



# Achieving Gender Balance Education through the Lens of Neo-Pentecostalism

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## Abstract

In order to be formidable and great in any given civilization, gender equality is a necessary condition. The fundamental formula for a functioning society calls for partnership and a fair division of labour between the sexes. Yet, a skewed approach has been used in which masculinity has taken precedence over femininity and women have constantly been left out of decision-making throughout history and in various communities. They are routinely discriminated against within political structures. These power structures are to blame for the ongoing underdevelopment, marginalization, and imbalance that they bring about. Recently, the Neo-Pentecostal movement have taken a significant step in the recognition and maximization of the inclusion of women in its religious hierarchy. As such they are giving women an eminent place of equal impetus with men, as such paving positive ways and encouraging gender sensitization in Nigerian society which is highly male oriented. This paper sees this move as a pathway for gender balanced education in Nigeria. The method applied in this research is a literary and descriptive method. It involves a qualitative approach which recruits the use of preliminary and post preliminary sources of data collection. The study found that the inclusiveness of women in the leadership hierarchical order in the neo-Pentecostal movements is a substantial achievement and it is worth emulating. It is a clear pathway to gender balanced education in Nigeria. It was recommended that 50% inclusion of women in all human endeavours will engender sustainable development in Nigeria and promote needed unity and above serve as a role model for other masculine oriented communities where justice and fairness are sorely needed.

**Keywords:** Inclusiveness, Women, Gender, Neo-Pentecostalism, religion, education.

## Introduction

According to Buda and Badrudeen (2010) quoting Hemmati and Gardiner (2002), women must participate fully and equally in all aspects of sustainable development. If only half of the persons involved in the process are involved, it is inappropriate to address issues, choose suitable methods, or put needed solutions into practice. Nigeria's National Policy on Women Education (2015), discussing women inclusiveness maintains that, "...it is their ability to push for their preference before, during, and after the negotiation process that can engender their inclusiveness and gender balance the equation". According to Moheyuddin (2021), gender is



defined as the relative or disparate roles, obligations, and opportunities that women and men have in a society. Ziso (2019) asserts further that gender as a whole must be seen as a socio-cultural element that cuts across all domains. Gender more specifically refers to the roles that men and women are expected to play within a certain cultural framework.

Gender, according to Bruyn (2015), relates to societal norms and expectations about proper male and female conduct, traits, and roles. Men and women have different access to power, including productive resources and decision-making authority, as a result of these expectations and conventions. In view of the above, it is evident that gender is not 'sex' which is often misconstrued as such. Sex is biological or physical differentiation between males and females; while, gender points to roles and privileges across sexes. The idea of gender equality is also buttressed by Moheyuddin (2021) who states that, Gender equality refers to the equality of opportunities and chances in life, not the transformation of men and women into the same. Pentecostal movements from the 1980s came to be known as Neo-Pentecostalism. They are ministries, churches, and Para-churches competing with one another for churchgoers. These organizations reached their height in Nigeria during the 1990s, a time of growing economic hardship, political unrest, social unrest, moral disorientation, and value confusion (Odey, 2018).

Odey (2018) further maintains that these groups are a corporation formed by the combination of wide varieties of assemblies with astonishing doctrines and practices. Odey (2020) asserted that, although gender is culturally construed, Pentecostal doctrines and dogmas have changed the traditional, cultural and social disadvantages pertaining to women. Noting that, the Pentecostal movement, being a religion of positive gospel and innovative religion have drastically given credence to equal partnership between men and women. From the perspective of the Neo-Pentecostal movement, women inclusiveness in their religious and bureaucratic process, can be delineated so that these movements after a critical analysis of the impracticable inclusiveness of women in political processes of the Nigerian society, have decided to lead by example thereby taking the advantage of including women in their hierarchical structure, which forms the basis that can serve as a pathway for gender balanced sensitization and education.

## **Literature Review**

Odey (2018) describes Neo-Pentecostal movement as many rival Pentecostal organizations, ministries, churches, and Para-churches. Some of these ministries emanated during the 1980s and 1990s as a result of severe economic hardship, political and upheaval, moral chaos and value confusion experienced in Nigeria. Ayogboyin (2015) further expounded on the concept of Neo-Pentecostalism, and contended that it is an amalgamation of numerous assemblies representing an equally astounding array of ideologies and practices. It is this these 'astonishing' practices that have seen their practice of including women in all their religious bureaucratic positions which has boosted the personality of women on which this research is based, a pathway to gender education in Nigeria. This research will hopefully build on these efforts and seek to discover and explore how this can further strengthen the promotion of gender balanced education in Nigeria.

According to Odey(2020), who wrote about the Pentecostal movement's contribution to the advancement of women's status in the ministry, several biblical teachings that emphasize the positive role of women in Christianity have gained significant visibility as a result of the expansion and development of the Pentecostal movement, particularly in Nigeria. The Pentecostal movement has had an impact on the Nigerian church, and to some extent, that impact has been positive. Its capacity to give both men and women gender equality roles is one of the ways it has benefited Nigerian society. This article aims to defend the leadership position held by women in the Nigerian Neo-Pentecostal Movement as an argument for gender-balanced sensitization and education.



Gender sensitization and education according to According to Gebaralvone (2015) is a socially taught idea that is institutionalized, passed down, from generations to generations, and manifested in various ways. Individuals are required to carry out their male and female duties in accordance with what is expected of them by their society. It impacts both the relationships that men and women enter into as well as whether they are male or female. How men and women behave in various contexts is determined by these preconceptions about what are commonly considered to be feminine or male features, abilities, and expectations. These are the outcomes of the different sex roles for men and women. Understanding how men and women interact in terms of sexual roles, power dynamics, decision-making, labour allocation, access to advancement, benefits, and resource management depends critically on gender. This is similar to how men and women are affected by different cultural norms, physical, institutional, social, and economic limitations. However, Gebaralvone (2015) merely concentrated mainly on the meaning and contents of gender and he did not highlight the role of women in Pentecostal groups, and how this can enhance a gender balanced education in Nigeria, this paper will attempt to fill this gap.

According to the french existentialist philosopher Simone de Beauvoir (2019), "...it accurately reflects the photographs" because one does not automatically become a lady at birth. Gender ideals and expectations are learnt in a variety of contexts, including families, friends, schools, the workplace, religious and cultural institutions, the media, and by what opinion leaders say. This process of socialization, which starts at birth, lays the groundwork for this. When viewed through the lens of the Neo-Pentecostal Movement, gender equality in its ministry can be understood as a means of promoting gender awareness and education in Nigeria. The typecasting of people's positions, the assignment of duties deemed appropriate for both sexes, and the level of pressure are all aspects of this socialization process. By unfairly distributing these duties and rights, the majority of nations do indeed enslave women. It is this unjust sharing of roles between males and female that this paper is trying to correct by highlighting the positive roles of women inclusiveness in Neo-Pentecostal movements and advocates this as a pathway to gender balanced education in Nigeria.

Asuquo (1998) opined that many Pentecostals support and encourage the inclusion of women in church leadership or other related duties due to the following reasons: according to him, Pentecostal and Neo-Pentecostal movement cite Biblical verses and passages to support their views. Some examples include: (1) Acts 2:17's - fulfillment of the Holy Spirit's promise of gift and this passage also included women. Some women were called and appointed as prophetesses, example Anna (Luke2:36-38), Deborah (Judges 4:4), Miriam (Exodus15:20); Huldah (2Kings 22:14). Acts 21:8-9 mentions the prophetic abilities of the evangelist Philip's daughters, and Philippians 4:2-3 identifies Eudia and Syntyche as leaders of the church (See also Nicolaidis, 2022, 2016; 2005). Neo-Pentecostals claim that women were the first to bring the good news of Christ's resurrection according to Matthew 28:1-10 and Luke 24:9-11. However, the above investigation, though has presented a positive approach towards the inclusiveness of women with a good support from Biblical quotations, it however, fails to indicate how it can lead to a balanced gender sensitization and education in Nigeria, this research thus seeks to fill this gap as stated earlier.

In Ucheaga (2011), Plato is cited as arguing against the family for a different reason and he said that raising children should be the responsibility of the state. The intention was to release women from the constraints placed on them by family obligations so that they might contribute their energies to the advancement of the state. The idea of Plato was not far from what Neo-Pentecostal movements are practicing. Hence they try to teach the larger populace the need to give equal roles to both men and women. Plato's idea though plausible, differs from the focus of this research; as such the research is a major valid statement to women inclusivity. Women inclusiveness in Neo-Pentecostalism is one of the primary objectives of feminist movements not only in Christian religion, but also in other world religions. In this vein, a book by titled *Radical Feminism and Radical Religion* by Clark and Richardson (1977), aptly portray



that women carried out two campaigns in reference to the Christian religion against some practices that often allow them to participate in subordinate roles such as cooking, baking, and Sunday school ministry. More so, they pointed out that the campaigns equally frowned at the exclusion of women from seats of power and from a lack of opportunity to shape polity and doctrine. In summary, Daly (1968) opined that some denominations excluded women from ordination and that even those that did, denied them some significant position. However, Clark and Richardson (1977) contended that the movement for women's ordination and ways to obtain equal opportunity with male ministries is one of the cardinal objectives of feminists in religion.

From the forgoing, it can be deduced that in many religions, including Christianity, women are rarely given equal representation as their male counterparts dominate proceedings, however, some campaigns by feminist such as the movement for women's ordination have been carried out to correct this glaring inequality. Some of these campaigns have been fruitful as can be seen in womens' active participation in Christianity, such as their inclusiveness in many areas of the Pentecostal movements with many women now even founding of many Pentecostal ministries, serving as active pastors in some churches, among several other areas.

### **Statement of the problem**

Differentiating between the masculine and feminine is what gender is all about. It is crucial to note that while religion serves as the foundation for society's spiritual life, How men and women relate to one another in terms of sex roles is significantly impacted by social constructions like masculinity and femininity. Religion is one of the institutions that teaches about gender issues. In other words, gender roles and religion are closely related since gender roles are impacted by religion. Religion places an emphasis on what men and women accomplish and raises issues regarding the sexual division of labour as well as the matching and separation of private and public areas in social life. It describes how men's and women's activities differ.

In the traditional gender construct, women have always been relegated to the back 'bench', especially, by the teachings of religion. However, the story seems to have a different outlook, as a result of the Neo-Pentecostal reversal to the approach. Rather than dwell on the traditional approach to gender roles, it is vital to introduce the dynamics of women inclusiveness which this paper emphasizes as an advocacy for gender-balanced society through the lens of Neo-Pentecostalism.

### **Methodology**

The method applied in this research was a literary and descriptive method. It involved a qualitative approach which recruited the use of preliminary and post preliminary sources of data collection. The preliminary sources of data collection was the use of oral interviews and focus group discussions while the post preliminary source involved the use of inter alia library materials, academic journals, the internet, and relevant text books. These were supplemented with information from bulletins, programme booklets of some organizations as well as the websites of some churches. In addition, theories of eminent scholars in sociology of religion, feminist studies, gender science and Neo-Pentecostal studies were also used.

### **Achieving Gender Balance Education through the Lens of Neo-Pentecostalism**

An in-depth investigation on the subject matter revealed that the lethargic attitude shown to women has contributed strongly to the under-development of Nigeria, hence there is need for improvement in the innovative strategies towards women inclusiveness in all human endeavour. Thus, there is need for the emulation of Neo-Pentecostal approach towards gender equality. This finding is in consonance with the position of Nigeria's national policy on women education



(2015) which states that, “Women education should be prioritized so as to empower them as against the prevalent belief that sending female children to school is wasting of resources.” The policy emphasized that, women education is essential to give women the confidence and also the skills to practice actively in the development process. Nwankwo and Omenyi (2018) corroborated with the above, by asserting that, “...the provision of sound and quality education is expected to produce meaningful positive change in the life of the educated women not only in terms of academic knowledge and skills, but also in attitude, belief and practices”. In the same vein, Nwagbara (2013) proposed three main points regarding the necessity of women's education for all-around inclusivity: first, the orientation of an attitude toward the education of all females, regardless of age; second, the awakening of awareness among all citizens that all people have the right to equal educational opportunities regardless of age, race, sex, locality, creed, or social status; and third, the awakening of the consciousness among women themselves.

Similarly, Eteng's (2018) research on the role of women in the local church revealed that there are two schools of thought regarding the place of women in Christian religion. He further stated that the first school of thought is the historical or traditional group with the view that women should not be allowed to hold essential pastoral roles in the church because it has never been so from the beginning of the church, whereas, the second school of thought namely, egalitarian or progressive school of thought, maintained that women should be given equal opportunities to men, because they possess the ability to function as men do. Obviously, the second school of thought clearly aligns with the sensitivity of what is practically operative in the Neo-Pentecostal movement which is the paradigm for the justification of this study. It has also clearly indicated support to the investigation and the result of the findings in this research.

Supporting the finding further, a remarkable principle postulated by Clark and Richardson (1977) using Daly's ideology infer that inclusion of women in the administrative and other essential departments of the church is “Daly's ideal philosophical vision” heralding the positive inclusivity. They try to emphasize the inclusivity citing Hewitt (1995) who views matters thus: “Daly's ideal philosophical vision postulates a world of alienation against which women struggle in order to realize their inner psychic and spiritual creativity and integrity, described by Daly as a journey or quest toward elemental participation in Being. Our passion is for ... recalling original wholeness”. The inclusiveness of women in Christianity, the Neo-Pentecostal Movement and the general public according to the above citation, depends to a large extent on the realization of self, especially within the psychic and spiritual components of their lives. In other words, the principle contends that women should understand their full potential in all dimensions of life and work towards actualizing themselves without permitting any form of negation, this will enable them to function maximally in every aspect of church activities and even beyond.

Juniad and Naheed (2010) using Islamic religion to support this view for women education and gender equality asserted that, women have been granted full human liberty by Islam, as such, their education is a matter of natural right. He further stated that personal development and intellectual training are human rights, in that Islam grants both male and female the same rights, as such, men and women are equal. Juniad and Naheed (2010) take a position that tends to support the innovative strategy of the Neo-Pentecostal movement of women inclusiveness in their church activities and leadership positions. According to this, the international convention on the eradication of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW) has correctly stated that women's rights are inherent in the natural rights of all human existence and that they are therefore on an equal footing with men's fundamental rights. The comprehensive agreement calls for equal rights for women in all spheres, including political, economic, social, cultural, and civil affairs, regardless of marital status, highlighting the extent of discrimination and restriction against women based only on their sex. It calls for the introduction of legislation that outlaws discrimination on a national level and suggests the adoption of temporary special measures to



hasten the development of equality between men and women, such as altering sociocultural norms and paradigms that support discrimination.

Consequently, it can be averred that a women's inclusiveness approach, as adopted by the Neo-Pentecostal religious movement is in tandem with the objectives of other Nigerian stakeholders and it could be used or accepted as the international convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women as a standard or point of reference for gender sensitization and education in Nigeria. Despite the aforementioned assertion, this article is unable to disregard or pass over the position of those who fight to limit or restrict the level of leadership positions that women are permitted to have in the church. They forbid women from ruling or dominating men. The Apostolic church is one example of these. This view is mostly supported by Paul's statements in 1 Timothy 2:11–14, which prohibits women from leading or teaching men in the church, and in 1 Corinthians 14:34–35, which instructs women to remain silent and not speak in church. According to some scholars, their position has been contradicted up until this point (see Ruether, 1983; Nicolaidis, 2022; 2016 ;2005; Daly, 1968; Groothuis, 1997; ) . These scholars emphasized the critical analysis of biblical passages with older as well as modern and contemporary interpretations of the Bible with an unrestricted thinking in order to discredit any opposition to the roles of women in society (Cowless, 1993).

In the same vein, Hagin (1979) argues that the same Greek term "*gyne*" is rendered as both "woman" and "wife" in English, therefore the biblical verses that are cited to support the subordination and exclusion of women from the ministry actually pertain to wives rather than all women. He comes to the conclusion that Paul was not targeting these limits to all women, but rather was preventing wives from usurping power over their husbands. Hagin's justification and the convincing performance of women in positions of authority within the Neo-Pentecostal Movement have undermined the case made by those who are against this inclusiveness. On the other hand, observation shows that many women who perform well in leadership posts within the church frequently do the same in executive roles outside the church. In view of this capability of women and the positive effects of their leadership role in Neo-Pentecostal groups on their secular lives, roles and education, several recommendations have been fashioned.

Pentecostal Christianity embraces variation and change because of their interpretation of the Holy Spirit, which is considered as being imaginative and open-minded (Jacobsen, 2006). Neo-Pentecostals are unable to identify with a certain theological culture and a particular political system as a result (WAGF Theological Commission, 2014). As a result, the theological cultures of the churches do not sufficiently reflect Neo-Pentecostal thinking, particularly with relation to gender parameters. Scott (2011) claimed that Neo-Pentecostals do not discriminate on the basis of any physical dimension, whether it be status, age, or gender, because Pentecostals are the church and they continue to be transformed by the Holy Spirit who defines them in order to alter others. Scott (2011) applied the principle of the Pauline epistle Acts 2:17 to make this claim. In addition, the church would not have demonstrated its own transformation, which would have prevented it from transforming others. Neo-Pentecostals, like Pentecostals, consider every Christian to be a priest. So, ordination would need to be less substantial and only take place for practical reasons, i.e., to support a leadership role that has already been generated through the Holy Spirit's gifts, in order for it to take place formally (Benvenuti, 2014). Neo-Pentecostal teachings oppose the official exclusion of women from the church hierarchy on the grounds of gender. Clifton (2009), reiterating the aforementioned point, stated that since the leadership in a church should not be based on a person's gender because the Holy Spirit's talents are not gender-specific, women are accommodated. Furthermore, the church would not have shown evidence of its own transformation, preventing it from reforming others. Pastors, missionaries, and other early Christian leaders have surely had a substantial impact as church planters. The Neo-Pentecostal Movement imitates this.



According to Veli-Matti (2014), a Pentecostal church is a charismatic fellowship, just like the body of Christ, hence value is placed on the local assembly, where God is manifested in the charismata. So, rather than emphasizing institutional or structural views of the church, the Pentecostal movement places more emphasis on how individuals relate to one another. Thus, they oppose any hierarchical system that inhibits anyone from participating in the church and ministry. This suggests that the Neo-Pentecostal concept is resisted by the structures in the churches that exclude women. Stronstad (1984) asserts that whenever the Holy Spirit is imparted, the outcomes are transformative and mission-oriented. Importantly, Jesus Christ declared that he will announce the arrival of the Kingdom by the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 4.17-21). The marginalized would be targeted by God's favour in the Kingdom that Christ preached. The status quo of the margins is upheld by Neo-Pentecostal churches in a similar manner, even if they subscribe to the notion of the liberating spirit.

Shorter and Njiru (2015) contend that Neo-Pentecostals' view of the Bible gives them direct access to God's word, which communicates to them in the context of their current circumstances. When it disregards the historical context of writings, this is analogous to reading the Bible literally. Regardless of the culture or other considerations, Scott (2011) notes that some denominations place a greater focus on quoting what the Bible teaches. After that, the texts are combined and used to support a certain church teaching or practice. They apply that to marginalized women and then vehemently defend it because they are founded on the Bible. So, it cannot be overstated how important it is to consider the context of the text. As such, other Christian denominations lack the Biblical inclusive interpretation and understanding which out-rightly project the Neo-Pentecostal movement as dynamic and liberal.

According to Cowless (1993), the strength of the textual, contextual, and historical evidence in the passages in 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 and 1 Timothy 2:11–15 are regarded as Paul's attempt to address a specific set of issues that were endangering the credibility of the gospel and the viability of the churches in Corinth and Ephesus. This conclusion is supported by a substantial body of textual, contextual, and historical evidence. The strength of the textual, contextual, and historical evidence, according to Cowless (1993), is in paragraphs in 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 and 1 Timothy 2:11–15 which are seen as Paul's attempt to address a particular set of challenges that were compromising the gospel's legitimacy and the viability of the Corinthian and Ephesian churches (1993). A sizable body of textual, contextual, and historical evidence backs up this judgment. The texts are evaluated critically in what follows.

They shouldn't voice their disapproval of the sexist atmosphere that women in traditional society were subjected to. This religion permitted women to worship wildly, which resulted in disorderly conduct. They would shout and speak erratically because they thought that only when they were "out of their heads" would the spirits be released from the body and make mystical touches with the gods (some even tried glossolalia). Early Christian women carried similar worship inclinations because of their backgrounds. As a result, their worship was raucous, disorganized, and filled with jubilant yells. This is made extremely plain in the verse when Paul asks, "So if the whole church comes together and they are all speaking in tongues, and strangers or unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are crazy?" (14:23).

Hence, the overall goal of Chapter 14 of I Corinthians is to restore order within the church, not to devalue the status of women within the church. Certain Christian denominations, however, firmly believe that the Pauline epistle relegated women to the back and that women should still be treated that way in the contemporary era. However, Cowless points out that the Greek definite article only refers to a particular group of women and does not apply to all women. Also, verse 34 is not the only place the Greek verb *sigao* (voluntary silence) appears. Scott (2011) also noted that the phrase "let him keep silent (*sigao*) in church," which Paul used to



address men in 1 Corinthians 14:28, is the identical phrase Paul uses it to address women. Apparently, there is a need to reconstruct this passage to have an accurate understanding of the passage. According to Kroeger and Kroeger (1992), 1 Timothy was written in response to a Gnostic-style situation in which women were granted an excessive amount of power. The principal site of Artemis devotion was Ephesus (the Greek name for the same goddess that was known as Diana in Latin). How the Bible was interpreted was negatively impacted by the notion that Artemis was the mother of all gods and humanity. Vondey (2010), argues that that Pentecostal theology is essentially concerned with the renewal of the Christian life identified through the transforming work of the Pneuma - Holy Spirit and it is solely directed toward the Kingdom of God including gender equity.

Two notable examples of this are the exaltation of the serpent as being superior to Yahweh and the idea that Eve was superior to Adam. The Gnostic heresy exalted Eve and hence women as the architects of humanity. Paul uses Jewish traditions portrayed in Genesis to disprove this heresy (verse 13-15 as a rationale for verse 12). Paul disputes any assertions that Eve was Adam's ancestor or that Adam was the one who was deceived. Together with marriage, the Gnostics had denigrated parenting, which Jesus also praises. As a result, Paul's new perspective on women has inspired the Neo-Pentecostalist even more. According to Scott (2011), a passage's context must be examined in order to draw valid conclusions about objectivity from it. In contrast to 2 Timothy 2:18, which demonstrates that certain teachings were based on the notion that the resurrection had already taken place, it will demonstrate that some teachings delivered in churches had a strong ascetic bent.

The prohibition of marriage was another aspect of asceticism. With some women, heretical teachers seem to have had success (2 Timothy 3:6). Women were therefore temporarily restricted from participating in church teaching because they were the group most impacted by this untruth at least until they had received enough Christian principles education. Notwithstanding Scott's assertion, biblical text unequivocally provides both sexes equal rights. For instance: the first chapter of Genesis reveals equality of gender (Genesis 1:26), there is presence of women leaders (Judges 4), women preachers of the word (Acts 18:1-4; 19:24-28; Philippians 4:1-3), prophets, deaconess (Romans 16:1-2), apostle (John 20:17), women disciples of Jesus Christ (Acts 21:10), women who were fellow workers of Paul (Romans 16:1-16), women with special vocations (Acts 9:36-43) and the egalitarian principle of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2. Certain Neo-Pentecostal movements in Nigeria appear to model themselves after this aspect by prominently granting 50% rights to each gender.

Gifford (2009) corroborated the above, by calling for an interpretation of the Bible such that it is neither here nor there. To him, churches should appropriate the message to suit the context for which it is intended, such that it can accommodate the full implementation of full rights to women. By so doing, it will give a universal recognition for both men and women as well as grant leadership qualities that will guarantee a contemporary sustainable development both in the church and society generally. When he postulated, the aforementioned were succinctly explained by Fiorenza (1986). Theology must be on the side of the oppressed in order to be liberal, and therefore Christian. This is the theology that Christ exemplified, and it must serve as the model for women's emancipation.

Traditional culture not only in the Biblical times but also in the traditional culture of Nigeria poses serious a marginalization to women inclusiveness. This is observed from the fact that the social construct is derived from its stipulations and passed down from generation to generation. Kenyatta (1978) said that "fathers" were in charge of leading religious rituals and prayers, and that senior women were only elevated in these circles because of their superhuman abilities. This is supported by the fact that elder women were viewed as "ritual males," exhibiting a male headship mindset, according to Mwaura (2003). Despite cultural





shifts, it's possible that women's perceptions of leadership roles haven't changed since men's dominance over institutions is still psychologically understood to be the norm. Even in times when social roles were clearly defined, according to Kenyatta, women's jobs mostly consisted of caring for children and doing the laundry and cooking. This may also explain why women are happy performing the roles they are accustomed to. More specifically, the conventional economic activities are those that women engage in to support their families.

According to Kanyoro (2002), this socialization structure may also explain why women have a submissive attitude and believe that it is unnecessary to empower them. The historic social structure there has an effect on how women's status is structurally determined in the contemporary church and in society. Obviously, Biblical hermeneutics also followed the traditional concept of women subordination which is purportedly present in the traditional culture. However, Neo-Pentecostalism modified the conventional viewpoint and embraced gender equality. Kamaara (2015) noted that humans are not always consistent with this value system, traditional African values, Christian values, and modern values all combine to determine human action in Africa. They choose the kind of value system they will adhere to, such as male dominance of women. Some texts that assert that women and men are equal might consequently be disregarded because they do not conform to predefined societal understandings of women's roles.

It is crucial to remember that Christ lived and taught in a Jewish culture where women were treated with marked inferiority, and were barred from participating in public worship because of their religious beliefs, and were regarded as being incapable of both learning and unlearning spiritual understanding. Mwaura (2005b) averred nonetheless, Christ's views and teachings on women show a departure from conventional Jewish thought. Jesus elevated women to positions as apostles and messengers of the good news of the resurrection. In fact it was first women who saw the resurrected Christ (Nicolaidis, 2022a). Christ's behaviour makes it abundantly evident that discrimination and tyranny against women were not the product of a heavenly command, but rather of a confluence of human interpretations. In view of Christ's inclusive approach towards women, Neo-Pentecostalist's highlight Christ's approach and radically adopt this approach which this research sees as a road map for gender sensitization and education. Hence, the Neo-Pentecostal philosophy should be imitated by everyone as a guiding concept for situating women for general sustainable growth in the church and society at large.

It is our contention that there is absolutely a flaw in the manner in which the gospel is disseminated in different Christian groups and denominations. There is a great need for theological education that can manifest the contemporary interpretations which dissuades the marginalization of women and allows us to move to one which accommodates Jesus teachings and practice of fairness and equity in relationship to gender groups. According to Mwaura (2003), the lack of biblical scholarship is the main reason why most African interpreters of the Bible fall short in their attempts to understand the text. Further, the majority are uneducated and do not comprehend Greek or Hebrew and lack basic theological training. More so, some ministers and preachers of the church do not have better knowledge of the passages in the Bible that offer universal redemption to all humanity irrespective of sex and gender. Women do not possess the autonomy and authority that the Holy Spirit bestowed upon Christian communities.

However, in the contemporary times, this understanding is becoming more emphasized, and the reason why is that there is a proliferation of female radical ministration among many Neo-Pentecostal movements. Consequently, theological education cannot therefore be over emphasized. The World Council of Churches agrees with Wingate (1999) when she stated that the gospel and ministry should be used to solve the pressing issues of human



development and social justice. In order to support this important academic endeavor, the World Council of Churches (WCC) established the Theological Education Fund (TEF). Female Theological education is a must to ensure solid theological education and knowledge since discrimination impedes women's growth and their right to social justice. Theological education offers opportunities for church expansion, according to a report by the Werner and Kang-led World Working Group of Theological Educators-Edinburgh (2010).

First off, the conference made notice of the fact that practically all schools that provide theological education must achieve a number of objectives, one of which is important for highlighting the participation of women in church ministry. It's also critical to emphasize how theological education would strengthen the denominational identities of aspiring pastors and church staff, ensuring that graduates have a strong sense of the church to which they belong. Furthermore, a critical view of both Christian and biblical tradition is emphasized in theological education. So, the churches would discover how to critically examine biblical texts and practices that disadvantage women. According to Veli-Matti (2014), the Neo-Pentecostal movement would significantly benefit from leaders who have had sober training and have learned how to engage in constructive criticism, including self-criticism. He continues by asserting the value of Pentecostal academic theology institutes because they stress the importance of being consistently and progressively critical in the pursuit of the truth.

Pastors and other leaders are instructed to realize the limitations of their ecclesiastical authority and revelation knowledge. According to Sider (2005), the Pentecostal Assemblies of God in Kenya initially did not ordain women. However, after Reverend Owasi studied theology and wrote a thesis on women ordination, there was a significant shift from the previous normal (WOMEN NON-INCLUSIVENESS), which was an egalitarian approach, to the current normal (WOMEN INCLUSIVENESS). "When the General Superintendent brought up the issue for discussion, many people still opposed the ordination of women. The Pentecostal Assemblies of God in Kenya, however, consecrated twenty women for the first time ever in April 2005 as a result of the leader's persistence.

## **Recommendations**

For optimum and adequate inclusiveness of women in all works of life in Nigeria, the following recommendations are highlighted:

Scholarship and free education should be granted to female children and adults.

Cultural and traditional early marriages should be discouraged.

Grants and soft loans should be given to women.

Government, NGOs and international organizations should engage in the starting of small scale businesses for rural women. These should be properly supervised, to ensure success.

The Nigerian government should stop paying lip service to women empowerment and emancipation, but should be practical in its actions towards women empowerment and emancipation

Trusted agents, men and women of integrity should be involved in the management of loans, grants and scholarships meant for women.

Sensitization and dissemination of information about women's education and inclusiveness, should be encouraged.



## Conclusion

The paper has been able to use the Neo-Pentecostal movements as a positive theological ministry that has touched many people's lives as a justification for gender-balanced sensitization and education. By simply including women in all facets of their religious life, they have been able to implement and resolve the long-standing gender inequality issues in Nigeria. Therefore, this work encourages everyone to imitate the energy of Neo-Pentecostalism. By significantly lessening the issue of gender disparity in their leadership hierarchy, neo-Pentecostal movements have made a significant impact on many lives. This article uses this as justification for promoting gender equality in the social hierarchy and the upholding of justice, fairness, and equity for all.

In support of the aforementioned, it is vital to stress that continued use of the more archaic traditional ways for distributing positions between men and women will keep society in a state of eternal stagnation. The study also showed that the employment of outdated gender positioning methods hinders the equality of rights between men and women. As a result, it is important to recognize the creative Neo-Pentecostalism strategy as a means of promoting gender sensitization and education in Nigeria. More specifically, the research investigation shows that the Neo-Pentecostal movement uses full inclusivity to promote a more original and dynamic development; as a result, it is necessary to imitate the Neo-Pentecostal movement's creative techniques for achieving equality for both men and women in the social dynamic.

According to the research, it is important to understand the Holy Bible correctly and conduct a thorough contextual analysis of it in order to ensure that women are treated equally in all human endeavours since a misinterpretation of Christian theology can seriously undermine what gender inclusion actually involves.

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