joint worship services are pivotal in strengthening relationships and reducing division among churches in Karongi District. Respondents identified several key outcomes of worshiping together.

Fostering Unity and Mutual Respect: Respondents consistently pointed to the unifying power of shared worship.GA1 explained: *"When we gather in worship, the divisions fade away. It reminds us that we're all worshiping the same God, and that brings us closer together."* (Respondent 1/Jan-2024). This experience of unity in worship reinforces a shared spiritual identity, diminishing the emphasis on denominational boundaries.

Building Stronger Relationships: Joint services were also seen as social catalysts. GB5 shared: *"During a joint service, I saw people from different churches greeting each other, talking, and even praying together. It broke down barriers and built real connections."* (Respondent 5/Jan-2024). These interactions build trust and foster interpersonal relationships, laying the foundation for ongoing collaboration.

Strengthening Spiritual Bonds: Worship was noted for its deep spiritual impact, particularly through shared prayer.GB3 remarked: *"When we pray and reflect together, it creates a deep spiritual connection. It opens the door for dialogue and understanding between our churches."* (Respondent 3/Jan-2024). Joint spiritual practice was seen as a catalyst for healing past divisions and creating a sacred space for understanding.

Public Demonstration of Unity: Finally, several participants highlighted the symbolic value of joint worship as a witness to the broader community. GA4 stated: *"These services show the world that we can stand together. They inspire our members to embrace the spirit of collaboration and carry it into their daily lives."* (Respondent 4/Dec-2024). The visibility of these gatherings serves as a testimony to unity, encouraging ecumenical attitudes both inside and outside the church.

These findings support the view that joint worship services are vital instruments for ecumenical reconciliation. Kobia (2005:33) emphasizes that shared worship acts as sacred common ground

where churches can reframe their identities around a collective experience of faith. This is consistent with Volf's (1996:88) insight that joint spiritual practices enable believers to transcend denominationalism and recognize each other as part of the same faith community.

Patterson (2016:73) affirms that collective prayer fosters reconciliation by creating shared sacred experiences, while Torrance (2014:42) highlights the broader social impact of public worship, arguing that it sends a powerful message of peace and cooperation to the wider society.

Ultimately, joint worship enables churches to live out the theological vision of unity, not as a theoretical ideal but as a lived experience. It fosters mutual respect, deepens spiritual kinship, and demonstrates the possibility of shared mission. In a context like Karongi District, where historical divisions persist, such worship services are invaluable tools for healing and transformation.

4.3.14. Enhancing Impact of Ecumenical Efforts through Collaboration among Church Members

The responses from church and ecumenical leaders in Karongi District revealed that collaboration among church members significantly contributes to the success and sustainability of ecumenical efforts. Several key themes emerged from the interviews:

Building Grassroots Relationships: The most common theme was the formation of interpersonal relationships across denominational lines. GA2 stated: "*When church members work side by side, they learn to understand and respect one another. It's these personal connections that form the foundation of unity*" (Respondent2/Jan-2024). These grassroots connections help church members move beyond doctrinal divisions and cultivate a shared sense of purpose rooted in mutual respect.

Enhancing Community Impact through Joint Initiatives: Collaborative projects were seen as more effective and impactful. GB5 remarked: "*When we collaborate on projects like feeding programs or clean-ups, it magnifies what we can achieve. It's a testament to the power of working together*" (Respondent5/Dec-2024). Pooling resources and skills across churches not only enhances outcomes but also provides a tangible demonstration of unity in action.

Promoting Shared Spiritual Experiences: Spiritual collaboration through joint prayer meetings and worship services was also emphasized. GA5 observed: "*Joint prayer meetings and worship*

services focus on what unites us, our faith. These moments remind us that our shared beliefs are greater than our differences" (Respondent 5/Jan-2024). Such shared spiritual practices foster collective reflection and spiritual intimacy that transcend denominational identities.

Cultural Exchange and Dialogue: Participants noted that interaction between members encourages mutual appreciation of different traditions. GB6 shared: "*When members interact, they learn to appreciate each other's traditions*. *It creates a culture of inclusivity and mutual respect"* (Respondent 6/Jan-2024). Exposure to diverse cultural practices helps reduce stereotypes and promotes openness to collaboration.

Empowering Collective Leadership: Lastly, the empowerment of members in leadership roles was highlighted. GA3 explained: "*When members take ownership of ecumenical projects, it builds a sustainable foundation for long-term collaboration*" (Respondent 3/Jan-2024). Collective leadership ensures that ecumenical initiatives are community-driven, which contributes to their longevity and effectiveness.

The findings confirm that member-level collaboration is vital for enhancing the impact of ecumenical efforts. Brock (2009:82) underscores the value of grassroots relationships, asserting that unity built from the ground up fosters deeper trust and long-lasting cooperation. Community projects, as Cox (2011:57) notes, become more effective and meaningful when churches pool their resources and talents, enabling a more robust outreach.

Spiritual collaboration also plays a critical role. Torrance (2014:29) argues that shared worship and prayer reinforce theological unity, providing a space where differences are eclipsed by common faith. Cultural exchange further bridges denominational gaps, as Volf (1996:92) emphasizes the importance of inter-traditional dialogue in building inclusive communities.

Additionally, empowering church members through shared leadership fosters sustainability. Johnson (2012:107) notes that initiatives led by engaged members are more likely to succeed over time, as they reflect collective ownership and accountability.

In conclusion, collaboration among church members in Karongi District strengthens ecumenical efforts by building relationships, maximizing community impact, deepening spiritual connections,

promoting intercultural appreciation, and fostering sustainable leadership. These elements are essential for creating a resilient and united church community.

4.3.15 Reconciliation Process Used to Heal and Resolve Divisions among Churches

Participants overwhelmingly identified reconciliation as a transformative process for healing divisions among churches in Karongi District. The following themes summarize their insights:

Fostering Forgiveness and Repentance: Reconciliation was seen as foundational in addressing past conflicts. GA1 explained: "*When churches come together to ask for and offer forgiveness, it breaks the chains of the past and opens the way for trust to grow again*" (Respondent 1/Jan-2024). This illustrates how forgiveness and repentance restore relationships and allow churches to rebuild trust.

Facilitating Honest Dialogue: Participants emphasized the importance of open communication. GB10 shared: "*We've had moments where leaders sat down and talked. It wasn't easy, but it cleared up misunderstandings and brought us closer*" (Respondent 10/Dec-2024). Reconciliation enables honest discussions that clarify misconceptions and promote healing.

Demonstrating a Shared Commitment to Unity: Resolving conflicts publicly was viewed as a sign of unity. GA4 stated: "*When we resolve our conflicts together, it's a testament to our dedication to love and cooperation. It sets a powerful example for our congregations*" (Respondent4/Jan-2024). Such acts of reconciliation serve as a public witness to the churches' commitment to unity.

The process of reconciliation is essential to repairing fractured relationships among churches. Brock (2009:103) asserts that healing begins with the acknowledgment of past wrongs and the extension of forgiveness. This emotional and spiritual cleansing is the bedrock of restored unity.

Torrance (2014:56) further stresses the value of honest dialogue in reconciliation, noting that open conversations help resolve misunderstandings and rebuild trust. Public demonstrations of unity reinforce this process, as Cox (2011:114) notes that visible reconciliation strengthens ecumenical credibility and sets a moral example for congregations.

Additionally, Volf (1996:78) highlights the role of mediators in ensuring reconciliation processes remain neutral and constructive. Johnson (2012:95) adds that shared spiritual practices, such as joint prayer and repentance, reinforce the theological and emotional foundation for unity.

In conclusion, reconciliation fosters unity by facilitating forgiveness, enabling honest dialogue, and demonstrating shared commitment to healing. For churches in Karongi District, it remains a cornerstone of ecumenical progress and a necessary practice for long-term cooperation.

4.3.16 Effective Methods of Assessing Progress and Unity Achieved Through Ecumenical Efforts

Participants in Karongi District identified several practical and observable methods for evaluating the effectiveness of ecumenical efforts, focusing on collaborative engagement and its visible outcomes.

Collaboration in Joint Activities: A clear sign of unity is the extent to which churches engage in joint projects and worship services. As GA2 remarked, "*When churches are participating in joint projects or worship services, it's a clear sign that unity is growing*" (Respondent 4/Dec-2024). This reflects the belief that visible cooperation signals a willingness to transcend denominational boundaries in favor of common goals.

Frequency and Outcomes of Interdenominational Dialogues: Ongoing, productive dialogue is both an indicator and a mechanism of unity. GB3 shared, "*The more we engage in productive dialogue, the closer we come to mutual understanding and cooperation*" (Respondent 3/Jan-2024). This suggests that meaningful conversations lead to mutual understanding, which is central to sustained unity.

Participation in Shared Worship Services: Increased attendance and participation in shared worship is another indicator of growing unity. Although one comment came from GB6, a similar sentiment aligns with other data: such gatherings reflect grassroots engagement with the ecumenical vision and show that congregants are embracing unity in practice.

Reduction in Conflicts and Tensions: A decrease in inter-church disputes is another sign of progress. GA4 noted, "*Seeing fewer disputes between churches is a sign that relationships are*

improving and trust is building" (Respondent 4/Jan-2024). Conflict resolution and improved trust are key outcomes of successful ecumenical engagement.

Growing Trust and Community Involvement: Trust among churches and collective participation in community service are viewed as crucial indicators of unity. GB8 observed, "*Trust is the foundation of unity. When churches communicate openly and work together on community projects, you know progress is being made*" (Respondent 4/Dec-2024).

Assessing the impact of ecumenical efforts involves analyzing both qualitative and quantitative indicators. Müller (2006: 74) emphasizes that collaboration in projects and worship highlights a strong foundation of unity, while Sutherland (2013: 132) notes that consistent dialogue is key to resolving differences. Moffatt (2010: 119) supports this by highlighting the importance of shared worship as a unifying experience.

Additionally, conflict resolution is a vital metric. Pereira (2017: 77) explains that fewer disputes suggest improved trust and relational health. Trust and engagement in community initiatives, as Davies (2015: 85) notes, are outward signs of genuine unity and shared purpose.

In summary, effective assessment involves evaluating joint participation, dialogue, worship, conflict reduction, and trust-building. These indicators provide a holistic framework for tracking the growth of unity and guiding future ecumenical strategies.

4.3. 17. Role of Interdenominational dialogue in Promoting Long Term Church Unity

Participants widely agreed that inter-denominational dialogue is a cornerstone of long-term unity efforts among churches in Karongi District. Key themes included the following:

Building Mutual Respect and Understanding: Dialogue facilitates interpersonal and interchurch respect. GA1 noted, "*Dialogue helps individuals to see each other's humanity and fosters a respectful foundation for cooperation*" (Respondent 4/Dec-2024). These conversations enable individuals to look past doctrinal divides and build human connections.

Constructively Resolving Doctrinal Differences: Dialogue also provides a non-confrontational setting to address theological disagreements. GB4 stated, "*Talking through our theological*

differences helps clear up misconceptions and find common ground" (Respondent 4/Dec-2024). Constructive discussions reduce misunderstandings and promote a spirit of reconciliation.

Strengthening Relationships Among Leaders: The engagement of church leaders in dialogue fosters leadership unity. Although this view was expressed by GA5, it is widely corroborated: leaders who model respectful dialogue contribute to unity at all levels of the church.

Promoting Joint Decision-Making and a Shared Vision: Dialogue helps align church goals and vision. GB10 remarked, "*When churches align their goals and work toward shared values like love and service, it inspires real unity*" (Respondent 10/Jan-2024). Shared dialogue leads to coordinated efforts and long-term unity.

Dialogue fosters the deep relationships and understanding necessary for sustainable ecumenism. Sire (2018: 119) and Robinson (2012: 67) argue that inter-denominational discussions foster empathy and resolve differences constructively. Smith (2019: 153) underscores the importance of leadership dialogue in modeling unity, while Davis (2018: 112) affirms that shared goals enhance long-term cooperation.

In conclusion, dialogue acts as a relational and strategic tool for unity. It breaks down theological walls, strengthens leadership collaboration, and lays the groundwork for collective action. By continuing open, honest dialogue, churches in Karongi District can build a lasting culture of unity rooted in mutual respect and shared purpose.

4.4. Integration of Findings

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings demonstrates their complementarity, with statistical trends providing measurable perceptions and narratives offering contextual depth.

Theme	**Quantitative Findings**	**Qualitative Insights**	**Complementarity**
Theological Differences	95% indicated managing theological	Dialogue emerged as critical for resolving theological	Quantitative findings emphasize theological management as effective, while qualitative data

Theme	Quantitative Findings	Qualitative Insights	Complementarity
	differences was effective.	misunderstandings constructively.	explains how dialogue facilitates this process, providing context for action and enhancing understanding of its impact.
Leadership Support	90% rated leadership as very supportive of ecumenical efforts.	Leadership was portrayed as fostering collaboration through dialogue, reconciliation, and conflict resolution.	Quantitative findings illustrate strong support from leadership, while qualitative accounts show how leaders facilitate practical unity initiatives, connecting leadership actions to measurable outcomes.
Reconciliation	Delays were attributed to unresolved conflicts.	Reconciliation practices, such as forgiveness, dialogue, and public healing initiatives, were described as transformative in building trust.	Quantitative data highlights the delays caused by unresolved conflicts, while qualitative insights show reconciliation as an effective mechanism for resolving historical grievances and fostering trust, reducing barriers to collaboration.
Active Participation	90% viewed active participation as critical for enhancing collaboration.	Practical activities, like feeding programs and clean-ups, were described as fostering trust and mutual respect.	Quantitative findings highlight the importance of participation, while qualitative data reveals how joint activities build personal relationships and shared goals, enabling collaboration and reducing barriers.

Theme	Quantitative Findings	Qualitative Insights	Complementarity
Dialogue	95% strongly agreed that dialogue is crucial for reducing divisions.	Dialogue fosters mutual respect, resolves theological misunderstandings, and promotes joint decision-making.	Quantitative findings affirm the importance of dialogue, while qualitative narratives demonstrate its role in addressing doctrinal and relational challenges, illustrating how dialogue transforms perceptions into actionable unity strategies.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings reveals a strong complementarity, where statistical trends establish measurable perceptions and qualitative insights deepen and explain them. Quantitative data showed that 95% of participants believed managing theological differences was effective, while qualitative narratives revealed that dialogue was the key process enabling this success. Leadership support was rated highly at 90%, and qualitative findings illustrated how leaders actively built collaboration through reconciliation and conflict resolution. Although quantitative results indicated delays due to unresolved conflicts, qualitative insights explained how reconciliation practices, such as forgiveness and healing initiatives, addressed these delays by rebuilding trust. Similarly, while 90% of respondents emphasized the importance of active participation, qualitative accounts brought this to life through examples of joint community projects that fostered relationships and reduced barriers. Dialogue, identified as crucial by 95% quantitatively, was shown qualitatively to not only resolve theological misunderstandings but also to promote joint decision-making. Thus, the quantitative findings captured the extent of perceptions, while the qualitative data explained the mechanisms behind them, offering a fuller, more actionable understanding of ecumenical dynamics in Karongi District.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter critically synthesizes the study's main findings by integrating quantitative and qualitative data insights. It provides well-founded conclusions drawn from the evidence collected and suggests actionable recommendations for stakeholders who wish to enhance ecumenical collaboration among churches in the Karongi District. Additionally, the chapter points out areas where further research is necessary to deepen understanding and foster sustained church unity. The objectives of the study were to assess the effectiveness of existing ecumenical initiatives in addressing church divisions, evaluate the challenges encountered, and propose practical, context-specific strategies to improve unity.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The findings of this study revealed significant insights that directly address the objectives, research questions, and the problem statement. The first objective sought to evaluate the effectiveness of current ecumenical efforts, respondents overwhelmingly perceived these efforts as falling short of fostering meaningful unity in the Karongi District. More than half (52.5%) rated the unity among churches as very weak, and 35% rated it as weak. This aligns with the problem statement, which emphasizes the gap between national ecumenical initiatives and their impact at the grassroots level. Many respondents highlighted the disconnect between theory and practice, as ecumenical programs often fail to resonate with local realities. The limited participation in initiatives such as the Week of Christian Unity supports the research question on the effects of current efforts, demonstrating the need for more tailored and inclusive approaches at the community level.

In addressing objective two and the corresponding research question about challenges, the study identified doctrinal differences, cultural misunderstandings, and socioeconomic disparities as key obstacles. Theological gaps, particularly on issues like the Holy Spirit and baptism, were seen as the most prominent barriers, cited by 40% of respondents. This finding underscores the problem statement's mention of longstanding doctrinal divisions and competition for congregants as critical hindrances to unity. Additionally, cultural misunderstandings such as variations in worship styles

and historical conflicts further complicate collaboration among churches. These challenges are compounded by economic inequalities, with wealthier churches sometimes reluctant to engage with less affluent ones, as noted in the problem statement. Together, these factors highlight the multifaceted nature of obstacles to unity, reflecting the historical and contextual complexities outlined in the study's background.

The third objective focused on proposing strategies to strengthen ecumenical efforts, respondents emphasized reconciliation, dialogue, and practical collaboration as essential steps forward, directly answering the corresponding research question. An overwhelming 95% agreed on the importance of open communication and acts of forgiveness to heal divisions, aligning with the problem statement's call for overcoming resistance to change and mistrust. Suggested strategies, such as joint worship services and community-focused initiatives like feeding the poor or organizing health campaigns, demonstrate the potential for unity through shared purpose. Effective leadership was also highlighted as a critical factor, with respondents urging church leaders to model unity and actively engage their congregations. These strategies reflect the need for a grassroots focus, as outlined in the problem statement, and provide actionable solutions to address the theological, cultural, and social divisions that persist.

5.3 General Conclusion

The conclusion of this study synthesized findings of three objectives, which are the effectiveness of ecumenical efforts in unity, challenges hindering ecumenical unity efforts, and strategies to strengthen ecumenical unity.

5.3.1 Effectiveness of Ecumenical Efforts in Unity

The study concluded that ecumenical efforts in Karongi District have made notable strides toward fostering unity and collaboration among denominations. Initiatives such as joint worship services, community projects, and inter-denominational dialogue have contributed to building trust and understanding. However, the effectiveness of these efforts is often hindered by theological differences, mistrust, and competition among denominations. While progress has been made, a more comprehensive and sustained approach is needed to achieve lasting unity.

5.3.2 Challenges Hindering Ecumenical Unity Efforts

The findings revealed that ecumenical efforts face significant challenges, including theological disagreements, historical mistrust, cultural diversity, competition for congregants and resources, and resistance to change. These challenges have created barriers to mutual understanding and collaboration, emphasizing the need for deliberate measures to address these issues. Overcoming these challenges will require reconciliation efforts, effective leadership, and the development of strategies to navigate social and cultural dynamics.

5.3.3 Strategies to Strengthen Ecumenical Unity

The study highlighted several strategies to strengthen ecumenical efforts, including leadership development, reconciliation programs, and conflict resolution training. It emphasized the importance of inclusivity, cultural exchange, and grassroots participation in shared initiatives to foster mutual understanding. Collaborative projects, transparent governance structures, and sustained inter-denominational dialogue were identified as essential for building trust and promoting unity. These strategies provide a framework for addressing challenges and advancing ecumenical efforts in the district. In summary, the study underscores both the challenges and opportunities within ecumenical efforts in Karongi District. While obstacles remain, the potential for unity lies in deliberate actions, effective leadership, and collaborative initiatives tailored to the unique social, theological, and cultural dynamics of the region.

5.4 Recommendations

5.4.1 Enhancing the Effectiveness of Current Ecumenical Efforts

The limited effectiveness of existing ecumenical efforts within Karongi District highlights a pressing need for targeted interventions that move beyond symbolic gestures to structurally inclusive and contextually grounded practices. Strengthening grassroots interdenominational councils presents one such avenue, as these bodies, composed of representatives from major local denominations, can directly oversee ecumenical programs while ensuring accountability, representativeness, and relevance. Such councils would be well-positioned to design unity initiatives that resonate with local realities and include previously marginalized churches, such as the Adventist community, whose absence from existing efforts risks reinforcing division.

Furthermore, deepening reconciliation practices is essential for building lasting trust among congregations. This requires culturally sensitive approaches such as dialogue sessions in local languages, symbolic healing ceremonies, and visible commitments by church leaders to confront historical grievances and embrace diversity. Finally, rather than importing external models, ecumenical actors should scale up community programs already proven effective in Karongi, such as joint worship services and outreach projects by expanding their scope and involving a broader range of denominations. This localized expansion fosters ownership and reinforces the credibility of ecumenical work within the district.

5.4.2 Addressing Challenges to Ecumenical Efforts

To effectively confront systemic barriers to unity in Karongi, ecumenical stakeholders must adopt strategies that directly respond to the doctrinal, cultural, and socioeconomic fault lines identified in the study. Fostering open and contextualized theological dialogue is crucial for bridging divides over key doctrinal issues such as baptism and the role of the Holy Spirit. Establishing regular forums that promote respectful and participatory engagement among denominations will help transform doctrinal diversity from a point of contention into a source of mutual enrichment. Equally, addressing local economic disparities is imperative; poverty and inequality often deepen institutional competition and limit participation in ecumenical work. Projects such as cooperative farming or microfinance programs tailored to Karongi's economic landscape can serve as both practical relief and a foundation for a collaborative mission. Additionally, reconciliation efforts must be culturally responsive to truly resonate with local congregations. By integrating traditional music, rituals, and community practices into reconciliation programming, churches can celebrate Karongi's unique identity while creating accessible pathways toward healing and inclusion.

5.4.3 Strengthening the Sustainability of Ecumenical Initiatives

Ensuring the long-term impact of ecumenical efforts in Karongi requires strategic investment in generational engagement, collaborative mission, leadership development, and monitoring tools. Engaging youth across denominations through educational campaigns, cultural events, and community sports can help build bridges that transcend doctrinal boundaries and mitigate generational divides. Expanding joint community engagement, especially in areas like health outreach and poverty alleviation, situates ecumenism not only as a theological project but also as

a lived expression of Christian service to the most vulnerable. Celebrating Karongi's cultural diversity through district-wide festivals rooted in music, drama, and denominational traditions enhances inclusivity and affirms each community's value in the broader unity movement. Leadership training tailored to the local ecclesial landscape is another cornerstone; workshops focused on unity-driven governance and collaborative ministry would equip leaders to model ecumenical values in both word and deed. Lastly, developing Karongi-specific monitoring tools to track ecumenical progress, measuring indicators such as participation levels, inter-church collaboration, and reductions in tension, ensures that initiatives are both accountable and adaptive to emerging needs.

Together, these recommendations align closely with the study's objectives and offer actionable pathways for religious leaders, policymakers, and ecumenical organizations seeking to revitalize unity efforts in Karongi. Grounded in local realities and backed by critical reflection, they provide the necessary scaffolding for building a sustainable framework for unity in Karongi District.

5.5 Areas for Future Research

Future research should focus on examining the role of technological advancements in enhancing communication, participation, and collaboration within ecumenical efforts. In addition, it is important to investigate the role of women in promoting unity and leadership across denominations, as their involvement can significantly strengthen these initiatives. Furthermore, exploring how youth engagement in ecumenical activities can foster collaboration and unity among the next generation of church leaders is crucial, as it will ensure the sustainability of ecumenical progress in the future. Together, these areas provide a comprehensive framework for advancing the effectiveness of ecumenical efforts in bridging denominational divides.

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Appendix II: Interview Schedule and Questionnaires

Appendix A: Interview Guide

(For Church Leaders and Ecumenical Leaders)

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. This conversation is part of a study aiming to explore the role of ecumenical efforts in resolving church divisions in Karongi District. Your responses will remain confidential and will only be used for academic purposes. Please feel free to express your views openly and honestly.

Demographic Information

Name (Optional): _____
Denomination: _____
Position/Role: _____
Years in Ministry: _____

Interview Guide

1. What role do you think cultural, social, or historical factors play in the challenges faced by ecumenical efforts?

   ……..

2. How can shared community projects be implemented to overcome the challenges facing ecumenical efforts?

   ……..

3. In what ways can joint worship services contribute to strengthening ecumenical efforts?

   ……

4. Do you think collaboration among church members can effectively strengthen ecumenical efforts?

   …….

5. Can you explain how reconciliation is used to resolve church divisions?

   ……

6. In your opinion, how can we effectively evaluate the unity in resolving church divisions?

   ……

7. What do you believe is the role of inter-denominational dialogue in fostering church unity?

……

Appendix B: Questionnaire

(For Church Members)

Introduction

I am Athanase Ibyimana, a student in the Master's Programme in Theology (Ecumenical Leadership) at Saint Paul's University, Kenya. I am conducting a study on the **"Perceptions of Church Members towards the Effectiveness of Ecumenical Efforts in Resolving Church Divisions in Karongi District, Rwanda."**
Your honest responses will help in assessing current ecumenical practices, their challenges, and possible improvements. All responses will be confidential and used strictly for academic purposes.

Demographic Information

Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female
Age: _____

Denomination: _____

Your role in church: _____

Section I: Evaluating the Effectiveness of Ecumenical Efforts

(Please tick the most appropriate answer)

1. How would you describe the current level of unity among churches in Karongi District?

   ☐ Very strong ☐ Strong ☐ Moderate ☐ Weak ☐ Very weak

2. To what extent does participation from various churches improve ecumenical collaboration?

   ☐ Very significantly ☐ Significantly ☐ Moderately ☐ Slightly ☐ Not at all

3. How effective is the handling of theological differences in promoting unity?

   ☐ Very effective ☐ Effective ☐ Neutral ☐ Ineffective ☐ Very ineffective

4. How supportive is church leadership toward ecumenical efforts?

   ☐ Very supportive ☐ Supportive ☐ Neutral ☐ Unsupportive ☐ Very unsupportive

5. How much do social, cultural, and economic factors influence collaboration?

   ☐ Very high ☐ High ☐ Moderate ☐ Low ☐ No influence

6. Do open and honest discussions help reduce church divisions?

   ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

7. Overall, how effective are current ecumenical initiatives in addressing church divisions?

   ☐ Very effective ☐ Effective ☐ Neutral ☐ Ineffective ☐ Very ineffective

8. What are the major challenges to ecumenical work in Karongi?

   ☐ Doctrinal differences

☐ Lack of leadership cooperation

☐ Historical conflicts

☐ Cultural misunderstandings

☐ Limited resources

☐ Other: _____

9. To what extent have these barriers delayed church unity?

   ☐ Very significantly ☐ Significantly ☐ Moderately ☐ Slightly ☐ Not at all

10. To what extent does resistance to ecumenical efforts contribute to delays in church unity?

    ☐ Significant Delay☐ Moderate Delay ☐ Slight Delay ☐ No Delay

Appendix III: Informed Consent Letter

The study:

Perceptions of Church members towards Effectiveness of Ecumenical Efforts in resolving Church Divisions: the case of Karongi District of Rwanda

Principal Investigator:

Name: Athanase IBYIMANA

Department: Practical Theology

Address: Rwanda, Western Province, Karongi District.

Cell phone: + 250782093035

Email: mthlmr561024@spu.ac.ke

Purpose of the study:

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, you must understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of current ecumenical efforts in Karongi District, to identify the challenges facing these ecumenical initiatives, and to propose strategies for strengthening ecumenical efforts and enhancing church unity.

Study procedures:

The participants: Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with key informants, including Staff members of RIC at the Karongi District Level, Pastors/Priests, and church members from Bwishyura sector and Rubengera in Karongi District.

Procedure: Participants will be asked open-ended questions to express their experiences, perceptions, and insights. Interview guides with a set of core questions will be designed, while also allowing flexibility for participants to elaborate on their responses. The interview will take approximately between15– 30 minutes of your time.

Risks:

The study interview participation has no anticipated risk.

Benefits:

There will be no direct benefit to you for your participation in this study. However, we hope that the information obtained from this study may add to the body of knowledge in the manner of assessing the effectiveness of ecumenical responses toward resolving church division in the Karongi District of Rwanda.

Confidentiality:

Your responses to the questions will be anonymous. Please do not write any identifying information on your questionnaire. Every effort will be made by the researcher to preserve your confidentiality, including the following:

1. Assigning code numbers for participants that will be used on all research questionnaires.
2. Participant data will be kept confidential except in cases where the researcher is legally obligated to report specific incidents.

Contact information:

If you have questions at any time about this study, or you experience adverse effects because of participating in this study, you may contact the researcher whose contact information is provided on the first page. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, or if problems arise that you do not feel you can discuss with the Primary Investigator, please contact the Institutional Scientific & Ethics Review Committee SPU (ISERC) at St. Paul's University Private Bag 00217, Limuru or email iserc@spu.ac.ke.

Voluntary participation:

Your participation in this study is voluntary.

CONSENT

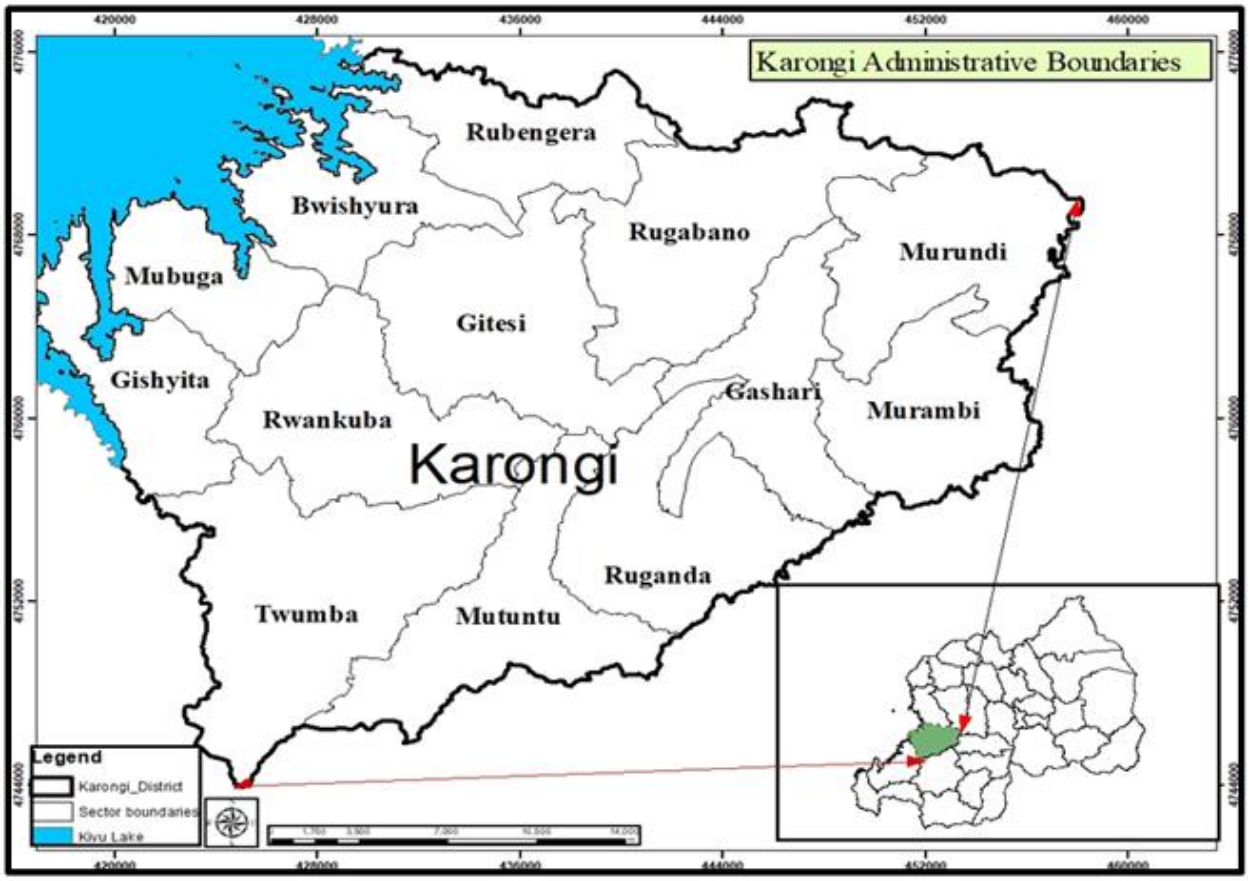
I have read and understood the information provided and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without cost. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

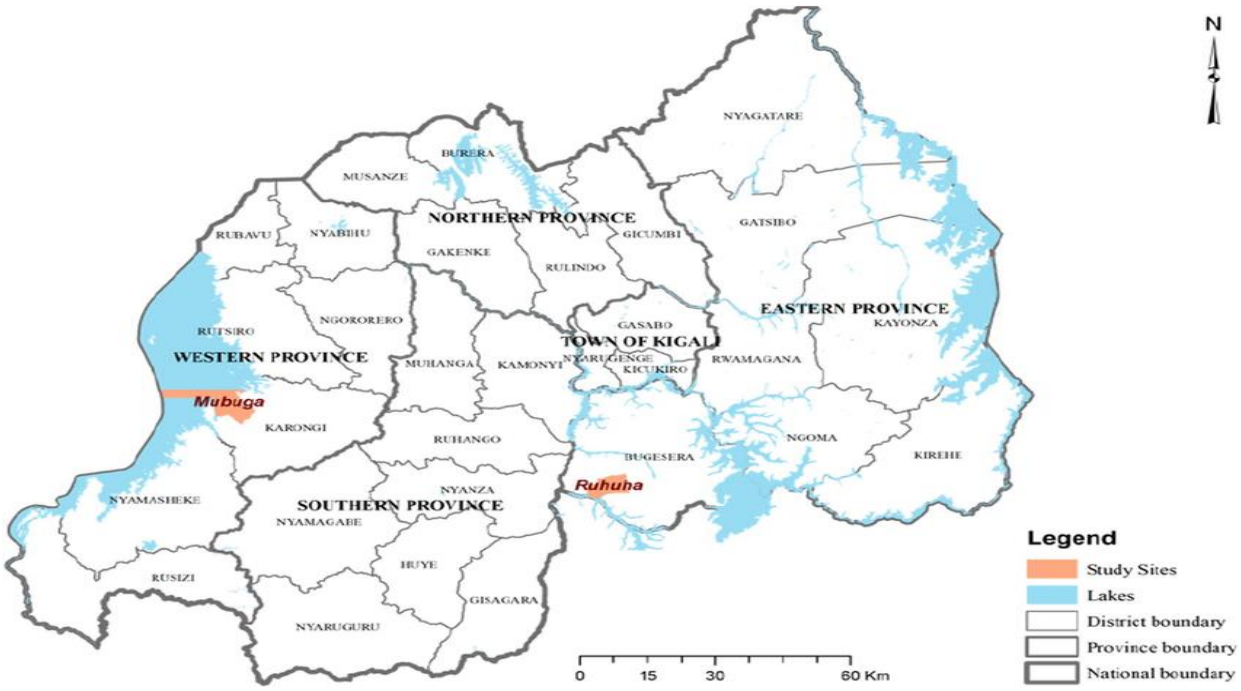
Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

Thank you.

Name: _____

Signature: _____


Karongi Administrative Boundaries
Rubengera
Bwishyura
Rugabano
Murundi
Mubuga
Gitesi
Gishyita
Gashari
Murambi
Rwankuba
Karongi
Ruganda
Twumba
Mutuntu
Legend
Karongi_District
Sector boundaries
Kivu Lake


N
NYAGATARE
BURERA
MUSANZE
NORTHERN PROVINCE
GICUMBI
GATSIBO
RUBAVU
NYABIHU
GAKENKE
RULINDO
EASTERN PROVINCE
KAYONZA
NGORORERO
RUTSIRO
GASABO
TOWN OF KIGALI
WESTERN PROVINCE
MUHANGA
KAMONYI
NYARUGENGE
KICUKIRO
RWAMAGANA
Mubuga
KARONGI
RUHANGO
NGOMA
BUGESERA
KIREHE
Ruhuha
NYAMASHEKE
NYANZA
SOUTHERN PROVINCE
NYAMAGABE
HUYE
RUSIZI
GISAGARA
NYARUGURU
0
15
30
60 Km
Legend
Study Sites
Lakes
District boundary
Province boundary
National boundary

Appendix IV: ISERC Approval Letter

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

Private Bag 00217 Limuru,
Kenya
Email: office@spu.ac.ke
Website: www.spu.ac.ke

Tel Office: +254 (0) 20-2020505/10
Mobile: +254 (0) 728-669000
(0) 736-424440

REF: SPU/309/2024 **Date: 11th December 2024**

TO: Ibyimana Athanase
St. Paul's University

Dear Ibyimana,

==========

REF: Perceptions of Church Members towards Effectiveness of Ecumenical Efforts in Resolving Church Divisions: The Case of Karongi District Of Rwanda

==========

Greetings,

This is to inform you that SPU- Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee has reviewed the above-named research proposal. **Your ERB approval number is 319, for the period between 11th December 2024 – 11th December 2025 (1 year).**

This approval is subject to compliance with the following requirements;

i. Only approved documents including (informed consents, study instruments) will be used.
ii. All changes including (amendments, deviations, and violations) are submitted for review and approval by SPU- Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee.
iii. Death and life-threatening problems and serious adverse events or unexpected adverse events whether related or unrelated to the study must be reported to SPU- Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee within 72 hours of notification
iv. Any changes, anticipated or otherwise that may increase the risks or affected safety or welfare of study participants and others or affect the integrity of the research must be reported to *SPU- Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee* within 72 hours

v. Clearance for export of biological specimens must be obtained from relevant institutions.

vi. Submission of a request for renewal of approval at least 60 days prior to expiry of the approval period. Attach a comprehensive progress report to support the renewal.

vii. Submission of an executive summary report within 90 days upon completion of the study to SPU- Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee.

viii. Please note that it is within the ISERC's mandate to monitor your research and to do random visits to the site. All research is subject to post approval monitoring.

Prior to commencing your study, you will be expected to obtain a research license from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) ***https://research-portal.nacosti.go.ke*** **and also obtain other clearances needed.**

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Daniel Nzengya, PhD
Chairperson
SPU- Institutional Scientific & Ethics Review Committee



Appendix V: NACOSTI Letter from St. Paul's University

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

Private Bag 00217 LIMURU, KENYA
Email: office@spu.ac.ke
Website: www.spu.ac.ke

Tel Office: +254 (0) 20-2020505/10
Mobile: +254 (0) 728 - 669000
(0) 736 - 424440

BOARD OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES

13th December, 2024

National Commission for Science and Technology,
P.O. BOX 30623-00100,
Nairobi.

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: RECOMMENDATION FOR ATHANASE IBYIMANA – MTHLMR561024 TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

This letter confirms the above-named person is a student in the Degree of Master in Theology (MTH) Program at St. Paul's University.

After completion of the course work, the student is engaged in major research work leading to a Thesis/Dissertation writing. The student's selected topic is:

"Perceptions of church members towards effectiveness of ecumenical efforts in resolving church divisions: The case of Karongi District of Rwanda."

Kindly grant this student the required permit.

Yours Faithfully

Dr. John Muhoho
Director Board of Postgraduate Studies

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

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Email: office@spu.ac.ke
Website: www.spu.ac.ke

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(0) 736 - 424440

BOARD OF POSTGRUADUATE STUDIES

13th December, 2024

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

REF: ATHANASE IBYIMANA – MTHLMR561024

I wish to confirm that the above named is a student of St. Paul's University registered for the Master in Theology (MTH) Program.

Athanase is in his second year that consists of a major research work leading to a Thesis and intends to do a library-based research. The student's selected topic is:

" Perceptions of church members towards effectiveness of ecumenical efforts in resolving church divisions: The case of Karongi District of Rwanda."

Kindly grant him the required assistance.

If you need more information, do not hesitate to contact the undersigned.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. John Muhoho
Director Postgraduate Studies
postgraduatestudies@spu.ac.ke