
The Causes and Outcomes of Women Restricted Involvement in Leadership Roles in The Nigerian Baptist Convention (NBC)

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the causes and outcomes of women restricted involvement in the leadership roles in the Nigerian Baptist Convention. The Baptist believes and preaches religion without gender barriers, because Baptist allows women to answer the call into the pastorate and ordain them as well. However, there is significant existence of marginalization of women pastors, especially in leadership positions. This no doubt is as a result of some Bible passages that have been misconstrued and used in support for gender inequality and cultural discrepancy. However, the paper argues that some of the Bible passages used for the support are out of context and there is need for proper interpretation being conscious of the different genders. This study employed descriptive survey method and the theoretical framework considered is the social construction theory which builds on the claim that people's assumptions, perceptions, and practices with social phenomenon develop within the matrix of a social context with what is generally accepted as socially valid claims. Hence, social realities are fluid and susceptible to changes as time goes on. Hence, to effectively do this, the church and specifically the Nigerian Baptist Convention need to reinterpret scriptures appropriately in line with present day realities as regards women participation and election or appointment of officers should be based on qualifications and not gender.

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INTRODUCTION

Leadership at all spheres of life has always been a challenge because of its complexity of getting the right leaders, the views of people and style of leadership. However, leadership is supposed to be opened to everyone depending on their qualifications to an aspect of leadership needed, yet there are certain restrain because of some cultural and religious views.

By God's creation, everyone has the potential to leadership dependent on the right enabling environment available to them. Beginning from how the child is treated from the home, good education and encouragement from the teachings of the church who makes believers to belief that all humans are created by God, there is no discrimination of persons and that everyone is equal before God. It is good to note that there is a lot of improvement in women's involvement in leadership in every aspect of life including the church, particularly the Baptist denomination. There are fully ordained female Baptist ministers who head Baptist churches as well as denominational theological institutions. Baptist women have the opportunity of rising to a professorship in theological education and are allowed to serve in any capacity within the Baptist Association, Conference, and the Nigerian Baptist Convention. But even though female Baptist ministers are not disallowed by any formal denominational documents or charter from holding leadership roles, yet, obviously they are absent from the apex power structures of the churches, which could be described as practically male-dominated. Because according to Ayokunle (2014), "this is more in principle than it is a matter of practice" as some Baptists still frown at the theological training of women whose divine calls are not in doubt.

Since the inception of the church, the role of women has been a hotly contested issue. Seeking to arrive at a consensus on what exactly the role of women should be in the church, the opinions of theologians, clergy and laymen significantly differ. Whether in mainstream Orthodoxy, the Roman Catholic, or any of the other Christian denominations, the issue is still a contention. Scholars are divided on this issue, with some acknowledging the classlessness taught in the Gospel, while others insist on relegating women to subservient roles in the church, mostly leaning on some controversial Pauline views on the matter and using some wrong cultural foundations. These structures provide some support to male dominance over women in society and the church. Although there appear to be some corrections of this anomaly, the overall picture is that women's leadership role in the church is largely subordinate to that of male.

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This is significantly observed among the Baptists who preach gender equality in principle but promote inequality in practice. There is a disparity in terms of preference and treatment of male Pastors to female ministers. The pendulum usually swings in favour of male ministers as if female ministers do not have the same level of calling and grace for ministry. In the Nigerian Baptist setting, there is lack of equity in the preference and treatment of male to female ministers in terms of church pastorate, theological education, and remuneration. While a good number of them are not allowed to be the substantive (or Senior) Pastor of the church, those who are lucky to be called into the pastorate are not treated with respect deserving of their calling. The leadership level they can generally reach is limited to children, teenage, youth, and education ministries of the church. Their sphere of authority also resides within the framework of the women's union of the church. Female Pastors can only be found to be the substantive Pastor in churches that can hardly pay their salaries and allowances or places the men rejects to go. This local church experience appears to be carried over to the Association, Conference, and Convention respectively. There is hardly any Association and Conference of the Nigerian Baptist Convention (NBC) where a female Pastor is the Moderator or Conference President respectively. Since its inception, no female Pastor has been the NBC President.

This experience has left many female Pastors in regrets for joining the ministry due to improper treatment meted out to them. They find themselves not exercising their divine calling and gifts to the fullest. They feel inferior and unfortunate, and always consider male Pastors luckier than they are. Prospective female Pastors either drop out of training or reject the call in total disobedience to God. Those who accepted the call and have completed their training are forced to look for other means of survival since they do not want to completely abdicate the calling of God on them.

This has resorted to murmuring and background complaints by the female ministers and many more females who felt called are afraid of answering the call and be trained in the theological institutions. Thereby, not fulfilling their call mandate and maximizing their spiritual gifts. There is a dearth of empirical studies dealing with this trend in NBC. Therefore, this study was conducted to investigate the causes and outcomes of women restricted involvement in leadership roles in the Nigerian Baptist Convention (NBC).

CONCEPT OF LEADERSHIP

Leadership is a universal phenomenon. Every known institution of society experiences leadership in diverse manners and under different designations. As an institution of society, the church as an organization and organism has so much to do with leadership. So long as the church is organized around some goals and objectives, leadership in the church context then becomes imperative. Irrespective of denominational differences, every religious sect has its leadership as the driver of its aspirations and targets. Therefore, leadership is a common denominator across denominational lines (Aiyebeyi, 2014). For a better understanding of church leadership, it is needful to explain what leadership means before delving into church leadership since it is an aspect of a general concept of leadership.

The concept of leadership has been defined by different scholars in various ways according to differing views of scholars (Aiyebeyi, 2014). Blanchard (2010) saw leadership as the capacity to influence and motivate them to engage their skills and potential toward the greater good. In the same vein, Kolzow (2014:11), stated that leadership is: "a process whereby individuals influence groups of individuals to achieve shared goals or commonly desired outcomes." Kolzow further opined that, leadership entails the provision of purpose, direction, influence, and motivation according to accomplishing the avowed mission and purpose of the organization as a way of improving it. Leadership is a social influence process in which the leader seeks the voluntary participation of subordinates to reach organizational goals (Omolayo, 2005).

Furthermore, leadership has been viewed from the point of view of a personal trait, an act or behaviour, a transformational procedure, a collection of skills, or conditions of power relations (Northouse, 2013). Another definition characterized leadership as a method wherein an individual or group of individuals causes others to attain a mutual objective (Northouse, 2013). More descriptively, Aritz, Walker, Cardon, and Li (2017) outlined the essential explanatory components of leadership as follows: (a) it is a process, (b) it involves influences, (c) it occurs in a group context, and (d) it involves goal attainment. Kanyandekwe and Boateng (2013) related leadership to influence producing achievement of organizational goals; influences that are born out of authority and legitimacy recognized and accepted by the group via election, selection, volunteering, or by the leader's position in the organizational structure. From a more functional perspective, leadership could be likened to a structured social interaction involving a leader (s) and followers sworn to objectively reach their identified goals (McCleskey, 2014).

A closer look at the definitions given so far, certain definitive ingredients operationally define leadership. That is to say, an operational definition of leadership features some key elements. It assumes the presence of a leader, a clearly defined and accepted sworn goal to be achieved, a group action, a relationship between a leader and the lead, guided processes of reaching the goals, and harnessing available resources towards goal attainment. It has been stated that leadership is universal, necessary, and unavoidable in any human institution or society. Organizations revolve around some avowed goals, and therefore, design their leadership as a tool for reaching those goals. Based on the foregoing, leadership, in this study, is described as a mechanism

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generally accepted and recognized by the entirety of the Baptists vested in the custody of some trusted individuals as a means for mobilizing and influencing people and materials towards achieving avowed ecclesiastic goals. The Baptists as a denomination organize its activities under the guidance of its various leadership echelons. In principle, Baptists practice congregationalism whereby the final authority rests in the local church as a body. However, some committees are charged with some denominational responsibilities on behalf of the church. These organizations study issues and report to the church at large for final approval and ratification.

2.1.2 Concept of Church Leadership

It is imperative to briefly explain what the church is before discussing church leadership. This is necessary because leadership in the church shares commonalities with the general notion of leadership. Defining the church is not a one-way task due to its dynamic nuances and usages. Therefore, the definition of church is limited to etymological and technical senses. Etymologically, the church derives *ekklesia*, a Greek that means “the called out ones”, or *kuriakos*, “belonging to the Lord”. *kuriakos* and *ekklesia*, put together, help in the definition of the word church from the New Testament (NT) standpoint. Thus, the church is viewed as a people called out to belong to the Lord. This attempt at defining church stresses the fact that the people are called out, not to be isolated or for an undefined purpose, but to “belong”, as an allegiance to the Lord, or to be subjected to the Lord. The import of the above is that church has both divine and social identities. It is the people called out of the world by the Lord as His witness here on earth. It owes allegiance to the one Lord that called it out of the world as well as a responsibility to the world from which it is called out as a priest between heaven and earth. Gelder (2004:87) describes the “double” calling as a double movement of being “called and sent”. And that purpose is summed up in the love of God and of one’s neighbor that the church owes to the world in which it domiciles. This defines the church as a missional organism.

There is a clear correlation between the classical Greek use of the term *ekklesia* and its meaning and the Old Testament (OT) “gatherings” or “assemblies”. The Old Testament makes use of two terms in this regard: *qahal* and *edah*. “The former term...derived from the word for voice, refers to a summons to an assembly and the act of assembling” (Grudem, 2005). A special mention should be made that “*ekklesia* never renders *edah*, “congregation” which represented the people as a national unit” (O’Brien 2005:194). But the fact that Israel as a chosen people of God was a different type of nation provides a context in which *edah* can be seen at the same time as referring to the gathering of the people before God who was the ultimate King over Israel even in its monarchical era. Old Testament references such as Deuteronomy 9:10; 10:4; 23:1-3; I Kings 12:3 make use of the term *qahal* in the sense of a religious gathering of people unto God. But also, the fact that the translators of the Hebrew Bible into Greek (LXX) rendered both *qahal* and *edah* (taking into account the context in which it was used) *ekkesia* gives rise to what is accepted as the “OT church”. This is also supported by the “New Testament authors (speaking) of the OT people of Israel as a “church” (Grudem 2005:854).

Technically, Barackman (1992:381) defines the church thus:

A company of baptized people, belonging to a certain place, who profess to be saved by trusting in Jesus and His atoning work (Acts 2:41, 47; 11:20-26; 18:8-11); who are in agreement in doctrine, policy, and practice (Acts 2:46; Eph. 4:1-6); who, recognizing the Lord’s presence (Mt. 18:20), assemble regularly to worship God (Acts 2:47; 13:2), to observe the Lord’s Supper (Acts 2:42; 20:7; I Cor. 11:23-26), to fellowship together in the study of the Word and in prayer (Acts 2:42; 4:23-31), to exercise their spiritual gifts for the edification of one another (Acts 9:31; 13:1; I Cor. 12:1-31; 14:23-26), to do good works (Acts 11:27-30; Gal. 6:10; Rev. 2:5), and to exercise corrective discipline when it is needed (Mt. 18:15-20; I Cor. 5:4-5); who bear witness to the gospel...(I Thess. 1:8) and who are looking for the return of Jesus (I Thess. 1:10; Phil. 3:20; Tit. 2:13).

Even though this definition cannot be said to be perfect vis-à-vis accepted description of the church, it can be seen that the definition elucidates what constitutes church membership, the calling, and purpose of the church, the manual upon which the church operates, the missionary responsibility of the church and the eternal hope of the church. Therefore, this study accepts the above in explaining what the church is all about.

Jesus Christ is the Lord over His church and the one calling people to Himself. This call is a call to allegiance and obedience to His commands. Therefore, the church is called to continue the ministry of the Master as commanded to them. As good disciples, the church must follow in the footsteps of its Master. Thus, the mandate of Christ becomes its mandate (Luke 4:18-19). Matthew 28:19-20 makes it clear: the church is to make disciples. This entails going, baptizing, and disciplining people to become believers. This is the continuation of vision and action, from Christ to the disciples, to the early church, and today’s church.

In this process of observing all things that Christ has commanded, the function of the church is to worship God, to nurture the people of God, and to bear witness to the world in mission. These functions flow directly from the nature of the church itself, allowing the church to do work found in its nature. Thus, evangelism serves as the birth stage for introducing people into the kingdom of God (John 3:3), a place of nurturing and maturing (Ephesians 4:11-16), as they worship God in doing what He has called them to do, both as an expression of love to God and their fellow men (Matthew 22:37-39).

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In this session, the effort is made to situate leadership contextually. The church is the context for discussing leadership in this work. Church leadership, on the other hand, could be defined from a general and specific stance. Generally, what goes as church leadership subsumes in the process of providing godly guidance and direction in all areas of church life, such as shaping vital Christian life, community, and witness in ways that are faithful to Jesus Christ and the gospel based on extant contexts, resources, and identified purposes. Specifically, according to Watt (2014), church leadership is described as a God-empowered ability to set goals following God's purpose and to motivate others in the body of Christ to willingly and collaboratively work towards realizing those goals for the glory of God. Church leadership is a subservient position of authority whereby Christ is considered the Head of the Church and church leaders as servant leaders under the control, authority, and command of Christ and of His Spirit. It is here that church leadership deviates from secular or conventional leadership. Therefore, church leaders are usually expected to find out the will of God as enshrined in the Holy Bible and guide their conduct as directed by the Holy Spirit. Thus, church leadership could be termed as an activity in spirituality.

Just like any conventional organization, the church needs purpose-driven leadership to fulfill its divine mandate and to experience growth and development in its impact-focused ministry to the world. This becomes more imperative given that, unlike for-profit organizations where stakeholders are volunteering the requisite resources like money, time, and people, the church cannot boast of such ready human and financial resources. Therefore, the church leader is saddled with the duty of seeking needed humans and materials for the effective functioning of the church vis-à-vis set goals by building a viable and trustworthy relationship with the immediate membership of the church and people outside the church (Grandy, 2013). Inquiries into church leadership indicate that it is relational, rather than responsibility or a gift that rests solely with one individual (Grandy, 2013). Leadership in the church as a nonprofit organization subsumes a diverse range of skills and abilities, some of which include a high tolerance for ambiguity; advocacy, fundraising, and grant writing; financial management; and managing and motivating a workforce comprised primarily of volunteers. Nonprofits are also value-driven organizations that require leaders who can sustain tradition (the mission) while balancing the need for innovation (Grandy, 2013). Therefore, such leadership is strained between the need to operate within the divine and the mundane; between the timeless dictates of the Bible and the demands of modernity. Altogether, this makes church leadership a tasking one.

Watt (2014) corroborated the foregoing by affirming that leadership in churches is a product of complex defined, and sometimes undefined relationships among pastors, leaders, and members, who have the official and standard authority, and various other institutions, such as the higher church diocese, media, government, and the community. This places both spiritual, moral, management, and social responsibilities all at once on the church leader. According to Kanyandekwe and Boateng (2013), church leaders as servant leaders are to model whatever expectations they have concerning their followers, such as church members, communities, societies in general, and political leaders. Practices, whereby church leaders turn their positions into corrupt avenues for fake miracles and prayers for a fee or counseling for a fee, are usually condemned. Thus, it is customary that a good work relationship is a strong contributing factor to the successful performance of organizational objectives. This is believed to engender trust and confidence in the leader by the followers such that they are moved to put in their best. Leaders in churches create and maintain a positive work climate by establishing the appropriate organizational structure and good policies and implementing them consistently (Kanyandekwe et al., 2013).

Given its nature as explained above, church leadership survives and thrives on the platform of moral, social, and spiritual uprightness. Grandy (2013) opined that church leadership builds on socio-spiritual values and mission and must be viewed from that standpoint. This implies that pastoral leadership differs from secular organizational settings. To this end, Watt (2014) maintained that churches in the 21st century need godly leaders capable of influencing others to achieve their mission. These leaders must be able to understand the dynamics of spiritual leadership in contradistinction from mundane leadership; the effects of diversity in theology and worship, spiritual formation of church followers, program planning and administration, as well as age-level best practices. Furthermore, leaders in the church should show moral leadership, individual control, and community service through the initiation, development, and maintenance of positive functioning relationships (Watt, 2014). The role of a church leader may take the form of a preacher, pastor, teacher, counselor missionary, small group leader, or another church-related ministry. But no matter what the call, the church needs to identify and provide leaders with the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to reach today's culture. This defines church leadership as a bridge builder whose responsibility is to bring down divine blessings to bear upon the earth. In this lies the relevance of church leadership in a world that finds it difficult to delineate the socio-political importance of the church today.

According to Watt (2014), church leaders need to prepare others for effective leadership by educating, equipping, enriching, and empowering them for the work of the church in general and life in the world at large. The church is one body made up of many people, most of whom are volunteers. Effective church leaders recognize that relational power is the outcome of working with others to achieve mutually satisfactory goals; being a relational church leader is often more about the ability to influence others than

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the capacity to wield power (Watt, 2014). A lesson for those fulfilling formal and informal leadership roles in the church is that individuals must learn to love others in the agape sense or sacrificial sense. Church leaders should respect and admire all types of other people. People must learn to love and respect others as they become aware of God's love for His people. Church leaders must make it a part of their daily business to communicate their vision and goals to complete the organization's mission (Watt, 2014).

Cole (2015) pointed out that churches face great challenges in reaching today's secular culture. As churches in the modern world, particularly in economically stable nations, they gradually become more individualized and removed from public involvement and can lose the ability to relate to people in their communities. Leaders may face increasing pressure to spend resources and time meeting the members' escalating demands, thus reducing the church's ability to carry out the great commission.

Moving a church from inward-focused to outward-focused does not guarantee the removal of the problems the church will encounter (Cole, 2015). The import is that pastors and leaders must prepare for pushback from the congregation when they embark on the journey of becoming outward-focused. Pastors must receive encouragement that they will not walk this journey alone. Thus, leaders of small and medium-sized churches who feel stuck with membership growth need to develop a systematized plan for their churches. The churches they pastor are on a course of status quo with no destination in sight (Cole, 2015). Pastors as leaders should provide the vision of the church to the congregation. A daily reminder of the vision is a critical part of a leader's responsibility for achieving the organization's mission (Watt, 2014). The success of the church depends on the direction of the pastor and leaders in the church as churches face significant reductions in church attendance and membership.

Inferentially, the foregoing implies that church leadership is a different ball game when compared with conventional leadership. While many contexts for studying conventional leadership are for-profit-organizations, the church is a spiritual commune. Conventional leaders are judged mostly by the rate of their achievements much more than the morality of their practices. This cannot be said about church leadership. This is because church leadership revolves around the morality and uprightness of leadership practices. Attention is paid more to the godliness of the leader than what is focused on results. The church may hail the achievements of the leader but will hardly put up with a corrupt leader irrespective of how successful he/she is. Therefore, cardinal to church leadership is spiritual, moral, financial, and social integrity. Upon these basic yardsticks, the church leader enjoys the unalloyed support of followers who not only conceive of the leader as an authority figure but also so much more as a spiritual guide and model. Where this trust and confidence is reposed on the leader, followers tend to be submissive and loyal to the leadership.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The essence of the theoretical framework is to provide an explanatory underpinning used to explain, predict and understand a phenomenon under investigation, to challenge and extend existing knowledge within assumption boundaries most critically and contextually. To this end, the theoretical framework is the "structure that can hold or support a theory of a research study. The theoretical framework introduces and describes the theory which explains only the research problem under study" (Swanson, 2013). The theoretical framework is necessary for this study to understand how society and of course the church as a socio-religious institution perceive, approach, and apply women's involvement in leadership and all the issues surrounding it from the social, cultural, religious, and political perspectives. This study uses the social construction theory to discuss women's participation in leadership especially in the church.

Social Construction Theory: Social construction theory or social constructionism builds on the claim that people's assumptions, perceptions, and practices with social phenomenon develop within the matrix of a social context with what is generally accepted as socially valid claims. Social constructionism is a theory of knowledge that holds that characteristics typically thought to be immutable and solely biological—such as gender, race, class, ability, and sexuality—are products of human definition and interpretation shaped by cultural and historical contexts (Andrews, 2012). The theory was introduced in the 1966 book, *The Social Construction of Reality*, by leading sociologists of the era, such as Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckman. Berger and Luckman's ideas were underpinned by the social philosophies of Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and George Herbert Mead. Of significant influence on the development of social construction theory is Mead's theory of symbolic interactionism, which stresses people tend to define identity and reality based on what they view society to be. Three separate sociological ideologies collapsed to birth social constructionism (Gergen, 2011). The first was the movement that interpreted all social realities and practices in the light of political values and practices; that is, politics is the basis for defining social realities. The second movement was more of philology that investigated social languages with a view to deconstructing language used in sampling and coding knowledge. The import of the foregoing is that social realities are products of the language used in encoding them. The third was a critique of scientific practice, led by Thomas Kuhn, who stressed that what is taken to mean reality or truth is usually subjective as each society interprets reality within the framework of their authentic environment and not on objective conclusions.

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According to the social constructionist perspective, a lot of human beliefs and truth claims are believed not to ensue from objective reality but from subjectivism since each society names and explains phenomena in terms of its peculiar experiences and environments. Thus, Galbin (2014) argued that there is hardly any universal view of the social phenomenon as each society defines its reality within the contours of time. This implies that social realities are fluid and susceptible to changes as time goes on. Thus, what one generation holds dear may be repudiated or significantly uttered by subsequent generations in the same society. The term 'construct' indicates that terms like gender are created by social orders instead of natural realities. Contextually, to say that certain roles are synonymous with men or women lacks substantive natural evidence even though society holds them true. When engaged in rational and scientific inquiry, those who practice gender role usually resort to tradition or superstition to explain their validity. Such practices and ideologies are usually transferred from one generation to the other, most of the time without tangible and a posteriori evidence. Thus, the theory of social constructionism states that all socially valid meaning is socially created. Social constructs, according to the theory, because of long-term practices and uses tend to be so ingrained that they seem natural.

This theory is relevant for this study as it enabled the researcher to identify and describe how historical hermeneutics has contributed to deepening the negative practices of neglecting women in key church leadership. The theory equally empowered the researcher to systematically examine how church dogmas and doctrines, particularly those ensuing from erroneous interpretations of Pauline views of women affect women's participation in church leadership and how much can be deconstructed.

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN CHURCH LEADERSHIP IN THE NIGERIAN BAPTIST CONVENTION

A critical issue to contend with in the church is the position of women, especially from the leadership point of view. Just as in traditional and modern society, issues of women's involvement in leadership have been a contentious one. In Nigerian political and religious spaces, the involvement and the extent as well as the mode of leadership are to be revolved. This is especially the case among churches. Aside from occupying central and apex leadership in the church, women's role in propagating the gospel in unique and impactful ways is acknowledged. Women have taken leading roles in providing authentic ministries for children, teenagers, youths, aged, sick, motherless homes, and other socially disadvantaged ones. Expanding missions whether in the mainline or Pentecostal churches owe so much to women's active and dynamic participation. Their spiritual gifts and social currencies are immediately employed in championing Christian causes. Various media are used in appreciating them for all their wonderful works. However, no matter how much they have contributed to church growth, the more silent and inactive men are favoured with key, central, and apex church leadership positions and roles.

The near-exclusion and marginalization of women in church leadership are usually anchored on some erroneous interpretations of the Bible, particularly Pauline injunctions. Of particular mention is 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 "Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church." There is both direct and indirect allusion to this text as an impetus for largely denying women key roles in church leadership positions. The most favoured interpretation of this text especially among male-dominated thoughts is that Paul provided a biblical ground for the subjugation of women in church leadership. These people take the text so literally that they quote Paul as prohibiting and opposing women's involvement in apex church leadership. Another text with a similar interpretative genre is 1 Timothy 2:12 where Paul recommended that a woman should not teach in the church or assume leadership in a congregation where men are equal members and asked that women should learn in silence. As literally as these passages appear to promote near exclusion or an outright prohibition of women from church leadership, a more contextual interpretation would indicate that Paul could have been handling some occasions rising in the church. There could have been some peculiar historical development, a kind of *Sitz im leben* (a situation of life) that could warrant such statements. Against the backdrop of early church practices, such situations or interpretations could not hold water in a church that was built on equality and egalitarian survival. Although Jewish practices promote women's subjugation, Jesus deviated from this perennial practice and showed friendship with women in His ministry.

However, experience and research show that Jesus not including women as part of the twelve Apostles has been the reason many Christians use to justify their continued subordination of women. According to Uchem (2001:211), "they claim that because Jesus did not include women among the twelve, it shows that the subjugation of women in the Church and the society has a divine origin. Uchem further noted that theologians have investigated this issue and they hold a wide range of views about the significance of the twelve appointed by Jesus from among His disciples. Interpretations range from that of the origins of a hierarchical structure to that of a symbolic and inclusive model of Church life. While alternative views shows that women subordination was not willed by God but by men for their own advantage. Quoting Robert McAfee Brown who stated that "what we see depends on where we are standing." In other words, our moral positions on any theological argument about what is considered just or unjust, inclusive of discriminatory towards women, depends on how one interprets Bible texts; that is whether it is take literally, in a selective, proof-text approach or whether a principle of critical hermeneutics is applied". Based on this fact, though none of the apostles was a woman because of the cultural limitations He worked in. But as Jesus began to challenge some

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of the socio-cultural barriers, women became part of His disciples and contributed significantly in His ministerial and personal activities. He not only moved in the company of women as against male-dominating social dispositions of Jews, but He also allowed women to have very personal contact with Him. Paul built upon this, having many women as co-preachers; which would contradict a literal interpretation of 1 Corinthians 14:34–35. However, the text is best understood from the perspective of the Greek term *ekklesia*. In its popular context, it refers to the assembly of a Greek city-state in which women were not permitted to speak. In similar Christian assemblies, they were permitted based on the Christian brotherhood. Apparently, in the Corinthian church, women were abusing this privilege by disrupting church services, which warranted Paul's order. This being the case, the crucial issue is the disorderliness being caused by the women, and not their participation. Therefore, in this text, it was not the intention of Paul to establish a doctrine disallowing women from participating in church leadership. Apparently, for the Nigerian context, the text is not a ground that does not provide a basis for excluding or marginalizing women from church leadership.

Varying interpretive approaches and dispositions have led to different practices regarding women in church leadership. The Nigerian situation explains this vividly. Ademiluka (2007:76–96) revealed that the mission-oriented denominations (mainline churches) leaning strictly on the doctrinal favours of their white missionary forebears hardly include women in church leadership on the premise of the Pauline texts cited above, particularly 1 Corinthians 14:34–35. These churches like the Roman Catholic, the Anglican Communion, the Baptists, the Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA), and the Methodist Church largely relegate women to subservient church leadership positions. In these churches, women are being marginalized to varying degrees. Church growth-oriented roles played by women in these churches are recognized and celebrated. In the Roman Catholic, Reverend Sisters are given a leadership lift among women for playing significant social service roles. Ministries are carved out for the Sisters to occupy. In Anglican Communion, women's ministries are carved out for enjoying the dynamic role of women. The Anglican and Methodist denominations are particularly adamant in this regard. In 1993, Bishop Haruna, then head of Kwara State Diocese of the Anglican Church, ordained three women, but the Anglican House of Bishops annulled the ordination. Similarly, in 1994, the synod of the Methodist Diocese of Kwara and Kogi States decided to start the ordination of women, but the headquarters of the church rejected it (Omotoye, 1996–1999:65). Others, such as the Baptists, gave recognition to women involved in church leadership but basically as ordained deaconesses, ministers and Pastors but still not yet allowed to occupy some positions.

The tide is different among Pentecostals for some obvious reasons. Greater inclusion of women in leadership is a strong marker of classical and new Pentecostal churches. This is true, particularly of the Cherubim and Seraphim Church (CandS) and the Christ Apostolic Church (C. A. C.). It was the former that laid the foundation for the practice in Nigeria of a woman, Abiodun Akinsowon, being a co-founder of the church, and it has since involved women in its leadership. Today, women are given the title of Mother in Israel in local branches of the Cherubim and Seraphim Church (Ademiluka, 2007:79–80). Apart from this, there are numerous CandS churches founded by women all over Nigeria. At the inception of Christ Apostolic Church (C. A. C.), women were not given place in its leadership, but with time, as female members began to exhibit the gift of prophecy, they began to be involved. Today, they are not only appointed as deaconesses; women have founded many C. A. C. branches (Olajubu 1991:79, 1993:142).

In the same vein, most of the neo-Pentecostal denominations in Nigeria today include women in all levels of leadership. In some of them, women are even given the highest leadership title in the church, such as pastor, evangelist, missionary etc. This is the case in Living Faith Church, Christ Embassy, Foursquare Gospel Church, The Redeemed Christian Church of God, Rhema Chapel, and Mountain of Fire, and Miracles, among others (Ademiluka, 2007:79–80). The T.B. Joshua's church after his death has his wife as the apex leader because of court judgement. It is important to note, however, that their reason for including women is simply an adaptation to the practice of their foreign founders, as in the case of the mission-oriented denominations. That is not to say, however, that there are no exceptions in the neo-Pentecostal fold. There are those of them who exclude women from leadership based on 1 Corinthians 14. For example, New Testament Christian Mission, Deeper Life Bible Church, and End-Time Message Believers' Fellowship (EMBF) still practice male domination. The EMBF is not only opposed to the inclusion of women in church leadership but vehemently criticizes churches that do. Hence, as far as one of its pastors, Pastor Ojo, is concerned such churches are not of God, for they contradict the word of God (Ademiluka 2007:78). However, Eboh (2000:66-67) do not share in this idea as he noted that:

The difference between man and woman is not in the sphere of essence and existence, not in the realm of substance and accidents but in the area of modality. As substance, both are spiritual, rational, sentient, living and material. In their essence, both are human, and hence rational and free; as for existence, both participate in being; they only vary in their mode of being. As both are modalities of one and the same species, by what criteria do we adjudge one modality superior and the other inferior especially if they are complementary parts of one wholeness?.

Thus, in Nigeria, the denominations are still divided on the issue of the inclusion of women in church leadership. Whereas those who exclude women base their non-inclusion practice on the 1 Corinthians 14 text, those who practice women's inclusion believe that this text needs not to impede women playing leadership roles in the church. However, it is important to clarify that women's participation in church leadership in Nigeria hardly means more than giving them titles and making them

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leaders of women's organizations within the church; women rarely head churches except those they establish themselves, and these are mostly limited to the CandS and C. A. C. Thus, male domination is still predominant in church leadership in Nigeria, which may be a reflection of the patriarchal nature of the Nigerian society as in Africa at large.

SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS

Based on the result obtained from the analysis of data, the following major findings emerged:

1. Female pastors' participation in church leadership in the NBC is poor.
2. Traditional views of women, wrong interpretation of biblical view of women, gender role differentiation, gender-based preference and sentiment, patriarchal system of leadership, male chauvinism, old church tradition, and jealousy over the spiritual charisma of female pastors are factors affecting the extent of female pastors' participation in church leadership whereas inability to perform well on the pulpit and poor theological qualifications among female pastors are not factors affecting their participation in church leadership in the study area.
3. Lack of holistic evangelization, dwarfed church growth, female pastors not given enough chance to exercise their spiritual gifts, poor enrolment of females into theological education, fear of accepting the pastoral call among female Baptists, inadequate attention to children's ministries, Insufficient promotion of ministries to young ladies (The Lydia), an unproductive women's ministries, inadequate revival due to marginalization of female pastors and poor motivation for spiritual development among female pastors are the impacts of poor participation of female pastors in church leadership in the NBC.
4. Increased participation of female pastors in church leadership in the NBC will result in the following benefits: promotion of Christian gender equality, facilitation of a new paradigm for women participation in leadership, the actualization of gender-sensitive church leadership, female pastors serving wholeheartedly when given equal chances, adequate development of children's ministries, building a robust young ladies' ministries, facilitation of a productive women's ministries and balanced spiritual development and exercise of spiritual gifts.
5. Ways to increase female pastors' participation in church leadership include deliberate destruction of traditional gender stereotypes, nominating NBC presidents based on qualifications and not gender. Electing Conference Presidents based on qualifications and not gender, choosing Associational moderators based on qualifications and not gender. Appointing qualified female pastors as heads of theological institutions. Re-reading biblical texts in the light of modern gender realities, and breaking free from the orthodox system regarding women.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, the following conclusions were made: there should be equity in the distribution of leadership roles in the NBC hence the poor participation is not as a result of poor performance on church leadership and poor theological qualifications but gender based. Again, this study concludes that there should be equity in the participation of female pastors in church leadership so that they can fulfill the mandate of the pastoral call upon their lives and be fulfilled in maximizing their spiritual gifts. This will in turn eliminate the fear of answering the call of God and subsequently been trained in the theological institution. Furthermore, the study concludes that hence everyone (male or female) is created in God's image and as has the ability to hear and respond to God in the manner He reveals Himself, especially that the Baptist having a cardinal distinctive of priesthood of all believers, which indicates that all Christians irrespective of gender, class or race are equal ministers of the gospel with equal access to God and intercession for all humanity. And soul competency which is an expression used to indicate that all believers are capable of hearing God, making personal meaning of what God is saying to them in His chosen vehicle of revelation, especially the Bible. This should not just be in principle but practice, appoint female pastors to duely participate in church leadership in every aspects of the church and denominational life.

Based on the findings of the study and the conclusions made, the following are recommended:

1. Male supremacy must be deliberately confronted head-on by enacting policies that criminalize participation based on gender differences.
2. The Baptists should reserve some high positions for female pastors.
3. There should be intensive re-reading of the Bible in line with present-day realities as regards female participation.
4. The church should work towards empowering women socially and economically.
5. Election or appointment of officers should be based on qualifications and not gender.

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