



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

## Women Inclusivity In Neo-Pentecostalism: A Recipe For Gender-Equality In Nigeria

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: Dec 24, 2024	<p>Gender equality is an essential building block in any given society. Partnership and equality between men and women are the basis of strong families and viable societies. However, women have been consistently excluded from decision making across history and societies. They are being systematically discriminated against within systems of government. It is this power structures that cause further imbalance, marginalization and perpetual under-development. Recently, Neo-Pentecostal movement have taken a significant step in the recognition and maximization of the inclusion of women in its religious hierarchy as such giving women eminent place of equal impetus as men, as such paving ways and encouraging gender sensitization in the Nigerian society. This paper sees this move as a pathway for gender-equality in Nigeria. The methodology adopted in this study is, survey research design. The population of the study consisted of 540 respondents comprising 313 members of Neo-Pentecostal movement, 192 Neo-Pentecostal Movement Pastors and 35 Non Members of Neo-Pentecostal Movement, from which 230 respondents was determined using YARO YAMENT formula and was sampled through stratified random sampling technique. A-30 item questionnaire was used in collecting data constructed, validated and its reliability of 0.84 determined by using CRONBACH alpha formula. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions; whereas the null hypothesis was tested with ANOVA. The study found that, inclusiveness of women in the leadership hierarchical order in the neo-Pentecostal movements is a substantial mark worth emulation, thus a pathway to gender education in Nigeria and 15 viable measures for gender education in Nigeria were identified. It was recommended that, 50% inclusion of women in all human endeavour will engender sustainable development in Nigeria.</p>
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### INTRODUCTION

According to Buda and Badrudeen (2010) quoting Hemmati and Gardiner (2002), "Sustainable development requires the full and equal participation of women at all levels." It is inappropriate to address problems, identify the appropriate strategies, or to implement the solutions, if only half of the people concerned are involved in the process. 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 negotiation process that can engender their inclusiveness and gender balance equation." Inline with above, Moheyuddin (2021), have defined gender as comparative or differential roles, responsibilities and opportunities for women and men in a society. Ziso (2019) further avers that the entire concept, gender, needs to be understood as a cross-cutting and socio-cultural variable. More so, gender refers to the roles expected of males and female within a particular cultural system.

Bruyn (2015) views gender as, the widely shared expectations and norms within a given society about appropriate male and female behaviour, characteristics and roles, which ascribe to men and women differential access to power, including productive resources and decision-making authority. In view of the above, it is evident that gender is not 'sex' which is often misconstrued. 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 does not mean that men and women become the same, but that their opportunities and life chances are equal. Neo-Pentecostalism are Pentecostal groups emanating from the 1980s. They are ministries, churches and para-churches competing for church members. "These groups in Nigeria came to a peak in the 1990s during the increased economic hardship, political crisis, social upheavals, moral chaos and value confusion" (Odey, E., 2018).

She further maintains that these groups are conglomeration of a wide variety of assemblies with equal astonishing flurry of doctrines and practices. Odey E. (2020) asserted that, "although gender is culturally construed, Pentecostal doctrines and dogmas have changed this traditional, cultural and social disadvantages pertaining to women". Noting that, Pentecostal movements being a religion of positive gospel and innovative religion have drastically given credence to equal partnership between men and women. Writing from the view point of the Neo-Pentecostal movement on women inclusiveness in their religious and bureaucratic process, it can be delineated that these movements after a critical examination of the impracticable inclusiveness of women in political processes of the Nigerian society, have decided to lead by example thereby taking advantages of including women in its hierarchical structure, which form the basis that can serve as a pathway for gender balanced sensitization and education.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Odey (2018) describes Neo-Pentecostal movement as plethora of Pentecostal groups, ministries, churches and para-churches competing for church membership. Some of these ministries emanated during the 80s and 90s as a result of severe economic hardship, political and upheaval, moral chaos and value confusion experience in the country, Nigeria. Ayogboyin (2015) further expounded on the concept of Neo-Pentecostalism, contended, they are conglomeration of a wide variety of assemblies with equally astonishing flurry of doctrines and practices. It is this astonishing practices that have seen their practice of including women in all their religious bureaucratic position which has boosted the personality of women on which this research seeks to use as, a pathway to gender education in Nigeria.

Odey, E. A. (2020) writing on Pentecostal contribution to the elevation of the place of women in the ministry noted thus: the emergence and rise of the Pentecostal movement in Nigeria in particular, has given a dramatic visibility to some of the biblical teachings in the history of Nigeria Christianity. Pentecostalism has produced an impact upon the church in Nigeria and to some degree, the impact has been positive. One of those areas it has impacted the Nigerian society is, its ability to give a beautiful gender equality role to both men and women. This paper is aimed at justifying the leadership role women play within the Neo-Pentecostal Movement as an advocacy towards the gender-balanced sensitization and education in Nigeria.

Gender sensitization and education according to Gebara Ivone (2015), views gender as a socially learned concept manifested, institutionalized and transmitted from generation to generation. This requires of individuals to perform their roles as men and women in conformity with what their culture expects of them. It affects not only the males or females but also the relationships which they enter into. These conceptions about what are typically feminine or masculine characteristics, ability and expectations, determine how men and women behave in various situations. Gender forms an important basis for appreciating male/female relations in terms of sex roles, power sharing, decision making, division of labour, access to development, benefits and control over resources. Similarly, the assorted cultures, physical, institutional, social and economic constraints, which men and women are confronted with, are products of the differential sex roles determined by gender.

De Beauvoir Simone (2019) averred that, "one is not born woman but becomes one that aptly captures the pictures." The ground for this is prepared through socialization process, which starts from birth. Gender ideas and expectations are learned from families, friends, schools, work place, religious and cultural institutions, even from the Media and opinion leaders. Viewed from the perspective of the Neo-Pentecostal Movement equality of role in its ministry, it can be seen as an avenue for gender sensitization and education in Nigeria. The typecasting of individuals role, assignment considered appropriate for both sexes and the level of pressure, again forms part of this socialization process. Most societies share these role and rights in such a way that they do subjugate the females to the males.

Clearly, they work to the disadvantage of the female. Plato in Ucheaga (2011), advocated the abolition of the family for a different reason and made child rearing and upbringing the business of the state. The aim was to free women from the encumbrances associated with family life so that women's energies can be incorporated into the development of the state. The idea of Plato is not far from what Neo-Pentecostal movements are practicing thereby try to teach the larger populace, the need to give equal role to both men and women.

### **Statement of the problem**

Gender deals with differentiation between masculine and feminine. It is worth noting that masculinity and femininity, which are social constructs, form an important basis for appreciating male and female relations in terms of sex roles, while religion forms the basis for the spiritual life of society. Religion has been one of the institutions where gender issues are learned. In other words, religion influence gender roles, they are therefore closely related. Religion emphasizes on what women and men do, and, asks questions about the sexual division of labour, and about the related division of social life into domestic and public domains. It says what comprises of women's activities and those of men. In the traditional gender construct, women has always been relegated to the back especially, by the teaching of religion. However, the story seem to have a different outlook, as a result of Neo-Pentecostal reversal approach. Rather than dwell on the traditional approach to Gender roles, introduces the dynamics of women inclusiveness which this paper emphasizes as an advocacy for gender-balanced sensitization and education. The study answers the following research questions.

1. What are the regular customary, traditional and cultural gender roles in Nigeria?
2. What are the innovative strategies by Neo-Pentecostal Movement towards gender equality?

### **Hypothesis**

Ho: There are no significant differences in the mean ratings of the regular customary, traditional and cultural gender roles in Nigeria and the innovative strategies by Neo-Pentecostal Movement towards gender equality.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The design of the study is a survey research meant to collect data from a sample, members of some selected Neo-Pentecostal Movements, Neo-Pentecostal Ministers and Non-members of the Neo Pentecostal Movements. A survey design according to Olaitan and Nwoke (2016) is one in which the entire population or representative sample is studied by collecting and analyzing data from the group through the use of questionnaire, interview or field observation.

The area of the study is located within the Calabar Municipality of Cross River State, Nigeria. The population for the study was 540 respondents made up of 313 members of some selected Neo-Pentecostal Movements, 192 Neo-Pentecostal Ministers, and 35 Non-members of the Neo Pentecostal Movements. Due to the large size of the population, the researchers, sampled 230 respondents determined using YaroYameni formula which comprises 133 members of some selected Neo-Pentecostal Movements, 82 Neo-Pentecostal Ministers and 15 Non-members of the Neo Pentecostal Movements, through proportionate stratified random sampling technique. This technique is

considered appropriate because it takes into account the identified characteristics relevant to the study and each segment was selected based on its proportion to the population (Uzoagulu, 2015).

A structured questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was generated based on the field observation and information gathered from the review of related literature. The questionnaire was structured on four response scale, for the competency and strategy, items with corresponding scale value as follows ; very great extent (VGE) =4, great extent (GE)=3, low extent (LE)=2 and very low extent (VLE)=1. While, 'strongly agree,' 'agree, disagree and strongly disagree' for research question two, with same rating scale. The instrument was subjected to face validation by three experts two from the department of religious and cultural studies and one from department of Christian Religious Studies, University of Calabar, Calabar. Each of those validated was served with a copy of the instrument for thorough scrutiny. Amendments were made on the instrument which reduced the number of items from 35 to 30 based on their constructive criticism and suggestions before the final copy was produced and used for the study.

Twenty copies of the questionnaires were administered to 20 respondents (12 members of Neo-Pentecostal Movement, 6 Neo-Pentecostal Ministers and 2 non Neo-Pentecostal members, to establish the reliability of the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha ( $\alpha$ ). The computation yielded reliability coefficient of 0.83 which indicates the internal consistency of the instrument.

A total of 230 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the respondents personally with the help of the two research assistants trained for the purpose. Completed copies were returned on the spot. Thereby achieving 100 percent return rate.

The data collected were analyzed using mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) with standard deviation (SD) to answer the questions and ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) to test the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance and 227 degree of freedom. The decision regarding the level of the perceived innovative strategy towards innovative strategies by Neo-Pentecostal Movement towards gender equality were based on the upper and lower limit of the mean. Thus:

3.50 – 4.00 very great extent (VGE)

2.50 – 3.49 great extent (GE)

1.50 – 2.49 low extent (LE)

1.00 – 1.49 very low extent (VLE)

In the determination of the innovative strategies by Neo-Pentecostal Movement towards gender equality, the mean was also the deciding statistic for the research question. Two the mean of 2.50 and above was regarded as agree for the items, whereas any item with mean less than 2.50 was indicated as disagree. The null hypothesis was rejected, when the calculated F-ratio, was greater than the F-table value and was significant, otherwise do not reject.

## RESULTS

The results of the analysis of the data collected were presented in tables according to the research questions and hypothesis being answered and tested respectively.

### Research question one

What are the regular customary, traditional and cultural gender roles in Nigeria?

**Table 1: Mean Rating and Standard Deviation on the regular customary, traditional and cultural gender roles in Nigeria.**

S/N	Regular Customary, Traditional And Cultural Gender Roles In Nigeria	Male Church Leaders	Male Church Leaders	General Congregation	Staff	Overall
		- SD1	- SD2	- SD3	- SD4	
		x1	x2	x3	x4	
	Women should be married	2.31 0.91	2.40 0.32	1.98 0.84	2.23 0.69	LE
	Women should remain at home	2.46 0.94	2.38 0.06	2.03 0.93	2.29 0.83	LE
	Men are the head of the Home	2.12 0.97	2.26 0.78	2.10 0.86	2.16 0.87	LE
	Women duties are in the kitchen	30 0.92	2.20 0.95	2.35 0.87	1.95 0.91	LE
	There is always apathy between male and female position	1.51 0.95	2.32 0.85	2.01 0.67	1.95 0.82	LE
	Education is strictly for boys	2.15 0.66	2.37 0.77	2.11 0.73	2.21 0.72	LE
	Girl child exist only for child birth	2.30 0.95	2.31 0.68	2.33 0.75	2.31 0.79	LE
	Women are to procreate for farming	2.05 0.93	2.08 0.70	2.04 0.81	2.30 0.81	LE
	Women cannot talk in the presence of men	2.13 0.86	2.41 0.83	2.15 0.78	2.23 0.82	LE
	Women cannot choose when men have not chosen	2.19 0.90	1.97 0.78	1.99 0.69	2.05 0.79	LE
	Property inheritance belong to men only	1.20 0.98	2.06 0.84	1.79 0.74	1.68 0.85	LE
	All landed property belong to the men	1.53 0.93	2.03 0.87	2.09 0.91	1.88 0.90	LE
	Women are not allowed at war fronts	1.65 0.94	2.07 0.85	1.87 0.88	1.86 0.89	LE
	Women are more active in farm work	2.04 0.83	2.09 0.74	2.06 0.76	2.06 0.78	LE
	Women are seen as the weaker being	2.18 0.73	2.21 0.61	2.16 0.73	2.15 0.68	LE
	Grand Mean	( $\bar{x}$ )				

The result of the analysis on table one on the mean response of members of Neo-Pentecostal movements, ministers of Neo-Pentecostal movement and non-members are with respective mean range of 1.20 - 2.48, 1.79 -2.35 with grand mean of 1.94, 2.26 and 2.07 respectively indicated the adverse and significant use of older customary traditional approaches, for gender distribution of position to men and women. In the same view, the overall grand mean of 2.09 revealed that the used of older method of gender positioning discourages the equality of rights between men and women as such requires the appreciation of the innovative strategy of Neo-Pentecostalism as a pathway for gender sensitization and education in Nigeria. More so, the SD of 0.89, 0.75, and 0.80 respectively for the three categories of the respondents are close therefore indicates homogeneity in their responses. This implies that there is the need for the emulation of the innovative strategies of Neo-Pentecostalism towards the equal position given to both men and women in their ministry.

### Research question two

What are the innovative strategies by Neo-Pentecostal Movement towards gender equality?

**Table 2: Mean Rating and Standard Deviation on the innovative strategies by Neo-Pentecostal Movement towards gender equality**

S/N	innovative strategies by Neo-Pentecostal Movement towards gender equality	Male Church Leaders	Female Church Leaders	General Congregation	Overall	Dee
		- SD1	- SD2	- SD3	- SD4	
		x1	x2	x3	x4	
	Women are made church leaders	2.65 0.68	2.76 0.81	2.80 0.87	2.74 0.79	LE
	Women can mount the pulpit	3.25 3.73	2.72 0.83	3.13 0.92	3.01 0.82	LE
	Women are ordained as priests/pastors	3.20 0.81	2.83 0.75	2.74 0.93	2.89 0.83	LE
	Women are members of the church council	2.78 0.73	3.92 0.67	3.01 0.98	3.24 0.79	LE
	Women are church mothers	2.70 0.76	2.73 0.78	2.91 0.95	2.78 0.83	LE
	There are deacon and elders	2.61 0.71	3.08 0.71	2.78 2.91	0.82 2.78	LE
	Women contributes to church decisions	3.21 0.82	2.89 0.80	3.16 0.86	3.09 0.83	LE
	Financial responsibility are also option to them	2.89 0.65	2.79 0.75	3.04 0.67	2.91 0.69	LE
	Women are engaged in the evangelical work	3.07 0.74	3.20 0.72	3.02 0.85	3.10 0.77	LE
	Women are allowed to manage parishes	3.06 0.73	3.12 0.77	3.21 0.90	3.13 0.80	LE
	Women are ordained Bishops	3.13 0.69	2.75 0.92	3.07 0.97	2.98 0.86	LE
	Women are made church choir master	2.76 0.66	3.16 0.85	2.89 0.92	2.94 0.81	LE
	Power rotate rationally between men and women	2.75 0.78	2.96 0.79	3.05 0.94	2.83 0.81	LE
	Charismatic and prophetic ministry are sometimes handled by women	2.89 0.74	3.02 0.65	3.11 0.82	3.01 0.74	LE
	Women are also engaged in intra and inter-religious dialogue	2.26 0.87	2.76 0.72	2.95 0.74	2.80 0.77	LE
	Grand Mean	2.88 0.74 ( $\bar{x}$ )	2.96 0.77	2.99 0.88	2.95 0.85	LE

Table 2 above shows the mean and standard deviation responses of members of Neo-Pentecostal movements, ministers of Neo-Pentecostal movement and non-members on the innovative strategy of Neo-Pentecostalism of engaging women in all leadership position in its ministry as a pathway for gender sensitization and education in Nigeria. The result shows that the overall mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) and standard deviation (SD) scores range between 2.74 and 3.13 and 0.69 and 0.86 respectively for the three groups. More so, the grand mean of 2.88, 2.99 of members of Neo-Pentecostal movements, ministers of Neo-Pentecostal movement and non-members respectively, with overall grand mean of 2.85 which were all above the benchmark of 2.50 indicated agreed to all the strategies investigated. Hence, these strategies were found to be viable enough for gender sensitization and education in Nigeria so as to teach to the mass the need to engage women in all works of life. More so, judging

from this perspective, Neo-Pentecostal movement have succeeded in making tremendous development which can be attributed to all involvement of both male and female.

**Table 3: ANOVA Comparism of the mean responses of members of Neo-Pentecostal movements, ministers of Neo-Pentecostal movement and non-members on the innovative strategy of Neo-Pentecostalism of engaging women in all leadership position.**

Respondents	Df	Sum Square (SS)	Mean Square (MS)	f-cal	Critical Value	Signature	Dee
Between group 2	2	0.69	0.345	0.227	3.32	NS	Do not Reject
	2.27	343.83	1.52				
Total	229	344.52					

The responses of the three groups of respondents were compared using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and the result indicate that the calculated f-ratio of 0.227 is less than the f-table value (critical value) of 3.32. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, since the computed F is considered not significant. This implies that the three groups do not differ significantly in their opinion regarding the innovative strategies of Neo-Pentecostalism of engaging women in all leadership position, as such, it could be recommended that this innovative strategy of Neo-Pentecostalism of general inclusiveness of women in leadership authority can serve as a pathway towards gender sensitization and education in Nigeria.

**Major Findings**

1. Allmembers of Neo-Pentecostal movements, ministers of Neo-Pentecostal movement and non-membersindicated that this new and innovative strategy by Neo-Pentecostal Movements, of inclusiveness of women in its church activities,is a necessary requirement to be used as a reference point when discussing gender issues. As such, it can serve as a pathway for gender sensitization and education in Nigeria.
2. The study found that the 15 factors identified, were viable innovative strategies, towards gender education, gender sensitization, and gender reconstruction in Nigeria.

**DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The result on research question one showed that the 15 items investigated were generally at low level (LL), hence there is need for improvement in the innovative strategies towards women inclusiveness in all human endeavor. Hence, there is need for the emulation of Neo-Pentecostal approach towards gender equality. This finding is in consonance with the position of the 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, all are believed to give women the confidence skill 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 term of academic knowledge and skills, but also in attitude, belief and practices.” In the same vein, Nwagbara (2013) posited in three major points the need for women education for all round inclusiveness: namely the orientation of the attitude of all female, irrespective of age, towards education, the awakening of the awareness of all citizens to the fact that equal educational opportunity is the right of all citizens, irrespective of age, race, sex, locality, creed or social status and should be made available to all. And lastly, the awakening of the consciousness of women to the need for the development of a positive self-image.

Juniad-Eko (2010) using Islamic religion to support his 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 same rights, as such, men and women are equal. JuniadEko’s

positions tend to support the innovative strategy of Neo-Pentecostal movement of women inclusiveness in its church activities and leadership positions. Similarly, the international convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW) has rightly noted the rights of women as inherent in the natural rights of all human existence, as such women have an equal fundamental rights as do men. The comprehensive convention reflects the depth of the exclusion and restriction practiced against women solely on the basis of their sex, by calling for equal rights for women, regardless of marital status, in all fields, political, economic, social, cultural and civil. It provides for the adoption at the national level of legislation prohibiting discrimination and recommends, the adoption of special temporary measures to accelerate the establishment of equality between men and women, including changing the paradigms and models, socio-cultural behaviour patterns that perpetuate discrimination.

Consequently, it can be averred that women inclusiveness approach adopted by the Neo-Pentecostal religious movement is in tandem with the objectives of the international convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and should be used or adopted by other stake holders in Nigeria to serve as a criteria or reference point for, gender sensitization and education in Nigeria,

### **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 marriage should be discourage.

Grant and soft loan should be given to women.

Government, N.G.O. and international organizations should engage in the starting of small scale businesses for rural women.

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 involve in issues of loans, grant and scholarship meant for women.

Sensitization and dissemination of information about women education and inclusiveness, should be encourage.

### **CONCLUSION**

Neo-Pentecostal movements as a positive theological ministry which has touched many lives, has also succeeded to implement and settle the long unraveled gender inequality issues in Nigeria. By simply including women in all spectrum of their religious life, which the paper has been able to use, as a justification for gender-balanced sensitization and education. This work therefore, calls on all and sundry, to emulate this dynamism by Neo-Pentecostalism.

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