

**GENDER STEREOTYPING IN CHURCH AND COMMUNITY:
A NIGERIAN FEMININE PERSPECTIVE**

by

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Declaration

By submitting this dissertation electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the owner of the copyright thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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ABSTRACT

In the Nigerian church and society negative gender stereotyping is pronounced in every aspect of human activities. The basic premise of this study therefore is that the Nigerian church and society need to deal with these negative gender stereotypes which breed gender insensitivity and injustice. Those cultural, political and economic structures, those proverbs and myths that have hitherto hindered women from attaining their full potential have to give way to a new mind-set and a change in attitude in both men and women in order to bring the much needed transformation and gender partnership in Nigeria.

The study in surveying the landscape highlights some important issues that women have to struggle with. Among other things, the low female literacy rate is one of the greatest hindrances women have today. This is due to the institutionalised structures and culturally created lenses that make some people still perceive men as more superior than women and therefore regard the education of women as a waste of resources. Although men are always perceived to be the better and more superior specie, this study does not advocate for gender bending. What is important is people being who God has made them to be and working with others as partners for a better human society. Women's involvement in development is based on the theological premise that true development must have a holistic approach which more than building infrastructures, deals with the development of humans.

A holistic approach to development implies a transformational development that is different from the status quo which is overshadowed by men's voices and experiences. Women's voices, experiences and potentials have to play a major role in this approach. The need to listen to women was further stressed by Powers (2003: viii) when he said:

Unless we listen, any action we may take in this area, no matter how well intentioned, is likely to bypass the real concerns of women and to confirm female condescension and reinforce male dominance. Listening, in a spirit of partnership and equality, is the most practical response we can make and is the foundation for our mutual partnership to reform unjust structures.

Due to the interdisciplinary nature of this work, both theoretical and methodological triangulations were employed. The empirical survey at the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria and in different public corporations and government ministries of Abia State on the participation of women in leadership positions brought to light a number of issues which have also been enumerated in this work.

Knowing that development involves the totality of human life which include the development of infrastructures as well as the development of all facets of human life, the church and society should work towards this transformational development which will help in restoring the dignity of women.

OPSOMMING

Negatiewe stereotipering kom nêrens in menslike omgang so duidelik na vore nie as juis met betrekking tot geslag. Die basiese veronderstelling van hierdie tesis is dus dat die Nigeriese kerk en samelewing betrokke moet raak by die negatiewe geslag-stereotipering wat onsensitiwiteit en onreg ten opsigte van geslag in die hand voer. Die kulturele, politieke en ekonomiese strukture, end die spreuke en mites wat vrouens tot dusver verhinder het om hulle volle potensiaal te verwesenlik, moet plek maak vir 'n nuwe ingesteldheid by mans sowel as vrouens om die nodige transformasie en samewerkende deelgenootskap van die geslagte in Nigerië te bewerkstellig.

In die verkenning van die landskap werp hierdie studie onder andere lig op 'n lae geletterdheidsvlak as een van die vernaamste struikelblokke wat vrouens terughou. Hierdie stand van sake hou verband met geïnstansionaliseerde strukture en kultureel ontwikkelde lense wat sommige mense steeds in staat stel om mans as meerderes te sien en die opleiding van vrouens as 'n verkwisting van hulpbronne te beskou. Alhoewel mans altyd as die beter en meer voortreflike spesie beskou word, bepleit hierdie studie nie 'gender bending' nie, omdat die Skrif vereis dat mans mans en vrouens vrouens moet wees, soos Grady (2003: 87) ook verklaar wanneer sy sê dat God nie androginie of enige vorm van wysiging in geslagsverwante verhoudings oorsien nie; God word eerder daardeur verheerlik dat mans manlik en vrouens vroulik is. Ook hoef 'n vrou nie kinders te hê om vroulik te wees nie en 'n man hoef nie 'n leier te wees om manlik te wees nie. Wat belangrik is, is dat mense moet wees wat God hulle geskape het om te wees en tesame met mekaar in vennootskap moet werk vir 'n beter menslike samelewing. Vrouens se betrokkenheid by ontwikkeling word gebaseer op die teologiese veronderstelling dat ware ontwikkeling 'n holistiese benadering moet volg. Dit vloei voort uit die Bybelse skeppingsverhaal waarin daar geen digotomie tussen die man en die vrou of die mensdom en die hele skepping is nie.

'n Vroulike benadering tot ontwikkeling veronderstel 'n nuwe hermeneutiek wat verskil van die status quo wat deur die stemme en ervarings van mans oorweldig word. Die vroulike benadering

wat sorg, mededeelsaamheid en bevryding betrek, is die mees toepaslike benadering hiertoe. Omdat hierdie hermeneutiek nou nodig is, is dit nodig dat ons na vrouens luister. Powers (2003: viii) druk dit as volg uit:

Unless we listen, any action we may take in this area, no matter how well intentioned, is likely to bypass the real concerns of women and to confirm female condescension and reinforce male dominance. Listening, in a spirit of partnership and equality, is the most practical response we can make and is the foundation for our mutual partnership to reform unjust structures.

Die interdisiplinêre aard van hierdie studie het dit nodig gemaak om van beide teoretiese en metodologiese triangulering gebruik te maak. Die empiriese oorsig met betrekking tot vrouens se teenwoordigheid in leierskap in die Presbiteriaanse Kerk van Nigerië en in verskillende openbare liggame en regeringsdepartemente van die Staat Abia het 'n aantal kwessies wat ook in hierdie werk genoem word, na vore gebring.

In die wete dat ontwikkeling die totale menslike lewe betrek, behoort die kerk 'n bewerker van verandering te wees. Feminisme in die teologie vloei voort uit die oortuiging dat 'n teologie van verhoudings 'n bydrae kan lewer tot die soort menslike samesyn wat God by die uitlewing van die vennootskap van mans en vrouens van ons verwag.

DEDICATION

I DEDICATE THIS WORK TO

MY HUSBAND
UMA A. ONWUNTA

AND

CHILDREN
CHINOMSO, CHIMA AND KELECHI

FOR THEIR CHERISHED LOVE AND RELATIONSHIP

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I cannot fully express my gratitude to the Almighty God who has seen me through this challenging journey. The fact that I started and have also completed the doctoral degree is an eloquent testimony that my God can do all things and He is to be trusted.

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WHILE NOT CLAIMING TO BE EXHAUSTIVE, WE COULD SAY THAT THE MAIN FOCUS OF THIS RESEARCH WAS TO LIFT OUT SOME VITAL POINTS CONCERNING ISSUES THAT CAUSE GENDER STEREOTYPING, AS WELL AS TO HELP PEOPLE THINK OF PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN AS A WAY FORWARD IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY. NOW THE CHURCH, SOCIETY, NGOS, AND WOMEN THEMSELVES ARE CHALLENGED TO WORK WITH A NEW MIND-SET IN

ORDER TO CHALLENGE THE UNJUST STRUCTURAL PATRIARCHAL INEQUALITIES WHICH,
 AMONG OTHERS, BREED CULTURAL DEHUMANIZATION, POLITICAL MANIPULATION,
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ABBREVIATIONS

AICs	African Independent Churches
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CCN	Christian Council of Nigeria
CGIT	Christian Girls in Training
FHI	Family Health International
GEN. SEC.	General Secretary
HIV	Human Immune Virus
I/C	In charge
INT.	International
MCA	Men's Christian Association
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NGR.	Nigeria
PCN	Presbyterian Church of Nigeria
REC	Reformed Ecumenical Council
STD	Sexually transmitted diseases
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
SCS	South Central Synod
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Humans Right
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WARC	World Alliance of Reformed Churches
WCC	World Council of Churches
WG	Women's Guild

MAPS



Fig. 1. Map of the Federal Republic of Nigeria showing the 36 States and Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory. (taken from www.motherlandnigeria.com/geography.html)

CHAPTER 1 RESEARCH FOCUS AND OUTLINE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This dissertation makes a contribution to discussions on gender stereotyping which is one of the central and crucial issues in church and the Nigerian community. A woman's perspective is the underlying viewpoint of this dissertation.

In the Nigerian church and community, gender stereotyping is pronounced in every facet of human activities especially in proverbs and myths. Both in the church and larger society, negative gender stereotyping which breed gender insensitivity and injustice manifests itself in various forms and structures such as economic, cultural, political and religious. This is so because the patriarchal mind set and attitude of people about women in society also extends to the church. There should be a paradigm shift from the patriarchal system of men and women relationship which has hitherto been *partner-sheep*¹ to a genuine partnership. In this way, stereotyping which have hindered Nigerian women from attaining their full potential will give way to a new mind-set in both men and women in order to bring much needed transformation and gender partnership in Nigeria.

Although the Nigerian women are 'better' placed now than was the case in previous decades, the desired result has not been achieved. This was also observed by Edet and Ekeya (1989: 6), who said:

It is a well known fact that there is a gradual upsurge of women from what is generally known as their stereotyped traditional enclaves² into public focus throughout the world today. It is also worthy of acknowledgement that more attention has been given to

¹ Partner-sheep is discussed in chapter two page 32.

²The traditional role of women has been to bear and rear children, take care of the husband and all the domestic affairs of the home. "We look ahead to a time when our children and our children's children will never have to experience the *escollos* (pitfalls or obstacles) that we have. I was quite old before I started developing a sense of self-worth. However, my daughter is just a teenager and she already knows that she is a very special creature of God. She can accomplish great things if she works hard enough (Powers. 2003: 98)".

women in Nigeria at national and international levels which in some ways have enabled them to occupy those enviable positions that were originally dominated by men.

However, despite the efforts by women themselves to struggle through and the contributions of the government and some churches, the desired goal has not been achieved, due to gender stereotyping which is still pervasive. As Uchem (2001: 22) rightly observed, “There is still much resistance against the full acknowledgement of women’s equality of human dignity with men in reality.” In the same vein, Eme (2004: 1) also points out that “Nigerian women, both past and present, have experienced structured domination, discrimination, and exploitation of greater magnitude than men, and the concept of inclusive covenant is a solution to the problem.” To say that the God-given potential in most women today remains unutilized is not an overstatement; that men still dominate in almost every facet of human life is common knowledge. Probably because of their cultural, theological or historical backgrounds, some men still hold tenaciously to gender stereotyping and, as a result of this, find it difficult to partner with women. But partnering with women in the struggles of life is not an option but an imperative. According to Njoroge (1994: 30):

a call for partnership is a call for participation
and community building where mutual love, justice
and respect for all life are the building blocks.

This call for partnership between men and women is not only a call to the society but also to the church. When Jesus described His disciples as the light of the world and the salt of the earth,³ He meant that the church, which comprises men and women, should be an agent for change and social transformation. According to Maggay (1994: 48),

As ‘salt’, we penetrate society and act as a preservative against social putrefaction,
restoring and affirming whatever is good and just and lovely in the things around us

³ Matthew 5: 13-16 see the disciples as the salt of the earth and the light of the world, but asks this pertinent question: if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? Or can anyone light a candle and put it under a bowl? This means that our deeds of righteousness and justice should be seen by all. As Christ’s disciples we cannot claim to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world when structures that oppress women are still present, even in the church.

(Philippians 4: 8). As 'light', we stand before forces of darkness, a sign of the truth about human condition and the meaning of history and human existence.

The church is therefore intended to be that inclusive community of people who reflect and radiate the love of God to the world through the agency of the men and women in its membership. The church is to prepare people for community service and the issue of gender balance should be top in the agenda of the church and society. Thus, partnership will be the lenses for our epistemology.

1.2 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM/QUESTION

In the light of the above introduction, the following questions have been formulated:

- To what extent has gender stereotyping been used to define people's roles in Church and society, especially in Nigeria?
- In terms of women's roles in church and society, how can partnership become a model to bond women and men and also free them as pilgrims travelling the same road of human struggles?

1.3 MOTIVATION FOR THE RESEARCH

The researcher is a Nigerian woman and, by the grace of God, an ordained female minister in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria (PCN). I have been privileged to work with women in the church and in some social organizations, in different capacities and at various times as Secretary, Treasurer and Co-coordinator. I also have the privilege of being the first National President of the Presbyterian Ministers' Wives Fellowship. In most churches and communities in Nigerian society, women have the numbers but do not have the voice, as is evident from our empirical survey in Chapter five. There is hardly any church or community where women are not more in number (Kattey, 1992: 75) but, sadly enough, it is rare to find a church or community where women are equal in number with men in terms of leadership positions and power sharing.

Sometimes women are even excluded from discussing matters that affect them. Powers (2003: 61) asks this pertinent question: “Does it not seem obvious to you that the exclusion of half of the world’s population is not something that God would want?” It seems that many churches in Nigeria have forgotten that both men and women are created in the image and likeness of God and that there is no “sacred” role meant for men only. In the ecclesiastical circle, the issue of female ordination remains a struggle in some mainline churches, especially in Nigeria. While some churches have reluctantly opened the door to women’s ordination and have created space for women in some areas of leadership, others have not yet seen the need to do so.

The opportunities of working with women have opened my eyes to the immeasurable potential and the untapped resources of women in Church and society. These opportunities have also given me an insight into the great benefit the church and society would have if men would partner with women in all spheres of life, especially in development activities.

Furthermore, having co-coordinated the activities of a group of girls in the church who are known as The Christian Girls in Training (C. G. I. T.) for more than ten years, has strongly confirmed to me that the Church will not maximize its membership potential until the female members are recognized, respected and given full opportunity to use their gifts and gifting for the good of all. I am indeed overwhelmed by the discovery that women have great potential which lies unutilized. This discovery, therefore, is part of my motivation for this project!

In addition to the above-mentioned points, I have also discovered that gender injustice remains a critical issue due to cultural and theological conservatism. The structural inequality and negative gender stereotyping that exist in church and society is a great source of concern.

1.4 HYPOTHESIS

The hypothesis of this research is that gender stereotyping that portrays women negatively has to give way to gender partnership for us to have holistic human development. Furthermore, if society and church, in particular, could deal with the gender stereotyping which breeds gender insensitivity and injustice, space could be created for men to partner with women in bringing about social transformation and community development. What this would entail is that the

church should encourage partnership between men and women in spreading the gospel with love and compassion, which is the enfleshment or embodiment of the values of love, justice, peace, care, etc. of the kingdom of God. Society on its own part has to do away with gender discrimination. The age-long structural gender inequality has to give way to partnership in order to allow for holistic community development. The dimensions of caring, sharing, and preserving by men and women can enhance our consciousness in addressing gender stereotyping in church and society, as well as harness the long unutilized resources and potential of women. This will also lead to (and enhance the process of) transformation in church and society and reflect the values of God's kingdom inherent in this approach.

1.5 POSSIBLE VALUE OF THE RESEARCH

In Nigerian church and society where gender stereotyping and institutionalised structures work against women, the product of this research is expected to be a useful resource to create the awareness for a change in attitude and mind-set. This work calls on both leaders and the members of the church, government, and other groups who are concerned, as well as for those who are indifferent about the position of women and their work in Church and Society that they should create more space in their own environments for women to use their potentials. It is expected that this work will be used in Theological Institutions for theological training to prepare women and men for a life of partnership in the Church's ministry to the world. It will help society in the fight against gender stereotyping which has hitherto been central to the exclusion and oppression of women, whether in the Church or in the larger society. NGOs involved with community development and gender issues will also be able to refer to it as resource, knowing that any development talk without women, who make up the numbers and are among the poorest of the poor, is no development at all. Finally, this research calls for a wholesome change of attitude towards womanhood and also encourages women to learn from their history and tradition and know that they can organize themselves to improve their own lives. As servants of Christ and in partnership with men, the Gospel empowers and positions them to deal with the reality, problems and challenges of any situation in which they find themselves. Together with others, they can and should make a difference!

1.6 METHODOLOGY

The study made use of combined qualitative and quantitative methodology, which is often termed “triangulation”, with a view to increasing the reliability of observations (De Vos, 1998: 359). Triangulation is a method in which “it is better to observe something from several angles or view points” and therefore employs several kinds of methods or data (Neumann, 2000: 124; Denzin & Lincoln 1994: 214). I have found this method to be particularly useful with regard to this subject area, ‘Theology and Development’, especially because of its interdisciplinary nature⁴ regarding gender issues. In a study of this nature, several points of view need to be represented in the interaction.

Four basic types of triangulation have been identified, namely data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation and methodological triangulation (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994: 215). This study employs the necessary triangulation.

In the course of the research work, the researcher consulted relevant books, journals, unpublished theses/seminar papers, articles, and other sources that were available, including the researcher’s personal experience. In addition, the researcher finds the Practical Theological definition⁵ helpful. As is already evident, discrimination against women due to gender stereotyping has a history. It follows that any attempt to deal with gender stereotyping must pay attention to and seriously take into account the historical context in which women have had to live in their

⁴ The rediscovery of the holistic and interdisciplinary approach to modern problems seems to have a future. The approach presupposes that the global interdependence in all spheres of life—economic, political, cultural, social, technological and scientific—has become part and parcel of human life (Wasike & Waruta 2000: 11). For this reason, one is now able to study Theology and Development, and within development talk about gender issues. The interdisciplinary approach is indeed bearing fruit.

⁵ According to Hendriks (2004: 19) Theology is about

- “The missional praxis of the Triune God, Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier, and
- God’s body, an apostolic faith community (the church)
- A specific time and place within the globalized world (a wider contextual situation),
- Where members of the community are involved in a vocationally based critical and
- Constructive interpretation of their present reality (local analysis)
- Drawing upon an interpretation of the normative sources of Scripture and tradition,
- Struggling to discern God’s will for their present situation (a critical correlation hermeneutic),
- Being a sign of God’s kingdom on earth while moving forward with an eschatological faith based reality in view (that will lead to a vision and a mission statement) while obediently participating in transformative action at different levels: personal, ecclesial. Societal, ecological and scientific (a doing, liberating, transformative theology that leads to a strategy, implementations and an evaluation of progress).”

different contexts. In this connection, therefore, the interaction of theory and practise, which makes the practical theological approach a hermeneutical one, is explored (Hendriks, 2004: 23-34; Louw, 1998: 4). However, the researcher uses only relevant aspects in the ensuing chapters of this research. This contextual analysis of gender stereotyping is thus assessed by means of an epistemology of partnership.

1.6.1 SAMPLING

Quota sampling in the form of questionnaires is employed in Chapter five. The questionnaire method may present a potential problem with reliability due to various reasons such as geographical location, illiteracy and lack of adequate exposure to such, and sometimes the unwillingness, on the part of some individuals, to participate in the activity. However, efforts were made to take care of the foreseeable problems by educating people on the importance of the questionnaire.

The survey was carried out in the church and government among some members of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria and government workers in the Abia State public service. The geographical location is shown on the maps in pages xv and xvi of this dissertation.

1.6.2 CATEGORIES

The categories for the survey are made up of men and women, both in the church and in the government establishments where the survey was conducted. By conducting the survey in church and government establishments, a more reliable response from the general public was obtained.

1.6.3 GENDER

The questionnaire was distributed fairly among the men and women in these establishments.

1.6.4 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUE

Prior to the distribution of the questionnaire, two field workers from the church and government were selected and trained for the distribution and collection of the forms. Apart from the questionnaire, unstructured scheduled interviews were also conducted. This type of interviewing

allows for guidelines which contain “questions and themes that are important to the research (De Vos, 1998: 299).” All the questionnaires and interviews had a common goal, which was to survey and find out how much space women occupy in the church and in Nigerian society. Respondents were permitted to deviate from the predetermined order of questioning. Thumma (1998: 206) describes the benefit of such an approach as its use of:

... planned questions around specific issues and general items but [it] also employs the freedom of unstructured approach. The people being interviewed are permitted to respond to questions in the language and format most meaningful to them. If you conduct many such interviews, you have the freedom to allow people to deviate from the predetermined subject, knowing that you can learn the specifics from others. You never know where one member’s verbal wanderings may lead or what significant fact may be uncovered.

1.7 LIMITATIONS

This research does not reflect the opinion of every Nigerian woman. Rather, it makes contributions on issues based on the research. All the congregations in the PCN were not covered in the church survey, but the aim was towards a fair representation of the population of the members under survey. Although quota sampling categories may not accurately represent all the categories of people involved in the survey (Neumann, 2000: 198), the researcher analyzed the data according to the approach suggested by Huberman and Miles (in Poggenpoel, 1998: 340), which outlines three interlinked sub-processes: data reduction, data display, drawing conclusions and verification. This method was chosen because the approach takes into account the presence of conceptual frameworks. Furthermore, the data were selected, condensed and organized into a concise assembly of information, as is seen in Chapter five of this work. Analysis of the questionnaire was also undertaken.

1.8 AIM

While not claiming to be exhaustive, our main focus in this dissertation is to make a contribution on gender stereotyping which is one of the central and crucial issues for African women and

raise some vital points concerning other issues like women's education, leadership positions, culture etc. It is also the task of this work to help people re-think partnership between women in church and society. The fact that the church as the body of Christ has a great responsibility towards its members, which include men and women,⁶ and towards the larger society is also established. While the PCN and the Abia State Government are the focus of this work, global consciousness of gender stereotyping also influenced the work because the issue of gender stereotyping is not a Nigerian or an African affair only, but a global phenomenon.

1.9 OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTER OUTLINE

The first chapter serves as an introduction to the study and also explains the motivation for the choice of the topic, which is "Gender Stereotyping in Church and Community: A Nigerian Woman's Perspective". It also seeks to justify its academic investigation as well as articulate the main research problem and hypothesis.

CHAPTER ONE

Chapter one comprises the following:

- Introduction
- Research problem and the research question
- Research hypothesis
- Motivation for the research project
- Aim of the research
- Possible value of the research
- Research Methodology

CHAPTER TWO

This chapter deals with concepts and their negative and positive effects which hinder or enhance the partnership of men and women in bringing about the much needed social transformation and community change, both in Nigeria and in other parts of the world.

⁶ Apart from men and women, the youth and children also form part of the church. I have only mentioned men and women here for the purpose of this research work.

CHAPTER THREE

Stereotyping is no where more pronounced in human society than in the field of gender. This chapter discusses some issues by which gender insensitivity and injustice is bred. These issues also immensely impact women's lives daily. These include Education, Health, Leadership/Political positions of women, the Law and Women's rights, Labour and Economics, and many others.

CHAPTER FOUR

It is common knowledge that different societies have different ways of looking at people, especially men and women in their particular contexts. This chapter, among other things, looks at the contexts in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria to see how people are perceived in their environments. Through culturally created lenses, men are seen differently from the way women are perceived in Nigeria.

This perception also determines the roles assigned to the different sexes, whether in the church or the larger society. The underlying assumption in this chapter is that women have been subjugated and relegated to the background in crucial issues of life, both in the church and in society, on the basis of cultural, theological or historical biases. Paul's ambivalence in some of his epistles and the role of Pauline theology in the contemporary churches are discussed. This chapter also focuses on the issue of women's ordination in the Presbyterian Church and some arguments around this topic.

The chapter furthermore examines the transformative role of the church as *ekklesia* in engendering partnership among the various members of the body of Christ. In addition, it argues that the church should encourage partnership between men and women in spreading the gospel with love and compassion which is the enfleshment or embodiment of the values of love, justice, peace, care, etc. of the kingdom of God. As an agent of change and social transformation, the ecclesia should be a community of God's people within the larger human community. In this regard, gender balancing must be a priority in the mission of the church in the world. And the incarnation of God in the person of Jesus Christ remains the clearest example and challenge for the church's active engagement and participation in community development.

CHAPTER FIVE

This chapter specifically looks at the findings derived from the empirical research conducted in Nigeria. It identifies the issues, analyzes the data and draws conclusions about the need for men and women to see each other as partners in the task of development, both in church and society.

CHAPTER SIX

Believing that the way forward is not to hand over to women or take over from men, we advocate that partnership and not *partner-sheep* as an antidote to stereotyping and the road map to transformational development, both in the church and in society. This is the argument in this chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Chapter seven comprises the summary of the arguments and the general conclusion of the whole work. It also outlines some recommendations on how the church and society can overcome the problem of gender stereotyping that has hitherto hindered development in Nigeria.

CHAPTER 2 CONCEPTUALISATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The process of specifying what we mean when we use certain terms in research is called conceptualisation (Babbie 2004: 122). Before discussing gender stereotyping and other concepts in this chapter, it may be worthwhile to have a look at the situation in which most women find themselves, and are struggling to escape from. Although this scenario is not peculiar to Nigeria but it could be said that most women in Nigeria find themselves in the situation enumerated below.

According to Nussbaum (2000: 1), “women in many parts of the world lack support for the fundamental functions of a human life. They are less well nourished than men, less healthy, more vulnerable to physical violence and to sexual abuse. They are much less likely than men to be literate, and still less likely to have professional or technical education. With reference to the work place, Nussbaum (2000: 1) states, should they attempt to enter the workplace, they face greater obstacles, including intimidation from family or spouse, sex discrimination in hiring, and sexual harassment in the workplace itself – all, frequently, without effective legal recourse. According to Nussbaum (2000: 1) similar obstacles often impede their effective participation in political life. In many nations, women are not full equals under the law: they do not have the same property rights as men, the same right to conclude a contract, the same rights of association, mobility, and religious liberty. Burdened, often, with the “double day” of taxing employment⁷ and full responsibility for housework and childcare, they lack opportunities for play⁸ and for the cultivation of their imaginative and cognitive faculties. All these factors according to Nussbaum (2000: 1) take their toll on emotional well-being: women have fewer opportunities than men to live free from fear and to enjoy rewarding times of love – especially when, as often, they are married without choice in childhood and have no recourse from bad marriages. In all these ways,

⁷ In my context, and in most cases, especially in the rural areas, women trek many kilometres to fetch water from the stream for family use, after which they cook and prepare the children for school. Then they go to the farm, work till late, come back home and start the circle of housework again.

⁸ It is not common in my culture for women to play. There is no time for relaxation for her in most cases, be it in the rural or urban area. Sometimes women who take out time to play with their children or husbands are not taken seriously. While men have many recreational activities to refresh themselves, women must always multi-task in order to “meet up”.

unequal social and political circumstances give women unequal human capabilities. As has been said earlier in this chapter, this situation is also seen in the Nigerian context where women are denied some of their rights just because they are women. In this chapter, we shall look at some concepts.

2.2 CONCEPTUALISATION

2.2.1 GENDER AND GENDER STEREOTYPES

The word ‘gender’ is derived from the French word *genre*, which means ‘kind’ or ‘type’ and refers to masculine and feminine. Gender has been defined as socially constructed and culturally variable roles that women and men play in their daily lives. Unfortunately, gender has often been used as a code word for women. According to Pettman (1997: 488), “this does draw attention to the ways in which dominant groups can normalize or naturalize their own identities - they name others while remaining themselves unnamed.”

The dominant group always believes in the patriarchal understanding that God is the creator of social hierarchy which must be obeyed by all. “According to hierarchy, to disobey the lords, kings and fathers is to disobey God (Phiri 2004:24-25)”. In this way, gender stereotypes stem from the distribution of women and men into social constructed roles by the dominant group which in most cases are men. I agree with (Moyo 2004: 85) that “the greatest threat to fullness of life still remains patriarchy, which is effectively sustained by some major reformed teachings, especially those pertaining to male/female relationship” .

Stereotypes develop in different forms and shapes as is discussed in the section below.

2.2.2 HOW STEREOTYPES DEVELOP

Although one could say that human beings develop stereotypes in their different environments by giving different names and different meanings to different things and people, one could also say

that in Africa, patriarchy and the church helped to enhance the stereotyped position of women. The colonial history of the African missionaries shows that the mission field was dominated by men as they thought that only men were qualified to be missionaries. Hambira (2004: 25) described the London missionary society as a men's club. He sums up the scenario thus: "The male dominated mission came from overseas to a male dominated society in Africa and did not recognise this situation as a challenge". By the manifestations of patriarchy in Nigerian church and society, one could agree with Tappa (1986: 101) that, "Christianity proved incapable of successfully opposing patriarchal system". The male missionaries one may say, encouraged gender stereotyping by dominating almost every public space in the mission work and as a result of this, their wives in most cases were not recognized. This created and is still creating a big challenge in the Presbyterian church of Nigeria where I belong. Today, the Presbyterian church of Nigeria, after 160 years of existence, still goes with the missionary mindset that only men are better qualified for the great commission in Matthew (28:16-20). During the missionary era while men were encouraged and some times forced to go to school, women were at best, told to go for domestic training and learn how to cook, sew and take care of their husbands. It was a great task for the first female minister to be ordained in the Presbyterian church of Nigeria as was discussed in chapter four of this work.

Because the missionaries gave the impression that they were more important than their wives, the ministers' wives are hardly recognized even today in the Presbyterian church of Nigeria. I am writing out of my experience as a minister's wife and also an ordained minister of the Presbyterian church of Nigeria. When ministers and their wives attend ceremonies like ordination service, licensing service, etc, the ministers will be given seats at the chancel but hardly are their wives recognised. This is one of the reasons why I and other ministers' wives formed what is today known as the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria Ministers' Wives Fellowship in which I was privileged to be the first national president. In this fellowship, we encourage ministers' wives to speak out against the unjust treatment they receive from their homes and from the church. The issue of stereotyping is still pervasive. When the church sends a minister for studies at theological or any other institution, nothing is said about the wife. The wife stays at home waiting for her husband to come back with many degrees. Hardly has the Presbyterian church of Nigeria intentionally sponsored the training of a minister's wife. The minister's wife they say

should be satisfied with the name ‘Ma Etubom’ or ‘Nwumye Nna-anyi ukwu’ which means, ‘minister’s wife’.

In the Presbyterian church of Nigeria, seniority is by year of ordination. The senior minister by ordination is always the minister-in-charge of a parish while others are associates. But, because of the pervasiveness of gender stereotyping in the church, a minister’s wife who is a senior to her husband by ordination is encouraged to accept to be an associate to her husband –the junior minister. Had the missionaries given the same education and recognition to men and women during their missionary period in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, maybe the story would have been different.

When a minister’s wife in spite of all hurdles struggles to attain a height in theological education and is ordained, she is not in most cases given the recognition as would to her male counterpart as the above example shows. A Nigerian female theologian also sees this as a result of patriarchy and writes as follows:

The leadership of the ordained in our African mainline churches is constructed in a hierarchal order as a lid [barrier] to the membership of the church, of which of which the majority are women. This structure supports and reinforces the traditional gender based roles, ignoring the leadership of African women in the same traditional culture. Thus the church selects from African cultures those elements that confirm its exclusion of women from authority where men are present. Here women demand that the church return to a Christlike understanding of authority and ministry, so that women and men may become partners in authority. Women’s demand for inclusiveness in ecclesiastical ministry is a search for human development, a search for wholeness (Edet 1989:96)

“Our theology will not be credible if it opposes one system of oppression while championing another (Tappa 1986: 103)”. Part of our theological pitfalls and myopia today is that the sinful, oppressive aspect of gender relations is so woven into the fabric of our lives and institutions that we often fail to ‘see’ or ‘feel’ it. We can engage in oppressive social practices without consciously intending to do so, since sin and short-sightedness permeate every individual practice

and every social structure. Most of us think of ourselves as nice people who would not discriminate unfairly. But Baillie (2002: 46) says:

It is erroneous to think that because we do not do some thing intentionally, we therefore do not engage in that practice. Since we often sin without knowing it or meaning to, it follows that we engage in unwitting operation. For example, an institution or company can intend to be an equal opportunity employer and still end up employing men rather than women because men always turn out to be the 'most qualified' people. Why? Because males construct the qualifications which then seem to be the 'obvious' or 'natural' ones to consider. In other words, 'most' qualified turns out more often than not, to mean people like us.

In most cases whatever men do or say are seen to be right. They draw lines of demarcation, which are generally, stigmas [used in the most general sense] that have been attached to certain groups of people in most cases women (Stangor, 2000: 142). These stigmas, though similar to prejudices are generally referred to as stereotypes. Stereotypes in this sense can be contextual. For instance, that girls/women are less valued in society is within a cultural environment of which Nigeria is one.

As has been observed by a Nigerian writer:

In the past, [and even now] when a male child was born the parents were happy, but when a girl was born they were usually disappointed. Worse still, if all children were girls, the father looked for male successors by marrying more wives or acquiring concubines. The main reason given for wanting male children was cultural rather than anything else. Parents, especially the father, had the idea that male children would help to propagate and perpetuate the family name. Any amount spent on male's education was not therefore regarded as a waste. In the case of girls, it was considered by many parents as a waste of money, time, effort, and resources to educate girls as they would eventually end up in another man's house or in the kitchen

At this point, stereotypes depend not so much on direct perception (and misperception) of the social environment as on the existing manifestations of those stereotypes in the behaviour and language of the society (Hartman & Husband, 1974, in Stangor, 2000: 76). The collective approach to stereotyping has emphasised the “reproduction” of stereotypes, focusing on the means through which stereotypes are transmitted and maintained, and on the ways in which stereotypes serve culturally shared values especially on sex and gender.

2.2.3 Sex and gender

The word sex denotes an individual as male or female, and derives from the individual’s biological attribute. The word ‘gender’ extends these physical attributes to create an ideological construct which is based on the way that society understands those biological differences between men and women. In lending her voice on this, Haddad (2001: 5) states that:

Gender refers to the socially constructed and culturally defined differences between men and women. A gender analysis always identifies the relationship between the sexes in terms of power relations. Gender influences the differences in poverty levels between the sexes because social institutions such as the family, religion, culture and education discriminate against women.

It follows that what we recognize and experience as ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ is socially and culturally constructed as our ‘gender’, which involves a whole constellation of roles, expectations, social and sexual behaviours (Bazilli, 1991: 8).

Pettman (1997: 488) has recently observed that, “*Men’s Studies* have explored the social construction of masculinities”. And the distinction between sex and gender brought out for a feminist project shows that if gender is a social construction, it can be changed. A serious study of gender will also reveal that there are different meanings of gender.

Gender is a personal identity – how do I experience being a woman? a social identity – what do others expect of me, as a woman? and a power relation – why

are women as a social category almost always under-represented in relations to power, for example? Gender is also political – it is contested, by men and women who regularly subvert, challenge, or bolster gender difference, at home or in other places, by feminists who seek women’s liberation, and by anti-feminists who seek to take back what women have won through struggle. Gender may be the basis for a mobilized political identity – of which ‘feminist’ is one (Pettman, 1997: 488).

Gender as a social construction can indeed be changed. What we need is a change in attitude and mind-set. The fact that gender stereotyping has been from the ancient world as buttressed below is no excuse to remain in it. The church and society should consciously resolve to move away from the status quo.

2.2.4 GENDER STEREOTYPING IN THE ANCIENT WORLD AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

In the ancient world the stereotyping of women was pervasive. The Jews had a low view of women. In the Jewish form of Morning Prayer there was a sentence in which a Jewish man gave thanks that God had not made him “a Gentile, a slave or a woman”. The thing which vitiated all Jewish law regarding women was that, in Jewish law, a woman was not a person but a thing (Barclay, 1966: 199). Ecclesiasticus, in Spencer (1985: 53) summarised well the perception about women as follows:

A daughter is a secret anxiety to her father, and the worry of her keeps him awake at night;

when she is young , for fear she may grow too old to marry, and when she is married, for fear she may loose her husband’s love; when she is a virgin, for fear she may be seduced and become pregnant in her father’s house, when she has a husband, for fear she may misbehave, and after marriage, for fear that she may be barren.

Keep close watch after a headstrong daughter, or she may give your enemies cause to gloat, making you the talk of the town and a byword among the people, and shaming you in the eyes of the world.

Do not let her display her beauty to any man, or gossip in the women's quarters.
For out of cloths comes the moth, and out of woman comes women's wickedness.
Better a man's wickedness than a woman's goodness;
it is woman who brings shame and disgrace.

One wonders why so many fears are attached to women. Even in Nigeria, the anxiety of whether or not the girl child will be useful in life causes fear to both parents. Many parents in Nigeria worry more about their girl-child's marriage than her self-development. The boy-child is more advantaged because more space for self-development is given to him. Because of the stereotyped positions girls find themselves in, they are confined to a particular space. This was well captured by Malina, (1996: 105) when she said:

In the ancient world, also, space is *gender divided*: males live in the public ('open') arena of fields, market places, and the like; females in the private ('covered') world of houses, wells, common ovens, and the like. Tasks likewise are *gender specific*: males attend to open-air tasks, such as farming and hunting, while females attend to covered tasks, such as clothing production, food preparation and child rearing. Hence *objects* would be male when they belong in the male sphere and pertain to male tasks (weapons, ploughs and so forth), and female when they relate to female space and tasks (looms, pots and pans, and such)

The issue of the stereotype did not stop with the ancient society; the ancient church also shared in the norms and practices of that world which was characterized by stereotyping. Starting from the Old Testament, the picture about women has mostly been in the negative. The fall, which has been blamed on Eve (Genesis Chapter 3), has become one of the yardsticks for measuring women's standing in the church.

Even in the New Testament, this idea did not change so much. You only need to look at some passages in the Bible to see that women were not painted better in New Testament writing. For instance, in the parable of the feeding of the 5,000 (Matthew 14: 13-21), only men were counted;

the record tells us that women and children were not counted. Protesting this misogynistic bias and negligence of children, Rakoczy (2004: 98) observed:

The good news of the gospel has been twisted into the bad news of masculine privilege.

Because of the prevailing culture at the time, the New Testament writers were very careful not to oppose the status quo in their context. Van Niekerk (2006: 372), poignantly states that:

The only way the male-dominated Roman society could cope with women who had overstepped the norms of acceptability, was by depicting them as immoral or promiscuous. Writers resorted to personal attacks, often against their immorality and infidelity – and that at a time of extreme moral apathy.

When we turn to other incidents in the New Testament, we realize that the culture of the time portrayed men as the ideals of morality while women were seen as the bastion of immorality. This is clearly illustrated by Van Niekerk (2006: 372) in the bible story about the prostitute. “A woman was caught in adultery and brought to Jesus by some accusers forgetting that it takes two to commit adultery, they wanted Jesus to judge and condemn this woman while the male culprit remained anonymous. These accusers were trying to show that this woman was a sinner who had violated the 5th commandment and should be punished accordingly, but Jesus made them know they were in the error because none of them was free from the very sin the woman was accused of”. This is similar to the case of Amina, a Nigerian Muslim woman who was accused under the Islamic law in 2004 of committing adultery. Whereas the state wanted her stoned to death for an illicit relationship, it took the international community to remind the over-zealous Islamic people that it was a man who put Amina in the family way and that the man should also be brought to book. The list can go on endlessly, but the fact remains that women both then and now have continued to bear the brunt of human oppression, subjugation and humiliation because of the picture society has painted of them. Culture and patriarchy which are the creation of society have been the foundation for gender stereotyping and oppression against women.

2.3 CULTURE AND STEREOTYPING

Culture, like gender is also constructed and is contextual. What pertains to Nigeria as the culture of the people may not be relevant in South Africa as a common culture. For example, in certain Nigerian culture women are not allowed to eat the gizzard of a fowl while in some other African country and the rest of the world it may sound as a myth. In Nigeria, proverbs are also medium of communicating culture. Proverbs and myths contribute to the culture of the people. Proverbs and myths are well cherished by the Nigerian people especially the men. The Igbos in the Eastern Nigerian refers to proverbs as the oil with which words are eaten. It is used as a medium of communication. In the next section, we shall take a closer look at proverbs as a medium of maintaining and communicating culture to generations and also how women have been negatively stereotyped through proverbs.

2.3.1 PROVERBS AS A MEDIUM OF COMMUNICATING CULTURE

Many scholars have attempted some definitions of proverbs but, according to Olayinka (1996: 214), “a cross-cultural definition of proverbs cannot be precise as it means many things to different people and cultures”. However, Amoah (1996: 204) has said that “Proverbs are short, concise and pithy sayings couched in local imagery”. In the footnote, Oduyoye, (1995:21) and Kolawole, (1998:3) have been found useful in illustrating some myths and proverbs. In African traditional society, just like in the Nigerian Igbo society, myths⁹, folk tales¹⁰ and proverbs¹¹ are

⁹ “Myths inform social activities, shapes men’s and women’s lives and attitudes, and give expression to people’s fears. Creation myths, for example, are replete with imagery that echoes of how society functions, of the nature of social relations relating to families, the economy, the running of the community. The myths help us see, at times, the society’s attempt to think through the paradoxes of life. An awareness of this function helps liberate us to some degree from the negative effects of myths. Myths then cease to function as “canon law” and become a source in the search for meaningful community. Living among the Yoruba of Southern Nigeria and reading about the Ezon and Ibibio of the Niger Delta, I have come across rich myths of origin that the Akan cannot boast of, and I have come to understand more clearly my own background as an Akan. I have also developed more appreciation of the extent of the influence of myths on our self-perceptions (Oduyoye, 1995: 21; Kolawole, 1998: 3).

¹⁰ Some folk tales tell how women’s wisdom, success and victory are attributed to men. The following folk tale from Oduyoye (1995: 39) tells us about the origin of Akan folk tales: “In the beginning, Onyankopon (God) was the owner of all folk tales so they were called Nyankosem (God’s stories). One day Ananse the spider went to God and said to God “Sell me your stories”. Onyankopon told him that the mighty cities of Asante could not afford the price of the stories, much less an individual and a poor commoner at that. Ananse insisted he could afford to buy them. Onyankopon said to Ananse, “Bring a python, a leopard, a dwarf (the legendry little people of the forest called mmoatia), and hornets. Ananse promised to procure all these and throw his mother Yaa Nsia as a bonus”.

veritable vehicles of communicating and transmitting societal norms. Some proverbs speak about human beings generally, but there are others that speak of women both positively and negatively. Kolawole (1998: 3) has observed that “mythology provides the *raison d’être* for gender inequality, oppression and diverse harmful practices against or involving women”. They are also means of socialisation and a formidable process of perpetuating cultural ideologies, especially about women. Being an important part of the culture, it is only expected that people will still hold firmly unto these ideas and conceptions as expressions of cultural loyalty and solidarity. During the socialisation process, children become acquainted with all these. Later on, young people gradually acquire knowledge of proverbs with their meanings and contexts. One thereby learns to use them appropriately in the process of assimilating the society’s culture.

Oduyoye (1995: 19-35), in *Daughters of Anowa*, states that “Myths and the religious implications of their respective cosmogonies, such as oral accounts of origins, are learned much later, as one acquires more maturity and the sophistication to appreciate their significance and importance.” Family occasions such as funerals and other rites, including festivals, provide important contexts for this learning process. Among the Igbo of Nigeria, the ordinary events of daily life are sprinkled with an appropriate set of proverbs, used for decision-making, counselling and the offering of benedictions and prayers. Like the collected wisdom of societies, this wisdom literature plays a crucial role in traditional non-formal education but also, a negative role in most cases, in women’s lives. Some proverbs uphold negative stereotyping against women as we shall see in our next discussion.

2.3.2 PROVERBS AND WOMEN

“Ananse went to consult his wife Aso Yaa who taught him how to secure the python and the hornets. He followed her instructions and was successful. ... Ananse’s wife dropped out of the enterprise and his mother safely returned to her maker, and Anense, the man, gained his autonomy! In this way, the human story as perceived by the Akan has become “Ansense-centric” (androcentric), instead of “theocentric” . The two women, Anense’s mother and his wife, contributed to his success but did not share in the success story Oduyoye (1995: 39)”

¹¹ Like the myths and folk tales, proverbs restate themes that appear in ethical and moral teaching. “Proverbs can be described as short, popular and oft-used sentences that use plain language to express some practical truth that results from experience or observation (Oduyoye, 1995: 55)”.

In Nigeria, where proverbs are a part of culture, there is a very difficult problem for women who want to question, in many different ways, some of the negative images of women as portrayed in the proverbs. Even in contemporary times, one encounters some of these conceptions of women, especially concerning their rights, their positions and power. This is because the ideologies of gender roles and power receive their backing from the various cultural traditions, of which proverbs are a very important part. In some Ibo proverbs about women, she could be praised, as in the proverb “Nneka”, which means “mother is supreme”, while, in others, she can afford to stand alone in discrediting proverbs: ‘omeka nneya’ (‘like mother like daughter’) is mostly said when a girl misbehaves. At marriage ceremonies, wives are reminded that they are ‘nwanyi’ which means women and must submit to her husband in all areas of life. Unfortunately in most cases, emphasis is not laid on the man’s attitude to the woman – his wife. It is believed that a man can achieve everything in life, but a woman does not stand alone in an achievement. It is believed that her achievements are either for her father, if not married, or for her husband, if married. Examples of such proverbs are presented below.

In Uchem (2001:59) we hear that “Ugwu nwanyi bu di ya” (A woman’s pride is her husband) and “Chi nwanyi bu di ya” (A woman’s god is her husband), meaning that a woman, regardless of background, education or beauty, remains weak and fragile. If unmarried, she is the subject of menace and ridicule in the men’s world. When married, her pride and worth fades or persists depending on her relationship with her husband.

I therefore agree with Amoah (1996: 212) that “while we appreciate the strong cultural support for our identities, there is a need to critically re-examine it in an attempt to build a future that does not see men and women as living in different worlds”. The ultimate goal is to create a situation where men and women can stand side by side as partners and pilgrims to confront the system or belief, practices and norms which they have inherited and which sometimes seem to set them one against the other. Proverbs, no doubt, are useful vehicles for cultural expressions, but as tools for gender expressions, they can be oppressive. Closely linked to proverbs is the patriarchal system that is still practised in Igbo land of Nigeria.

2.3.3 WOMEN AND THE TRADITIONAL MYTHS

Oduyoye (1976:146) tells us that, “a biased application of myth and of tradition is very familiar to us in Africa”. Some African myths portray women as being responsible for the rift between humanity and God. One of the more chauvinistic accounts explains the separation between the earth and the sky as occurring when:

... a woman touched the sky with her dirty hands
and the sky abashedly retreated upward (Kalu, 1991: 16).

Kolawole (1998: 3) asserts that “African mythology has, to some extent, contributed to the plight of women by portraying them as the source of evil. Depending on the woman’s docility or assertiveness, she is usually viewed in two categories. If passive, she is noble, saintly and pure, and inspires men. If assertive, she is evil; distracting man from his religious and worldly pursuits”. Some other myths even represent her as a demon, a dog and a sensual lust, a being that man must fear. Below are few examples:

Women are untrustworthy, unreliable and treacherous (Kolawole, 1998: 21).

A woman, a dog and walnut tree, the more you beat them the better they be (Simpson, 1982: 248).

The person who covers himself with a woman’s cloth covers himself with the tormentingly itching werepe¹² fruit (Yusuf, 1998: 73).

He that gets a ship or a wife will always have trouble (Whiting, 1977: 389).

Women are necessary evil (Whiting, 1977: 494).

A man that is still alive is, because his wife has not killed him (Kolawole, 1998: 24).

¹² The extremely itching effect of the *werepe* fruit on the skin usually leads to a distressing jumping out of one’s cloth, it then follows that depending on women is regarded as engaging in self deceit. In other words, the proverb believes that a person would be better off without a woman’s support. This is most untrue because whether as an infant, a child or an adult, we all need women in our lives.

Any family that allows a woman to be vocal will see the abnormal growth of the wide Arere tree¹³ inside the house (Kolawole, 1998: 19).

Are these myths really painting the true picture of women? The myth in Kolawole (1998: 24): “A man that is still alive is so because his wife has not killed him” does not have an opposite version and yet we hear and see how some men also kill their wives. It is time to rethink and recreate myths even in the traditional religion.

The traditional religion of the Igbo people in Nigeria, West Africa contributed greatly to the passive role of women in the society. Even in the area of food, women are discriminated against due to gender stereotyping. Ezeaku (1990: 105), has this to say about women and food:.

“diviners who were mainly men passed down injunctions on women’s participation when it came to eating certain foods. Some of these injunctions stated that women were not to eat the gizzard of a fowl, the tail of a fowl or even eggs. This is so because, according to the superstition, fowls are the link between the ancestors and men and women are not ancestors. About the eggs, the elders say that women should not eat eggs because they also lay eggs.

This was prominent in some major Igbo-speaking areas like Anambra and Imo in Nigeria. Women could cook such tabooed food but could never eat them. The traditional Igbo society also forbids women from breaking kolanuts because, according to them, it is a religious symbol by which the living communicates with the ancestors and women are not allowed to initiate communication with the ancestors. For the Ibos, abominations embrace serious personal and moral crimes. For instance, the birth of twins and abnormal presentation in the birth of a child (breech birth) were considered abominations which required a cleansing sacrifice to atone on the part of the wrongdoer, who eventually regains full association with the rest of the community. Most times, the woman is seen as the evildoer who needs this atonement while her husband is considered innocent and sinless (Ezeaku, 1990: 105).

¹³ The Arere is a tree that emits a terrible odour and only grows widely (Kolawole, 1998: 19)

From the above discussion we have seen, just as has been observed by Kolawole (1998: 12), that myths are highly gendered in Nigeria and many African societies. This is not surprising, because literature was male-centred for long, as observed by Ojo-Ade (1983: 158-159): “African literature is a male-centred, Male-oriented, Chauvinistic art”, and Conde (1992: 132) agrees to this by saying that “when women were silent, male writers orchestrated their myopic monologic perceptions of women, burying them under such a heap of myths from which they needed to be exhumed ...” The good news is that, despite the constraints militating against women in the academic world, women are beginning to take up the challenge of writing. By challenging their male counterparts to dialogue within creative space. According to Okereke (1995: 162), “women writers have not only exploded the myths of vocality as a male prerogative, but have also ... through dialogic resistance re-appropriated their voices from the silence imposed on them”

This challenge to recreate and rewrite the negative imagery of women is not only for women in the academic world. Women in Nigeria and all over Africa have a great task of reconstructing new positive images. African women and Nigerian women in particular need to change their vision and their words to change their world. The process of transforming people’s consciousness and self-perception is therefore an imperative in the on-going quest for women’s mobilisation and empowerment and also a way of dealing with gender stereotyping. A change in the mind-set of women will affect their daughters positively, because girls for the most time learn from their mothers.

In most parts of Nigeria, especially in Igbo land, girls begin to take on responsibilities as adults too early in life and thereby do not, in most cases, enjoy their childhood. This is because society and culture expect them to take care of boys already, even those older than they are. They have to cook, wash, clean and do other jobs that the mothers do; while the boys play and relax, the girls carry burdens heavier than the boys do. Is it any wonder, then, that women are subjected to all kinds of rules and regulations in the church and community? Some roles of woman as a result of gender construct are: You should not be involved in politics because it is men’s business, you must not aspire for a leadership positions in the church and community because God has made it so that you must submit to your husband and, as Paul said, woman should learn

in silence, etc. Women are most times reminded of these socially constructed roles to make them feel inferior. That women are inferior is still the belief of most churches and communities, both in Nigeria and in some other countries. Women in Nigeria and all over the world should unite to question these injustices that are perpetrated against them. Some of the obstacles faced by women in Nigeria are also real in China.

Mao Tse-tung, in Burkey (1993: 6), is quoted as saying: “Chinese men have to carry a burden of three mountains: oppression from outside, feudal oppression and the burden of their own backwardness. But Chinese women are burdened by four mountains; the fourth one being the Chinese man.” In addition, according to Nussbaum and Glover (1995: 411), in China, the Chinese woman is told that she is ‘liberated’; but she is discouraged from and punished for thinking independently on gender issues. Lacking opportunity for critical thinking and information, she must adhere to rigid instruction on how to be the ‘equal’ of men. ... This is the truth in nearly every single rural community where females are in a majority, especially among adults. And experience shows that not only are women a majority in rural areas of the society, but they also are responsible for well over 50% of all productive activities, even in those households where adult men are present. In African households carrying out subsistence or near subsistence agriculture, women have been measured as doing well in agricultural labour. In most cultures, they are responsible for planting, weeding, watering, harvesting, transporting and storing of crops. When their men are present, they also have to do the clearing of land and the preparation of the soil. This practice is also rooted in the way people were looked at or even from the custom in ancient times, as we saw earlier. Women are associated with the domestic work and are not expected to aspire for leadership positions. Musopule (1992: 201) captures this gender-phobia in these lines:

In decision making and leadership in which the male is dominant, he accuses women who seek their freedom of attempting to be like men. The women are labeled “masculine,” and this label has stuck because of the nature of its role-breaking powers. A woman who gets the label of “man” is one who breaks through male power socially, psychologically, economically, politically or spiritually. People interpret women’s desire for equality as masculine. This is so

because for so long women have allowed themselves to depend on men. They have accepted being labeled the weaker and tender vessels. To be feminine is to accept dependence on men.

However, women's unique position in nature is considered an invaluable asset and advantage for social harmony and religious fulfilment. Having looked at culture, proverbs, myth and how women are viewed in traditional religion, what follows is the other side of culture, where women oppress their fellow women.

2.3.4 THE OTHER SIDE OF CULTURE: WOMEN OPPRESSING WOMEN

It is quite a surprise that women are sometimes both the oppressors and the oppressed. History is replete with instances where women have been and still are the sources of their own undoing. It is very important to stress the point that most times, it is the tradition and culture women find themselves in that make them behave the way they do towards their fellow women. Most times it is not a matter of choice but a fulfilment of their duties as daughters of the land. But do women still have to be controlled by cultures that dehumanise them and their fellow women? This is a very long history. We will quote some cases to illustrate this point, starting with the issue of barrenness and child bearing of which the Old Testament story of Sarah and Hagar is a classical example (see Gen. 16: 1- 16).

The interaction between Sarah and Hagar is determined by the patriarchal value system of that time. The relationship of Sarah and Hagar to each other is typical of their patriarchal context. Sarah sees Hagar in terms of how she can help her meet her patriarchal obligation – producing children for Abraham. Hagar also sees Sarah and herself through the Patriarchal value system. In this story, when Hagar saw that she was pregnant, her perspective of Sarah was altered. In Nigeria and some African contexts, the story is the same. This was observed by (Mbuwayesango, 1997: 34) when she said “In the Shona and Ndebele cultures in Zimbabwe or the Igbo in Nigeria, women's relationships are governed or directed by what society expects from women”. “Eme (2004: 10) takes this argument further by pointing out that “Mothers and aunts have the responsibility of making sure that female children fulfil their patriarchal obligation”. As has

been said earlier, women's status in society is also determined by how women under their responsibility fare according to the patriarchal expectation. The role that women play in societies is determined by what is known as "omenala" (the rule of the land or the customs of the ancestors). This has been and still is a major endorsement of the oppression of women in Igbo land.

In the case of a burial in most parts of Nigeria when some women have to undergo culturally prescribed widowhood rites on behalf of their deceased husbands, it is the older women who always ensure that these mourning ones pass through some shameful and inhuman processes in the name of cultural loyalty or solidarity. In some parts of Igboland, for instance, widows are made to eat from unwashed plates and to go without bathing for some days as a mark of respect for their deceased. Eme (2004:10) has also observed that "the unjust treatment of widows that violates the principles of human dignity, equality and rights also enforce upon widows, the shaving of their hair, the wearing of black cloth, sitting on hard floor or mat, and not even having a say in matters affecting the husband's burial ceremony. In cases where the death of the man is in dispute and the woman is suspected of having had a hand in the death, the widow is compelled to drink the water used for washing the corpse as a declaration of her innocence before the living and the dead. These dehumanising practices, very painfully, in most instances, are being preserved and perpetrated by women against their fellow women. Concerning the treatment of widows, Nwachuku (1992: 66) has argued that most of these role functions, even today, are monitored and deviants punished by a female pressure group widely known as "daughters of the land". In some cases, they are joined by another female pressure group called the "co-wives" of the kindred who make demands and taunt the widow.

The dehumanization of women by women also exists in the church. Phiri (2004:26) draws attention to the fact that African Women Theologians are aware that churchwomen organizations are very patriarchal and do not promote gender justice". This attitude according to (Kang 2004: 7) is because the patriarchal socialization of women has conditioned them to think, act, behave and react as second class members of the community.

This dissertation calls for intentional radical change in the mindset of women which has conditioned them to act and believe that they are second class members of the church and community. There is a fact which can never be erased and that fact is that God created women and men in His own image and likeness (Genesis1:26-27). The question now is, how do we overcome gender stereotyping? This will lead us to the next section.

2.3.5 HOW DO WE OVERCOME GENDER STEREOTYPING?

Agitation is one of the strategies women could use to pass the message that they are no longer comfortable with their negatively stereotyped positions. I share in Gordon's lament and call that: "constructions of gender have robbed women of life, and in our time continue on their deadly course, thus making the task of dismantling them not only critical but urgent (Gordon 2004: 30)". The call to overcome gender stereotyping by dismantling the institutionalized patriarchal structures is indeed an urgent one. The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians has made a call for cultural hermeneutics for gender justice and also for a gendered approach to theology. According to Phiri (2004:21-22),

A gendered approach to theology refers to exposing the injustices that exist in the church, culture and the Bible in the relationship between men and women. It acknowledges that human beings construct culture, therefore cultural practices in the Bible and in our own cultures should not be confused with the will of God. It highlights the importance of acknowledging that both men and women are created in the image of God. The process of change requires an analysis of the African world view and how people's identities are constructed. It acknowledges that there are many interpretations of the relationships between men and women and the gendered interpretation is one of them.

To be taken seriously also is the centrality of God in mission and gender justice. In overcoming gender stereotyping, the church should take seriously its role as the instrument of God in carrying out God's mission. Phiri (2004:26) has pointed out that "if indeed the church in Africa is to experience gender justice, we need to radically change the way we have imaged women and men

both in the church and society”. Gender justice means promoting the humanity of both women and men in the church and using their gifts as revealed by God. Any form of discrimination and oppression mars the image of God in creation and humanity, for God is a God of justice and the practice of Christianity is supposed to reflect the justice of God

To overcome gender stereotyping and the injustices around women, there must be a change in mind set and attitude. Shalom, which according to Van Schalkwy (199: 9) entails peace and justice must be welcomed by women and men. As we all know, peace and justice cannot reign in the atmosphere of dominance. Men and women should be willing to embrace one another in the spirit of justice for as has pointed out, “as new creatures in Christ, Christians are called to resist the worldly principles of dominance and submission which are the results of sin”. Tappa (1986: 106) further stresses that, we work for a participatory community so that men and women of all ages become acceptable in all areas of Christian ministry and church governance. We must move from brotherhood to fellowship of brothers as sisters, making real the teaching of the gospel that male and female are made in the image of God and are both God’s stewards on earth. Tappa (1986: 106) further says, “to do this, the church must first and foremost recognize the sinfulness of patriarchy, a social system oppressive and dehumanizing for both men and women, and consequently rid itself of those structures that reflect patriarchal ideals”. It then follows that to overcome gender stereotyping, the church also has to see God as God and not as a man. This change in attitude and mind-set is very important because according to Tappa (1986:101), “patriarchy has created God in man’s image. Oduyoye (2000:88) has added her voice by stating that:

Redeeming the church begins with breaking the silence around the church’s attitude to, and teaching concerning women. Redeeming the church involves encouraging action against divisiveness of sexism, racism, tribalism and exploitation. The image of the church as a caring community is tarnished by its tardiness in confronting violence against women and worse in participating in the marginalization and demeaning of women. The unity of the church can only become a reality if the church works intentionally on the call to be an inclusive community.

To be an inclusive community therefore means that church and society must re-think *partnership*. The patriarchal system of partnership has to give way for an engendered system of ‘real’ partnership between men and women in Nigeria. Emphasis is given to the word ‘real’ because in real partnership no one is conceived to be a burden to the other. The researcher’s concept of gender partnership is a relationship of women and men where all are equally given their full rights and privileges with respect and dignity. It seems to me that the relationship of men and women in a patriarchal system is *partner-sheep* and not *partner-ship*. Men see themselves as persons partnering with sheep. The analogy of “- *sheep*” and “-*ship*” will be used to buttress this point.

“*Sheep*” is a domesticated animal just as a goat is. In Nigerian Igbo language, sheep is ‘aturu’ and goat is ‘ewu’. While it is derogatory to call a person a goat, it is more derogatory to call someone a sheep. This is largely because sheep (‘aturu’ in Igbo language) connotes senselessness. Sheep most times are guarded and guided. For one to be called a sheep therefore means someone without a sense of reasoning. Thus one could say that the patriarchal mind-set of partnership between men and women in Nigeria is not partnership as we know it but *partner-sheep*. This is because most men want to lead, gird, guide and guard women. Because for most men, women cannot reason on their own hence *partner-sheep* takes over partnership. Sheep in the bible is used for many metaphors. Examples are: the lost sheep Luke 15:4-7); cf. Matthew 18:12-14; the judgement day in Matthew 25:31-46; Jesus as sheep to the slaughter according to Isaiah 53:7. In these passages, the weakness in the sheep is also portrayed.

A “*Ship*” on the other hand, is a vessel that carries passengers or cargoes across the sea. Men and women should see themselves as pilgrims travelling in the same ship to a common destination. Therefore, to deal with gender stereotyping, church and society must stop perceiving the relationship between men and women as *partner-sheep* but as *partnership*.

Nigeria’s rich cultural heritage of community life and life in community which is strong as against the individualistic life we find in many countries of the world should also engender partnership as it is not only men that make up a community. Nigerians cannot truly claim life of

togetherness when men dominate in every facet of community life and women in most cases are not given a sense of belonging and a sense of equality.

Let us in what follows look more closely at the meaning of community and other concepts of community.

2.4 *WHAT IS COMMUNITY?*

Before we look at the dictionary meaning of community and other schools of thought, we would like to briefly describe what we understand a community to mean in Nigeria and indeed, many parts of Africa. One of the essential elements in the African worldview is the emphasis on life in community with others. Africans tend to find their identity and meaning in life through being part of their extended family, clan or tribe. There is a strong feeling of common participation in life, a common history, and a common destiny. The reality in Africa may be described with the statement: I am because the community is. Paradoxically, women are excluded from most activities in African community which emphasises life in community with others.

According to Collins Co build English Dictionary for Advanced Learners (2001: 298), community is defined as “the people who live in a particular area or place”. Another school of thought says that “a Community is usually defined in terms of geographical locality, of shared interest and needs, or in terms of deprivation and disadvantage”. Edward and Jones (1976: 12) give a geographical definition when they maintain that a community is

...a group of people, who are similar in some way, who reside in a specific locality and who exercise some degree of local autonomy in organizing their social life in such a way those they can, from that locality base, satisfy the full range of their daily needs”.

Zentner (1964: 420-423) views a community as:

...a group structure ... integrated around goals associated with the problems arising out of the collective occupation and utilization of habitational space ... The community has certain measures of local autonomy ... and a degree of local responsibility.

However, according to De Beer, (1984: 42) “when we come to the term ‘community development’, the above definitions will be open to criticism. For, if ‘local autonomy’ is a prerequisite for community, then a number of entities practicing community development are disqualified from being communities”. Some civic associations in the townships as observed by De Beer, (1984: 43) may, for example, engage in community development, yet they possess no local autonomy. Similarly, it would be exceptional to find a community which is able to “satisfy the full range of their daily needs” from local resources, as the definition by Edwards & Jones suggests

Cary (1970: 2) also recognizes the spatial dimension when he says that “a community exists where “people ... live in some spatial relationship to one another and ... share values and interests”. According to Roberts (1979: 26) and Sanderson (quoted in Wileden, 1970: 20), “it is only in isolated rural villages where locality, to some extent, can define a community”. In his definition of community, Roberts (1979: 27) focuses on the shared interests and needs as the factor distinguishing a community: “The community exists when a group of people perceives common needs and problems, acquires a sense of identity, and has a common set of objectives.” Apart from the social community, there is also the church community which shall be our next focus.

2.4.1 *THE CHURCH COMMUNITY*

When we talk about the church community, we do not only refer to the local denomination but the local, national and global as we can see from the discussion below. Van Gelder (2000:108) suggests that:

“To be the Church is to be in reconciled relationship. To be the Church is to be in active fellowship. To be the church is to live in interdependence with others”

The church is known as the *ecclesia*. Hill (1988:186) describes the word “*ecclesia* (noun) as being derived from the verb *ekkaleo* which means to summon or to call out”. Vocation – the

calling together is the closest English equivalent of this word which means an assembly. It was borrowed from the Athenian political vocabulary. And it was in this sense that the Bible writers used it in Acts 19: 32, 39, 41. The Hebrew *qahal* also has the same sense of a people called together. Both the old and the New Testament share the same idea of the church as a people called and sent for a mission.

In the New Testament there are several images and metaphors used to describe the church. According to Kalu (2005:12), “there are over 96 images of the church in the New Testament covering a wide range of metaphors drawn from the physical structure of the human body, from the mineral world, the animal world, the vegetable world and the world of nature. Beyond the biblical images are the myriad denominations”. The ecclesiological map looks like the shell of a tortoise Kalu (2005:12). Van Gelder (2000:107) confirms this idea by stating that “the diversity of images reflects the truth that the church’s nature, ministry and organization is multifaceted”

Smit (2003:423-437) points out that the church as a whole assumes different forms in society, and should not be thought of only as a local congregation that gathers on Sunday mornings. In this regard, he identifies six forms of dimensions or emphasis of the church in three pairs: a) the worship services of (b) the congregation; (c) denominational and (d) ecumenical forms; followed by (e) individual believers and (f) their voluntary actions, initiatives, organizations and associations. Smith’s identification provides us with a more comprehensive view into the public presence and engagement of the church.

This challenge for the Church to be an example is at the heart of what Smit (2003:423-437) describes as an attempt ‘to give content to the vision of unity¹⁴ or *koinonia* albeit in diverse and sometimes conflicting ways...’ August (2005:40) sees the church as a public institution or organization in which people who share a mutual interest in this case the practice of their Christian religion, organize themselves voluntarily. In the voluntary exercise of our duty as a church, we should understand that people are called into God’s mission regardless of their gender

¹⁴ Smit in *Living Unity? On the Ecumenical Movement and globalization* has argued that this unity is a costly one. It is not a “cheap unity which avoids morally contested issues because they would disturb the unity of the church. Costly unity in the church as a moral community is discovering the churches’ unity as a gift of pursuing justice and peace. It is often acquired at a price (Smit 2003:428).

or class. Men and women are to work in partnership for any meaningful progress to be made. This agrees with Paul's apostolic message and instruction to the Church: "... for he (Christ) himself is our peace, who has made the two, one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility" (Ephesians 2:14). This message is very relevant and demanding on the churches now as people seem to be building walls of hostilities through divisions and disunity in many denominations.

Generally speaking, the church refers to a community of people who share a common faith, tradition and commitment. As a community of ordinary people, it is characterized by mutual love, service and solidarity – with all the imperfections of humankind. The church is not just a community of people but a community of the people of God constituted by God himself through the reconciliatory work that was done by Jesus Christ on the cross (Ephesians 2:14-15) which removes every form of prejudice and stereotype that contribute towards the oppression of women and the less privileged . It is a community that strives to fulfil God's purpose for humanity.

As things are, it is near impossible for the Church to realize Jesus' high priestly prayer "that all of them may be one, Father just as you are in me and I in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (John 17:21). We have to change our negative attitude towards one another as members of the body of Christ, and also towards one another as members of the opposite sexes if the future is to be better. Hence, we are suggesting that it starts from the smallest unit of the ecclesiastical family, the local church community which is indeed the action point of the entire church.

2.4.2.1 THE LOCAL CHURCH COMMUNITY

The local church community is the action point of the church. Without the local church there will be no national or global church. The *Wheaton Declaration* (cf. Samuel & Sugden 1999: 259-276) declares unequivocally the importance of local congregations as "the vehicle for communicating the Gospel of Jesus Christ both in word and deed". According to Gelder (2000:145), the local congregation is "the vital instrument for the fulfilment of the missionary vocation of the church."

It bears many names: parish, congregation, community, fellowship – or mission community. It is the real centre of practical theology where theological reflection is done.

The position of women in the local church community is very crucial. The local congregation is a faith community of people living in a particular time and place, called to witness within the confines of their world. They must answer questions such as: What is happening here? How should we address the problems and challenges confronting us? Practical theology in a faith community therefore is a critical and constructive reflection of the praxis of the Christian community's life and work in its various dimensions. It therefore requires that we carefully examine the theology that is being "cooked and consumed" here. For it has been observed that the theology that is emerging out of new contexts especially the local congregations or faith communities is engaging the energies of more than professional theologians. According to Edet and Ekeya (1989:10), "the theological enterprise could be divided into non-academic and academic, or more precisely, grassroots and professional. The two are related for they overlap and in many ways complement one another"

In many instances it is helpful to make a distinction between the role of the whole community of faith, whose experience is the indispensable source of theology, and whose acceptance of a theology is an important guarantor of its authenticity, and the role of smaller groups within the community who actually give shape to that theology. In other words, the role of the local church community is that of raising questions, of providing the experience, of having lived with those questions and struggled with different answers and of recognizing which solution are indeed genuine, authentic and commensurate with their experience. Local church communities are the sites of struggle where people especially women demonstrate their faith in their daily experiences and give birth to practical theology

In sum, the local church community is a key source for theology's development and expressions although Schreier (1985 16-21) warns that "it will be inaccurate to call it a theologian in the narrow sense of authorship". In this local community which is the congregation women are struggling to make their voices heard and their experiences recognised. Edet and Ekeya (1989:6), add to this by pointing out that

women all over Africa are quietly but surely struggling to be free to realize their fullest potential as persons both within and outside established social customs and church traditions. Women with a theological vision that sees beyond the traditional patriarchal interpretation of a few passages of the bible are learning to delve into these interpretations and to expose those negative sexist designations that are added to burden women with an eternal sense of guilt and condemnation. Both men and women need to be freed from this so called divinely willed subordinate state of women. To do this, African women are beginning to reclaim what is positive in the traditional culture and to question all that is negative.

The women cannot achieve this noble goal without the support of the local church which is the action point of practical theology for what ever happens at the national church has its foundation at the local church community.

2.4.2.2 THE NATIONAL CHURCH COMMUNITY

The name National Church can be ambiguous in the sense that someone may be thinking of one big or mega church. Rather, the national church is a body that holds the local churches/denominations together for the expansion of the kingdom of God here on earth. It comes into existence as a result of a merger process of several denominations or ecumenical agencies, as approved by the consenting denominations. It is called a council of churches in Nigeria and in many countries. The council of churches is a vital expression of the ecumenical movement in any nation today.

It is important to reiterate that the Council of Churches is not a super church. It is, in fact, not a church at all but an organization whose purpose is to provide a place for its member denominations to work together. The National Council of Churches therefore is “a community of communions Rusch (1985: 52-53). Rusch also further explains that:

The work of the Council is multi-faceted. It is a mechanism that enables the member communions to manifest more fully the oneness of the Church, to encourage the use of the Bible, to carry on programmes of renewals in the life and mission of the churches, to further works of Christian love and service throughout the world, to study and speak on conditions and issues in the world that involve moral, ethical, and spiritual implications of the gospel and to encourage cooperation among local churches and further the development and support of regional and local ecumenical agencies.

One of the duties of the National church is to speak on conditions and issues in the world that involve moral, ethical and spiritual implication of the gospel and to encourage cooperation among local churches. The injustices perpetrated against women are one of such issues that should be taken up by the national church. In Nigeria, we have the Christian Association of Nigeria, an umbrella organization of Christian denominations. It has been very vocal on many thorny and burning national issues as it represents the common position of the churches at such critical moments. But it is doing little about the oppressed position of women in the church.

The global church as we shall see next also has its duties towards the local and national church.

2.4.2.3 *THE GLOBAL CHURCH COMMUNITY*

The global church is an umbrella organization covering the local and national church. A typical example is the World Council of Churches (WCC). Significant members within the community, often working as a group, give voice to the theology of the community in the world. Because of the importance of this body, the WCC, let us briefly look at activities.

2.4.2.4 *THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES*

The story of the creation¹⁵ of the World Council of Churches (WCC) is a fairly long one that cannot be written in details here. In its early history, the World Council was largely a European and North American enterprise, but has changed over the years. According to Rusch (1985:59), in

¹⁵ Rusch in the book *Ecumenism: A Movement Toward Church Unity* 1985 dealt extensively on this issue and much of the information contained here is from this source.

1948 in Amsterdam two major strands of the ecumenical movements – Life and Work, and Faith and Order – came together in a new ecumenical organization as 147 churches constituted the World Council of Churches, completing the long process of formation that had been interrupted by the World War II. The World Council established its permanent headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, under the leadership of its first General Secretary, W. A. Visser ‘t Hooft, (Rusch 1985:59).

WCC makes no claim to be a church – but rather seeks to perform five tasks in the world. They are to:

- (1) call the churches to the goal of visible unity in one faith and Eucharistic fellowship;
- (2) facilitate the common witness of the churches in each place and in all places
- (3) support their efforts at common witness and evangelism;
- (4) express their concern for the service of human need and the promotion of justice and peace; and
- (5) foster the renewal of the churches in unity, worship, mission, and service (Rusch 1985:59).

The church as a community within the larger community has a reformatory role to play

2.4.2.5 *THE CHURCH AS COMMUNITY WITHIN COMMUNITY*

The Hebrew word *qahal* and the Greek word *ekklesia* express the calling of people out from the broader community and together within the broader community of the inhabited world to become the community of God – for God’s redemptive purpose for the world. The apostle Peter described the church thus when he said, “but you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light’ (1 Peter 2:9). It is the church’s missionary role in the world as we see in the scripture just quoted above and others not mentioned here that defines it as the community within a community.

Whether at local, national or global level, the church is called to serve the people within its community. Community development should therefore be on the priority list of both the church

and the larger society. This work as we know carries enormous responsibilities and implications which cannot be handled by men alone. So it becomes absolutely necessary to partner with women to achieve the expected result. Discussing this point further will take us to the issue of development.

2.5 DEVELOPMENT: MEANING, TYPES AND GOAL

In this section, we shall be looking at development, the meaning of the concept and at types and goals of development. Development means different things to different people and the goal of development differs from group to group. We shall try to look at this from different angles.

2.5.1 WHAT IS DEVELOPMENT?

It is not easy to define development. Many people look at development with different 'eyes' and so many writers have tried to define it and its branches from different perspectives. But Carmen (1996: xii) has cautioned that:

It is demeaning, dehumanising and, therefore eminently anti-development to define people by what they are not: ignorant, illiterate, poor, powerless.... Development starts from the other end: from the power in the powerless, from the literacy (and oracy) in the illiteracy, from the ability in disability, from the formal in what the owners of development refer to as non-formal and informal. In other words, it sets out from where people are.

In a similar vein, Wilson and Ramphela (1998: 262) have this to say:

... genuine development work is that which empowers people; which enables them to build organizations that, like a hydro-electric dam, pool their resources and generate power where previously there was none.

According to Bronkema, Lumsdaine and Rodger (1998: 110), development needs to be concerned with building up and cultivating human persons and communities as wholes. This is the ultimate purpose and practical foundation of other development objectives.

Development is obviously a complex and slow-moving process involving people on the one hand and the factors of production and organization on the other. For Burkey (1993: 39), “[i]t is obviously not a simple matter of an investment project here and a training programme there”. So there can be no fixed and final definition of development; but we can make suggestions of what development should imply in particular contexts. In the context of gender and development in South Africa, Haddad (2003: 427) has clearly stated that:

In order for the church to play any meaningful role in the development of communities, there need[s] to be a sound theoretical understanding of ‘development’. Development, however, is not neutral but is a gender issue. Theoretical issues of gender and development need to be understood within the context of extreme poverty experienced by poor and marginalized South African women.

In general terms, development necessarily involves structural transformation, which implies political, social and economic change. Women in Nigeria, South Africa and elsewhere in the world are all looking forward to this political, economic and social transformation. Burkey (1993: 23) has given broad outlines of types of development which the researcher has borrowed and modified for the purposes of this dissertation. They are:

2.5.2.1 HUMAN RESOURCES (PERSONAL) DEVELOPMENT

This, according to Burkey (1993: 39), “is a process by which an individual develops self-respect, and becomes more self-confident, self-reliant, cooperative and tolerant of others through becoming aware of his/her shortcomings, as well as his/her potential for positive change”. This takes place through working with others, acquiring new skills and knowledge, and active participation in the economic, social and political development of their communities. Women as well as men need new skills to participate actively in any development work. Thus the expected goal in this type of development will not be achieved if women are not allowed space to develop

themselves. Women on their own part should be determined to develop self-respect, confidence and self-worth if they must participate holistically in development. This is very crucial if there is to be any serious harnessing of the resources of any community where in most cases women form more than half the population. Another important aspect in development is to acquire interpersonal skills that enable one to interact with others, especially in the areas of problem solving and conflict resolution. Economics is an essential aspect of this interaction.

The focus of development on social and economic relationships emphasises the importance of making provision for the weak, the defenceless, the needy and the poor. This challenge is as Stassen (1998: 120) has observed, “to institutionalise access to immediate provisions, resources for long-term productivity, and just institutions that defend against possible oppression”.

2.5.2.2 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

If there is any type of development that women in Nigeria need most, it is economic development. This is because for decades, women have been taught to depend on their fathers if not married, on their husbands if married or even on their sons when their husbands are no more. Economic development is a process by which people through their own individual and/or joint effort boost production for direct consumption and to have a surplus to sell for cash. This requires that the people themselves analyse the problems, identify the causes, set their priorities and acquire new knowledge. It also requires them to organise themselves in order to coordinate and mobilise the effective application of all the factors of production at their disposal. Women’s needs and priorities have hitherto been set by men. But in the words of President Julius Nyerere, quoted by John Parrat in Birch and Rasmussen (1976: 129),

... unless society is so organized that the people control their own economics and their own economic activity, then economic growth will result in increased injustice because it will lead to increased inequality, both nationally and internationally.

This means that people in a particular context including women must plan, implement and manage their own economic activities individually and/or collectively. The higher income that

accrues through increased savings and investment can be used to satisfy a wide range of the people's wants, enabling them to realise greater well-being. However, continued progress requires the reinvestment of part of this surplus. This is the concept of economic sustainability.

Women are known to be active participants in the area of economic development although they mostly earn less than their investment because of gender stereotyping.

2.5.2.3 POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT:

Women for many decades have been denied space in the political development of Nigeria. Political development is a process of gradual change over time in which people increase their awareness of their own capabilities, their rights and their responsibilities and use this knowledge to organise themselves so as to acquire real political power. From our empirical survey in chapter five, we see that some structures make it difficult for women to be in key political positions. According to Burkey (1993: 23), fairness in politics will create a situation that will enable the people to: (1) "participate in decision-making at local level and to choose their own leaders and representatives at higher levels of government who are accountable to the people; (2) plan and share power democratically; and (3) create and allocate communal resources equitably (fairly) and efficiently among individual groups". Hence it may be possible to avoid corruption and exploitation, realize social and economic development, political stability and peace, and create a politicised population within the context of their own culture and their own political system. Gender issues are crucial at this point because women for long have been exploited in some quarters. They should be part of all decision making in our church and society.

2.5.2.6 SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Women in Nigeria have been left out of Social development which signifies a process of gradual change in which people increase their awareness of their own capabilities and common interests. As suggested by Burkey (1993: 23), "People use this knowledge to analyse their needs; decide on solutions; organise themselves for cooperative efforts; and mobilize their own human,

financial and natural resources. They also work to improve, establish and maintain their own social services and institutions within the context of their own culture and their own political system”. There is another aspect of social development which I call realisation and enjoyment of self. Women find it difficult to relax and enjoy themselves because for some, it is uncultured for women to relax. In most parts of Nigeria it is believed that only a lazy women finds time to socialise, relax and enjoy her social services. But we need to be transformed in our thoughts and actions. The next type of development brings us closer to the Christian ideals of development.

2.5.2.7 TRANSFORMATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Transformational development relates not only to the physical but also to the spiritual. Bowers & August (2005: 29)”, point to the fact that “the goal of Christian transformation is unique”. In the same way transformational development from a theological perspective is also unique. In theology, there is an engagement which seeks to establish and restore genuine relationships. Theology values development as long as it is holistic and people-centred. “This type of development reflects respect for human dignity and self-worth (August, 2006: 12)”. In this type of development we do not only engage in application but also in interaction. It is not controlled by a hegemonic network of doctrine, but by participation, reciprocity and dialogue in which the course of the journey to be taken remains open. There should always be a partnership of equality whereby each member has a duty to contribute as much inputs as possible. “This approach makes it clear that the biblical anthropology of equality before God forms the basis for human relationships in transformational development (August, 2005: 2)”. According to Wilbanks (1993: 28), “the attention to ecclesiology in recent Christian ethics is very important for reconsidering the church’s public role”. Christians are called to be innovative in their own communities by fashioning non-dominant patterns of relationships and organisational structures, not only to press these norms on other institutions but also to model inclusiveness, hospitality to strangers, justice and mutuality. Christians should no longer see development as a task for the government alone. If the church and society must experience transformational development, then women, who form half of the churches’ and societies’ population, should be allowed their rightful place. According to August (2005: 26), “the purpose of justification is the transformation of humans into subjects who do justice and who liberate the truth that is being held captive by structures of injustice”

The aim of every development, especially transformational development, is to do justice and to challenge the structures of injustice which has kept women away from active participation in development.

In the final analysis, development can best be seen as a process in which people and resources are engaged in and for transformative change. This transformational change does not take place in a vacuum, hence this discussion on what community development means.

2.5.2.8 WHAT THEN IS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT?

Community development is like a journey in which people walk together as pilgrims. The United Nations Organization's Department of Economic and Social Affairs in 1963 described community development as "... the process by which the people themselves are united with those of governmental authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural condition of communities, to integrate these communities into the life of the nation because community development is what we do with people not for them Korten (1990: 135). The government, church and other organizations should be part of people' struggles, as is also captured by Korten (1990: 135) in the following way:

If you have come to help me you can go home again.
But if you see my struggle as part of your own survival,
then we can work together.

Holistic development includes a whole range of self-help programmes like education, setting up of health and social welfare committees, building infrastructures, development of ideas etc. Very importantly, community development has to do with how to improve the living conditions of people, both in rural and urban areas. For the desired goal to be achieved, partnership with women is an imperative and not an option.

In addition to what has been enumerated above, for some, community development is having surplus money and other material resources for the people and taking care of the ecology for

mass production, and some orthodox development literature starts from an analysis of poverty, powerlessness, illiteracy, disability, etc. to deal with the issue. But for Burkey (1993: 23), “people should be ‘put’ first in any talk about development because, in the words of Carmen (1996: xii), “development is people.”

It is therefore important to know that community development is not only about social amenities and infrastructure but the totality of the life – both human and things in a given environment. It has much to do with the interests and issues that are shared by people in a community. As we know, some of these interests and issues can hinder or enhance the overall development of the community, depending on how they are understood or handled.

We are aware that hardly anything has been done in human society without a tinge of gender colouration. This process of tenderisation that has been the basis of ordering things in human society has left women as the worst casualties. This is, therefore why any discourse or practice of development should, as a matter of critical importance, consider the issue of gender and not only hand out food because, for women, development is more than food. And Food eaten in an oppressed environment cannot satisfy the hunger of the poor of which women are greater in number. The approach to development which only hands out food has robbed women of their dignity and self-worth because they are always seen as the helpless.

Stassen (1998: 120) further stresses the point that “we must see poorer people not as the helpless recipients of our generosity or pity, but as fully human, dignified, responsible persons with much to contribute.” Development efforts should focus on the dignity, insight and energy of poorer people and the value of bringing these assets to common tasks of development rather than assuming any kind of superiority. Development at the expense of the poor, who are mostly women, is no development. Our task then is to engage in a process with women to discover the hidden talents and resources that can help them truly realise their full humanity. In this way she can contribute to what Swart (2000: 232-4) calls the Global Ethics, for the *oikomene* – the global family”. And by this process the church can indeed participate in the fourth generation development paradigm instead of depending on the old ‘charity’ community development methods.

The fourth generation realm or approach according to Swart, (2000: 232-4) is:

a perspective in development that does not only deal with projects but also with ideas at the local, national and global levels. It is a strategic development action that requires analytic, catalytic, articulation, technical and other forms of development strategies. Unlike other forms, it seeks greater global penetrations while not neglecting the local dimensions.

In the *fourth generation realm*,¹⁶ we encounter the kind of spiritual contribution that Swart (2000: 232-4) based on Korten for instance, is asking of religion and the church. In this connection, we can find religion's clear commitment to play the reconciliatory role that Swart is asking for, which in the first place begins with reconciliation among the different religions themselves by making the message of love, *koinonia* and reconciliation a common project (based on their own reconciliation). The Church can in this way be proactive and could come closer to fulfilling a fourth generation development role than through all the charity and so-called community development projects. Here the church may excel on the basis of her true expertise. Here she may come a step closer to the world of new ideas, values and relationships and partnership. Here it becomes possible for local churches to fully participate in a global project, as is described in fourth generation strategic development action.

This type of development is not for a particular group of individuals but it is for all, including women. As stated above, development without liberation is distinguished slavery. Women in some parts of Nigeria suffer this disguised slavery in the name of development. However, there have been various debates about the involvement of women in development.

The International Decade for Women (1976 – 85) generated a huge amount of material concerning women's lives and the discrimination they face. It also documented the gender-bound effects of development, and provided a base for the themes of peace, justice and development.

¹⁶ Ignatius Swart extensively discusses this in his doctoral dissertation submitted to the University of Stellenbosch in 2000.

Some theories like WID (Women in Development) WAD (Women and Development) GAD (Gender and Development) also emerged. Visvanathan, (1997: 17), has a full discussion on the various theories about women and development.

2.6 *DIFFERENT THEORETICAL DEBATES: WOMEN GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT*

2.6.1 *WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT (WID) AND WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT (WAD)*

The issue of women and development has a long history and many dimensions. Visvanathan 1997: 17) Points out that, “As the oldest and most dominant perspective, WID had manifestly influenced the course of the field”. WID, maybe because of its long history within the field continues to be a popular term for the field itself. Visvanathan (1997: 17) further states that “WID subscribes to the assumptions of the modernisation theory; its programmes generally stress western values and target individuals as the catalyst for social change” “Modernisation theory depicts traditional societies as authoritarian and male-dominated and modern ones as democratic and egalitarian. But how democratic are the modern societies if one may ask? Does the modern society really show sensitivity to the oppression faced by women? In Nigeria where we operate a democratic system of government, the plights of women have not changed as one expects. A major WID policy initiative has been the mainstreaming of gender issues in development agencies but another school of thought, Women and Development (WAD), argues that: “liberal feminists using a WID framework tend to focus narrowly on sexual inequality and ignore the structural and socio-economic factors within which gender inequalities are embedded (Visvanathan, 1997: 21)”. It is this structural and economic inequality that the Nigerian women are campaigning against, because it is these existing patriarchal structures that make equality difficult

2.6.2 *GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT (GAD)*

Closely linked to WID and WAD is GAD. It is believed that GAD emerged in the 1980s and represents the influence of diverse feminist perspectives. According to Visvanathan (1997: 23), “it draws its heritage from feminist activism in the women’s movement, as well as from a schism in the ranks of Marxist feminists, many of whom challenged the notion that class analysis alone could explain women’s oppression”. Thus this theory does not only focus on women but on gender.

The GAD model adopts a holistic approach and treats development as a complex process influenced by political and socio-political forces. Young in Visvanathan (1997: 23), emphasizes that “GAD expects the state to assume a critical role in providing programmes to support the work of social reproduction, namely the care and nurturance of children. GAD proponents recognise household conflicts as arising both from gender division and from generational differences. GAD acknowledges women’s concerns about economic independence, and gives weight to political activism advocating strategies such as community organising, Transformative action, public education and coalition-building”. Women are always available for any kind of meaningful development but most times they are denied space. This denial of space is as a result of gender stereotyping as we have discussed earlier.

2.8 SUMMARY

In this chapter, we have conceptualised and also had a general view of how gender stereotyping has defined women’s roles for centuries. We have also discovered that the negative impact of culture reflects more on women than men through patriarchy and that church have enhanced stereotyping. It is clearly noted that the male dominated missionaries did not help matters rather they maintained gender stereotyping by their activities.

The Presbyterian Church of Nigeria after 160 years of existence still in some ways go by gender stereotyping which in some cases deny women space and justice in the system.

Proverbs and myths that portray women negatively have added to the problems of women’s self worth. For this reason, women need to recreate and rewrite those negative stereotypes, especially

those captured in proverbs and myths. There is need for a new mind-set and a change in attitude in both men and women in order to bring about the needed transformation and gender partnership in the Nigerian church and society.

Unfortunately there is another side of culture where women oppress their fellow women. The point we make here is that, if it is a sin for men to oppress women, it is a double sin for women to oppress their fellow women. The dehumanising practices that are preserved and perpetrated by women against their fellow women, especially widows, should be rejected by all. Women should no longer be used as instruments of destruction, but should use their potential to build bridges in relationships and networks to encourage one another.

We also looked at development and its various branches. We mentioned some theories and various debates on women and development. We made the point that development cannot be successful in an environment of oppression and exploitation as has been the case as regards to women. We had a discussion on community development and the various communities including the church community. We saw the church as a community within community that has the primary duty of transforming its members and its environment.

In what follows, we shall have a contextual look at gender stereotyping in Nigeria.

CHAPTER 3 GENDER STEREOTYPING IN NIGERIA

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of the study was outlined in Chapter one. We did some conceptualisation in chapter two, while gender stereotyping in Nigeria is the main focus in this chapter.

3.1.1 A BRIEF PROFILE OF NIGERIA

We have deemed it helpful to offer a brief profile of Nigeria in the interest of readers who may not know much about the country.

Nigeria is the most populous nation in the African continent. Its population of about 140 million¹⁷ people is constituted by diverse ethnic nationalities that have different languages, cultural identities and religious perceptions.

“Nigeria was put together as one nation by the British at the beginning of the 20th century when Lord Lugard, a British colonial administrator, and the colonial office in London amalgamated the then Northern and Southern protectorates of Nigeria in the year 1914. On this date, the Nigerian nation was created; before then, there was no entity known as Nigeria (Okafor, 1997: 1)”. Nigeria was thus created as an amalgam of more than 350 ethnic nationalities that have different languages, cultural identities and religious perceptions (Soludo, 2004: iii). Though each ethnic group has its own language, the main official languages are English, Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba.

“Nigeria gained political independence from Britain on October 1, 1960. The country was under military rule for over thirty years since independence, but democratic governance resumed in 1999 (Soludo 2004: 1)”. Nigeria operates the Federal system of Government with a central government and thirty-six states. Abuja is the federal capital and President Musa Yar’dua is the

¹⁷ The World Fact Book (2005) ranked Nigeria the 11th most populous country in the world. (<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/rankorder/2119rank.html> [Feb.06].

President of the country. It is the most populous country on the continent of Africa, with over 120 million people, Women constitute roughly half of the current population, based on the 1991 census (Okafor, 1997: 1).

Before the discovery of crude oil in commercial quantities in the 1950s, agriculture used to be the mainstay of the economy. Though Nigeria today is ranked about 6th in the world as an oil producing country, and despite its enormous natural endowments, very painfully, most Nigerians still wallow in abject poverty because of poor political leadership and gross mismanagement of resources by a few members of the political class and their associates. Corruption is a threat to the socio-economic fabric of the nation. Yet, Nigeria remains a highly religious society. Christianity, African Traditional Religion, and Islam are the major religions among others in the country. It is common knowledge that there is always conflict between Islam and Christianity, especially in the Northern part of Nigeria, which is a hotbed of Islamic fundamentalism. Endemic religious riots and conflicts have cost Nigeria more human and material loss than any other misfortune.

The empirical research for this dissertation was conducted in Abia State which is one of the thirty-six States of Nigeria. Abia State was carved out of the former Imo State in 1991. It is one of the thirty-six (36) States that constitute the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The people of Abia are of the Igbo ethnic group that predominates much of the Southeastern part of Nigeria. Their traditional language is Igbo. English is widely spoken and serves as the official language in governance and business. Globally, Igbos are well travelled. Abia's 2.4m people are mainly Christians and entrepreneurial. They are known and reputed to be industrious, highly market oriented, very hospitable and accommodating.

3.1.2 STEREOTYPING IN NIGERIA

It is true that in Nigeria some stereotyping may be positive, but most of the popular stereotypes are negative and one hardly hears any positive stereotyping about women. Again, some of these stereotypic expressions, especially about women in Nigeria, are part of the oral tradition. It is clear, though, that stereotyping is not only a Nigerian affair but a global issue. “Lawyers are

liars”, “theologians are righteous”, “women are evil”, “Italians are romantic”, “Russians like to drink”, “Germans are punctual”, “college professors are absent-minded”, etc., are some of the proverbial stereotypes that have long lingered among humans, despite their grave and even hateful consequences (Stangor, 2000: 5-6). These statements are taken for granted by many people without a second thought as to their veracity.

In Nigeria we have different versions of similar statements which people employ when referring to those from ethnic groups other than their own. For instance, among the two hundred and fifty ethnic groups in Nigeria (Okafor, 1997: 1), people have stereotyped the three major groups and therefore describe their members in the following ways: “Hausa/Fulani¹⁸ are rearers of cattle”, “Yoruba¹⁹ are tricky cowards”, “Ibo²⁰ are money lovers”.

Compared with our experience in Nigeria, the above elaboration raises a crucial question as to whether the stereotype is myth or reality. When, for instance, we consider the fact that most of the political leaders that have ruled the Nigerian nation are from among the Hausa/Fulani, one questions the basis of describing and treating them as mere rearers of cattle.

Even outsiders who are conversant with the Nigerian ethnic landscape are aware of the stereotypes. According to Robert Guest (2004: 120), Nigerian comedians play endlessly on ethnic stereotypes: that the Yoruba are noisy, Ibos are miserly, Hausa are dim, etc. Within the groups themselves, there is further stereotyping in which women bear the greater burden of its negative consequences. For instance, if a man does anything ugly or unwise the question will be: “Why did you behave like a woman?” And if a woman does excellently well, you will hear the statement: “She did it like a man.” When a man tries to help with some domestic activities, the next statement you will expect in Nigerian Pidgin English is: “This man, na woman wrapper”, which means he is a man who is always controlled by a mere woman. Even in the area of sports, if someone performs badly the conclusion in most quarters is that he performed like a woman!

¹⁸ The Hausa/Fulani are people living in the northern part of Nigeria. Most of them are Moslems, they are nomadic by nature, and they are very close to the desert area of the country. They have produced more Presidents in Nigeria than any other group.

¹⁹ The Yoruba live in the south-western part of Nigeria. They are one of the major ethnic groups in the country. The present President, Yar’adua is from this group.

²⁰ The Ibo are people living in the south-eastern part of the country. They are very enterprising.

One could also wonder why women are still seen as unfit or incompetent for leadership positions when, in reality, examples abound of women who have proved their worth. Although in Nigeria we have never had a woman's president or vice president of the country, at least two African countries have women president and vice who are performing well. The President of Liberia is Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, is a woman, and the deputy President of South Africa - Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka is also a woman. In Nigeria a few female ministers who are allowed to serve in the cabinet have also proven their worth. An example is past Finance Ministers of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in the person of Ngozi Okonjo Iwuala. But the problem remains that, even when women excel, their excellence is sometimes attributed to the men.

The question that we need to seriously ask, concerns whether these statements are true or mere perceptions in people's minds. Dealing with this question will require an unpacking and deconstruction of the meaning of stereotyping, particularly in relation to gender.

It is noteworthy to look at how the term stereotype was coined. According to Stangor (2000: 6), the term was first used by the American journalist Walter Lipman in his 1922 book entitled *Public Opinion*. Lipman was interested in how individuals react to people from different countries and different races, and he thought of stereotypes as "picture in the heads" of the people in the social groups around us

Stereotypes are also defined as beliefs about the characteristics of groups of individuals (for instance, that women are emotional or that college professors are absent-minded), and stereotyping is the application of these stereotypes when we interact with people of a given social group. Stangor & Lange (1994: 6) have said a stereotype can be thought of as "the characteristics that are mentally associated with a social category label in long-term, semantic memory".

3.2 Some areas where stereotyping manifest negatively on women in Nigeria

In this chapter we intend to look at some areas where the issue of stereotyping is constantly seen and experienced in the Nigeria society.

3.2.1 EDUCATION

Education plays a vital role in the process of holistic development and change in every human society. The issue of women's education in Nigeria is a serious one that needs urgent attention. The education of girls and women is an important project that any progressive government or church should take as a priority. Although it is assumed that everyone has an equal right to education, it is not yet a reality in practice, especially with regard to women in some parts of Nigeria.

Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights clearly states that:

- 1 Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.
- 2 Education shall be directed to the full development of human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

The above article points out the importance of education. We can see that education strengthens the respect for human rights and promotes peace, tolerance and friendship among nations. It could also be said that education is the life wire of every society. The right to education expresses a fundamental right that a citizen possesses in society and this obliges the state to guarantee and protect such a right directly. From this perspective, we should understand that women in society seeking this holistic type of education should be viewed as stakeholders with full rights and not as objects of charity or investment. Sometimes this equality is far from our sight and something needs to be done.²¹ Since education enables one to acquire skill and value among other things, women should no longer be left out.

²¹ There is need for corrective strategies in order to ensure equal access to education to groups that are excluded for various reasons, especially for gender-related reasons.

Education as referred to here is “a process of living that leads to balance in the development of the hand, the head and the heart in daily behaviour (Kalu, 1996: 140)”. Thus education involves the development of both intellectual and physical abilities with the ultimate purpose of not only enabling individuals to acquire an appropriate means of livelihood, but also of raising the general level of the life in a given society economically, socially, spiritually, aesthetically and politically. This type of educational balance is the hearts’ cry of many women today. Since this balance is so important to the individual and the society, women must be part of this holistic type of education. Ogbuagu (1990: 126) has observed that literacy is perhaps the most important single way station of social and economic development, opening for the individual the door to innovative ideas, options and actions. Women have, for the most time, been denied the door to innovation because education was perceived as unnecessary for them. With regard to the negative treatment of women in the traditional African setting, Oladepo (1990: 16) has also observed that:

In African traditional setting, a woman’s education is an exception, not a rule, despite the obvious fact that she is the mother of the nation, the nurturer of Nigerians of tomorrow...She is like a beast of burden, a bird of passage, often forgotten, not only by the society, but even by the children and husband she laboured so strenuously to sustain.

It was thought that women have no rational power to take the initiative unless men do it for them and that they, given their traditional role, do not need education, especially in the Western sense of it. The only education that was thought fit for women was domestic education. Some people try to glorify this type of education by calling it domestic science. In most cases what this type of education provides is teaching women about cleaning the home, cooking good food, dressmaking and hairdressing and, more importantly, managing whatever amount of money they are given by their husbands – the so-called breadwinners, even when it is unmanageably little. But men, on the contrary, are given the Western type of education. This system has helped to widen the gap between the educated men and the domestic science women. The resultant effect is what we see today in many areas of human endeavour where men still dominate. But from statements contained in various Articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as we have seen

above, everybody has equal rights and, by implication, equal rights to education. The key policy problem is that commitment to equal educational opportunities is not translated into practice, as indicated in the UDHR.

In this connection, Orugbani (1988: 120) has pointed out that:

Although there is no legal provision against the education of women in Nigeria, the high school fees charged meant that sometimes families had to decide whether it was the girl or the boy that went to school. Almost in all such cases, boys were favoured. Indeed, in some cases, the girls were given out in marriage to provide the where-withal to train the boys. Because the superiority of men is somehow in the mind-set of the people and also a traditional belief that the education of girls and women is a waste of money and resources, many families preferred boys/men's education.

In the traditional African society, the general attitudes towards women were quite clear. Sex differentiation between a male and female began right from birth. This was further elaborated by Ogbuagu (1990: 127) when he said:

Reception for male is longer and more hilarious than the reception given to the female baby. And from then on, the young child is largely restricted to the company and activities of the appropriate group

The appropriate male group is always cherished and educated because it is believed that they are the rightful heirs of the fathers. And for women, education is believed to be of little or no use. Ironically, these women who were denied education played very significant roles in the social psychology of a people and in the control of behavioural patterns in the society. The male, who paradoxically would later turn round to claim superiority over a female, is for the most time trained and nurtured by a woman. Odoemene (2003: 6) has observed that a proper study of social life in colonial Nigeria shows the women fulfilling very vital functions; probably the most important in this respect was their exclusive responsibility for the early education of children.

Children are taught the language, values and norms through folk tales and the oral tradition. These activities are carried out in the homes. One would have thought that women would use this golden opportunity of the formative age of children to foster behavioural change in them by educating them on the need for equality and partnership between boys and girls. But unfortunately, because of the cultural influence, women do not make proper use of this opportunity. I should like to say that, during this stage, mothers and fathers should restore dignity to their girl children by teaching equality and partnership at home. But before we move further, let us look at the general situation of education in Nigeria.

3.2.1 CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

The Nigerian Millennium Goals Report 2004 includes education as number two out of the eight goals that have been set for the nation to achieve by 2015.²² According to Soludo (2004: 15), “education has been identified as the cornerstone of development. It is now clear that societies that are underdeveloped are those which do not invest in or see education as their overriding priority. Nigeria is a signatory to the Jomtien Conference of 1990 and has endorsed the “Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs” (Soludo. 2004: 15). The country also actively participated in the Ouagadougou (1992) “Declaration on the Education of Women and Girls” and the Dakar Framework for Action (2002), which reaffirmed basic learning needs for all – Education for All (EFA), where six goals were defined. Education for all is still far from being achieved.

²² Following the United Nations Millennium Declaration adopted at the Millennium Summit held 6th-8th September 2000 in New York, Nigeria has become committed to the realisation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. These Goals were targets for making measurable improvements in the lives of the World’s poorest citizens (Soludo, 2004: iii). The first MDGs Progress Report produced by Nigerian’s stakeholders provides the benchmark for the national development targets to be achieved by 2015. The goals are:

1. Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger
2. Achieve Universal Primary Education
3. Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women
4. Reduce Child Mortality
5. Improve Maternal Health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure Environmental Sustainability
8. Develop a Global Partnership for Development (Soludo, 2004:ii)

The Nigerian world has blamed the woes of Nigeria, and in particular that of the educational sector, on the many years of military misrule (Dike, 2001 <http://www.Nigeraworld.com>).²³ During the military era, schools could be on strike for weeks and months and sometimes even close to a year and the government would not be greatly concerned. Rioting and strikes were common in the post primary and tertiary institutions. Sometimes a degree that should have taken four years to acquire took up to six years or more because of disruptions due to the above-mentioned unrest. Women were always the most affected because they could be tempted or persuaded to get married, if single, and in the case of married women, they could fall pregnant and find it difficult to continue their education. Many women's educational hopes were shattered by this instability in the system.

There is a general feeling that the military neglected the universities because of their opposition to military rule. When leaders who know the value of education are in power, they strive to fulfil the right to education but this right is infringed when other leaders do not have the same regard for education, especially women's education.

Dike (2001:1) argues that the survival of Nigeria as a viable society will depend on the health of her educational institutions, and that "the socio-political and economic development of a nation (or her health), in many ways, is determined by the quality and level of educational attainment of the population. In other words, lack of attention to the educational sector will lead to national paralysis. The Nation launched the Universal Primary Education programme in 1976 but it failed due to lack of funds. Another programme, named Universal Basic Education (UBE), was launched recently, but it is reported that the system also has some problem. There are some primary schools without classrooms, where learners are studying under trees. How can teachers, who are mostly women, survive under such conditions? Teachers are in the group of those who are paid the least and the latest, yet they are expected to train the future leaders of the nation.

²³ Dike Victor, *The universal basic education programme: Educating the educators in Nigeria*. Online posting <http://www.Nigeraworld.com>, 24/3/2007.

Lack of equality in education is not a problem in the secular sphere only, but also in the sacred. The lack of sufficient female participation in theological education and institutions is a concern to many. This requires that we shift our focus to the importance of women's education.

3.2.1.1 The importance of women's education

Although the education of women is something that every reasonable and responsible human being should encourage, it is unfortunate that some have not yet seen the need to do so. This may be because of what Nwachuku (1990: 128) has observed: "Nigeria generally suffers of this 'disease' of appalling female illiteracy." Soludo (2004: 22) also makes this important point:

If you educate a man you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman you are educating a family, a nation. ... The price to be paid for women's education cannot be compared with the pay off to the nation in tangible and intangible terms. ... If the best and soundest education is given to girls today, the future generation of this country will have the very best foundation and background to sustain our fledging civilization.

But it has already been observed that the gender disparity in access to primary, secondary and tertiary education dates back to the pre-colonial era and is rooted in African traditional culture, Christianity and Islamic religion (Uduiwomen, 2004: 1). In this regard, one has to appreciate the efforts of the United Nations and also commend the various Governments in Africa for encouraging women's education. However, this should never be seen as a favour to women because, according to the United Nations (1975a: 74), in Ogbuagu (1990: 126):

As long as women remain illiterate and are subject to discrimination in education and training, the motivation for change so badly needed to improve the quality of life for all will fail, for in most societies it is the mother who is responsible for the training of the children during the formative years of life.

As long as mothers are still responsible for the training of the children during their formative years of life in many societies, the neglect of women's training and education will bring the worst

results to humanity. It has been proved beyond any doubt, for example, that the education of women is the most effective way of reducing infant mortality. A woman who can read is able to learn how to care for her children much more effectively. She can better understand the need for cleanliness, for nutritious food, for a clean water supply, and so on. It is not at all surprising that a UNICEF report on the state of the world's children published in 1991 states that "the education of girls is probably the world's best investment" (Hughes & Bennett, 1998: 254). This should serve as a wake-up call for those who still do not see the need for women's education.

However, it is important to note that there are women who have done womanhood proud in this educational struggle. A few examples will suffice: Professor Bolanle Awe, the historian, is a giant in the area of academics and culture. Her contributions to the development of African studies and culture are immeasurable. She also is an epitome of motherhood. Prof. Alele Williams was the first female Vice-Chancellor in Nigeria. She made history. As a result of her excellent performance, she is a cause for pride to womenfolk, not only in Nigeria, but also in the world at large. Chief (Mrs.) Folake Solanke, first female Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN), is a reliable and an exemplary mother, a legal luminary and a woman of substance. She is an asset to Nigeria and brings pride to the legal profession. Even in the hallowed profession of soldiering, history was made when Major General Kale (Rtd.) became the first female major general in the Nigerian Army. (<http://www.vanguardngr.com/articles/2002/viewpoints/vp324032006.html> [accessed on 27/03/06]) A number of other women mentioned in this dissertation are also among those who have done womanhood and humanity proud.

But, while women have made significant contributions to society through Western education, they are still struggling for breakthroughs in the church through theological education. This scenario is what we will be looking at in what follows.

3.2.2 THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Although the Presbyterian church of Nigeria from our survey, is interested in women's theological education, the fact still remains that theological education is one of the areas in which women are lagging behind, either out of fear of venturing into the male 'domain' or through

frustration of their endeavour by the males who are in the system. Professor Denise Ackermann, quoted in Cochrane and Klein (2004: 49), aptly captures the situation in the following lines:

... The paucity of women theologians is essentially due to the fact that there's lack of recognition, and problems about procuring jobs. People are scrambling around today because of affirmative action pressure, wanting to appoint women to jobs in society generally. Women get appointed more easily in the secular world than the church.

Ackermann went on to express her fear of the future of women theologians thus:

I wonder about the women theologians for this century. I look back on the dearth of women doing theology as one of the saddest parts of my whole professional life. I mourn the fact that I have not been able to be party to producing more qualified women theologians. Some of those who were promising found the going tough. It has often been a lonely road.

As a result of this, there are neither female students nor female lecturers in most theological institutions. Even the few that are there sometimes do not receive encouragement from their male counterparts. This is largely as a result of our cultural baggage and patriarchy. From my own observation in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, it is also difficult to post female ministers because some congregations reject them on the account of culture. They make statements to the point that a woman cannot lead us, it is not allowed in this land.

Tse (1989: 95-96) has observed that "exclusion of women in teaching theology until recent years was partly due to the patriarchal church". She further argues that "the inclusion of women in teaching theology will help to shape the teaching and preaching of the church for alternative experiences within the accepted patriarchal theology". Yong (1989: 105) has lent her voice in noting that, "among women theologians and women engaged in theological reflection; the need for a partnership of women and men in contributing to the total life and mission of the church is becoming more recognised". This contribution is essential, particularly in terms of maximising women's participation in all areas and sharing in all forms of ministries, theological dialogue, and

education towards partnership. The need for partnership cannot be overemphasised. Despite our differences, we should learn to work together. The partnership of men and women will not only move humanity forward, but will also restore dignity and self-worth in women. Okure (1989: 56), further stresses this point in the following way: “the creation of male and female has consequences that extend beyond the purely biological. It demands that both men and women be involved in every sphere of human endeavour. Nowhere is this more needed than in the theological and spiritual field where humanity most lives out its likeness of God”. Women must therefore be encouraged and enabled to undertake the study of scripture up to the highest level. In addition, a section of the Final Statement written by the Francophone African women during their meeting in Yaounde, Cameroon, under the EATWOT reads thus:

The African woman is the soul of the society and thus the initiating teacher in spiritual and divine matters. Concerning the formation given to religious and lay women, we believe that the churches must prepare women to be capable of preaching the word of God, of directing retreats and study groups, of taking responsibility for the formation of pastors, evangelists, lay leaders, apostolic workers, priests and other ordained persons. We recommend that women be equally present in the teaching of Christian doctrine, not only as female catechist, but also as professors of theology (Fabella & Oduyoye, 1989: 60)

With regards to scholarship, King (1995: 30) says, “women need to integrate scholarship from both sexes in the religious sphere, and then analyze the important interconnection between gender and power”. In her book, *Evangelical Women in Belfast*, Baillie (2002: 24) writes that feminist critical analysis has called into question androcentric authority in scholarship. Furthermore:

Religious and spiritual values are vital for this. Women must be empowered and need to empower others to change the world as we know it. The critical voices of women in religion and in the contemporary study of religions must be heard and listened to for they are a promising sign of hope for the future of religious studies and for the future of our world (Baillie, 2002: 24).

It must be known that, without women's education, the steady progress expected in the world will hardly be achieved. Phiri (2003: 430) rightly observed:

The nations of this world are tied to each other in a web of human connectedness, not least of which is education. One of the most striking things about the world's education in the previous centuries has been its systematic exclusion of women. Let us expect that the most striking thing about the world's education in the 21st century will be the systematic inclusion of women at all levels and in all fields.

One cannot talk about education without talking about health for it is the healthy that has the ability and energy to acquire education. In the following session, we, therefore, are going to discuss some female related health issues especially, HIV/AIDS.

3.3 FEMALE SEXUALITY AND HEALTH RELATED ISSUES

Another important issue that affect women in Nigeria is health related. The saying, "Health is wealth" is a popular maxim stating a fact that cannot be overemphasised. This saying is very true because only a healthy person has the strength or ability to work and be productive. Recognising the fact that health is wealth and wealth is health, and that lack of good health could lead to poverty, people ask: Is disease a cause of poverty, a result of poverty, or both? (Sachs, 2005: 204). The Commission for Macroeconomists and Public Health Specialists (Sachs, 2005: 202) has the following answers to give to this dialectic question: Causation runs strongly in both directions. Poor health causes poverty and poverty contributes to poor health (Sachs, 2005: 204). The maintenance of health among our people in Nigeria falls mainly into the hands of nurses and doctors. It is a well-known fact that women are often first in the line for health care delivery, particularly to children. It has been noted that they are the implementers of the child survival revolution, and the success of the Expanded Programme on Immunization (E.P.I.), launched in Nigeria in 1985 (Odoemene, 2003: 11). In some cases, circumstances surrounding these 'care givers' unfortunately prevent them from being 'care receivers'. Sometimes the reason just lies with the people's perceptions about women and sexuality.

3.3.1 *SEX AND SEXUALITY*

For a Nigerian woman, discussions around sex and sex related issues are seen as taboos. This is as a result of the patriarchal orientation that only women who are prostitutes discuss sex matters. This is well captured by (Gupta 2000:1) who says:

In Africa sexuality issues are power issues. Those who determine the “what, when, where and how” of sex are those who have power – in this case men”.

But sex has been described by Nelson (1978: 17) as “a biologically-based need which is oriented not only towards procreation but also towards pleasure and tension release”. On the other hand, according to Nelson (1978: 17), sexuality is a much more comprehensive term associated with more diffuse and symbolic meanings, and psychological and cultural orientations. While it includes sex and relates to biological organ systems, sexuality goes beyond this.

Although many church people, as well as leaders in Christian communions do not always recognize it, we today are in the midst of a sexual revolution. The older and generally accepted conventions regarding human sexuality and its expression are being questioned – not only by many outside the religious tradition but also by many within it; not only by young people but also by older ones; not only by revolutionaries but relatively by conservative men and women who find those conventions meaningless under the very different conditions in which we are all obliged to live today (Nelson, 1978: 5).

This topic of ‘sexuality’ is one that sounds too ‘sacred’ to be discussed by the church and too cultural to be discussed by the society. Yet, lack of proper information on this issue has aided in childhood pregnancy, contracting sexually transmitted disease and contracting HIV/AIDS. As Bruce (2004: 45) has rightly pointed out:

The extent of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in South Africa and the fact that in most cases the H I Virus is sexually transmitted make it imperative that the churches commit themselves to an open discussion on sexuality and the various social, cultural, and economic factors that impact on the way individuals exercise their sexuality.

The church should as a matter of urgency demystify sex. I agree with (Cohen 1999: 285) that “until church leaders are ready to discuss issues of sexuality, drug use and homosexuality in an inclusive and transformed discussion, their ability to serve the entire community as well as to confront, instead of replicate, dominant ideologies will be severely inhibited”. On the other hand, women should change their mind-set as far as sexuality and sexual issues are concerned.

Having seen the need for Nigerians to engage in meaningful discussion on this issue, the government of Nigeria is trying to change its mind-set on this. According to Soludo (2004: 28), Government’s approval of the implementation of the National Curriculum on Sexuality education at Junior and Secondary school level is a positive development. This is a very good policy on sexuality education but the question is: Will culture allow this policy to succeed? It is a well-known fact that women comprise the majority of teachers in the junior and secondary schools and it is also a well-known fact that, until now, it is regarded as an abomination in some cultures for a woman to talk about sex. How do we reconcile culture and reality?

The researcher being a pastor has the privilege of counselling people concerning many conflicts, including conflict in marriage. Being a female pastor gave the researcher an added advantage of interacting with many women. According to the majority of women who come for counselling, they are more open in discussing their domestic problems with me than with my male colleagues. From my interaction with these women, it would seem that the greater percentages of the quarrels that take place in homes are more of sexual and economic problems. Some women speak about the inconsiderable manner in which their husbands demand sexual intercourse whether it is convenient for them or not. Most African women have been told that it is always the husband’s right to demand sex. But this is not true rather it is a gift from God that should bring pleasure to both the man and the woman, especially in marriage. This is echoed by (Moyo 2004: 97 when she suggested that “Christian theologians need to develop a theology of mutual love and communion climaxed in sexual pleasure within an acceptable sexual relationship”. It is sad to say that many marriages are in crisis because of poor understanding of the place of sex in marriage.

3.3.1.1 MARRIAGE²⁴

Marriage is still the centre that holds communities together and also the centre that still oppresses almost half of the community – women. Sometimes women are not allowed a free hand to choose their own husbands, but parents or relatives choose on their behalf. This happens in Nigeria, even in this 21st century. As a result of this, many girls get married at a very young and tender age in life and there is usually a large age gap between husband and wife. In such marriages, the wife is like a slave or a baby to her husband. It is difficult for the husband to consult her or have any meaningful discussion with her. She is too afraid to ask questions and even if she does ask, she is shouted at in most instances. Young married girls are at risk of contracting HIV from their husbands as it is acceptable for men to have sexual partners outside marriage and because some men have more than one wife (polygamy). Because of their age, lack of education and low status, young married girls are not able to negotiate safer sex. They are powerless. Some of these girls are even circumcised in infancy for the pleasure of their would-be husbands. To date, female circumcision remains an issue in Nigeria and many parts of Africa. It is necessary to take a brief look at this.

3.3.1.2 FEMALE CIRCUMCISION

There are certain myths that sustain the belief that an uncircumcised girl is a potential prostitute (Kolawole, 1998: 24) Female circumcision/female genital mutilation (FGM) is a cultural practice where all or part of the female genitalia is removed by cutting. Sixty percent of all Nigerian women experience FGM, which is most common in the south, where up to 85% of women undergo it at some point in their lives. FGM puts women and girls at risk of contracting HIV

²⁴ In Nigeria, marriage is always a time of joyful celebration especially if the two families (the family of the man and the family of the woman) are in agreement. This celebration is not only for the two families but for the entire community. The parents of the woman take pride in the fact that their daughter is of age and they also accept some kind of “bride price” from the suitor’s family, which varies in different parts of Africa. The bride price could be cattle, cows, goats or cash, according to the particular context. On the other hand, the suitor’s family takes pride in that they are getting a bride or another property as the case may be, to add to their number. The Articles in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights or the African Charter do not make sense to most African men simply because it talks about equality.

from unsterilised instruments, such as knives and broken glass used during the procedure. (Source: [http://www.avert.org/aids-nigeria.htm\(28/1/06\)](http://www.avert.org/aids-nigeria.htm(28/1/06))).

Women's low status and lack of access to education increase their vulnerability to HIV infection. Certain social and cultural practices such as early marriage and female circumcision also contribute to women's vulnerability. While one wonders if there is hope for women in the midst of all such suffering, Oduyoye points out that "... in a continent where physical suffering seems endemic, a suffering Christ is a most attractive figure, for that Christ can be a companion" (Oduyoye, 2001: 57). But rather than accepting suffering passively, African women view this suffering like "birth pangs", ushering in the new. Jesus is a comrade in their suffering, a co-sufferer not distant and removed. The women of the African indigenous Churches (AICs) speak from their experiences as 'healers' of a "victorious Christ" who heals and also suffers with those who are physically and psychologically disabled. This physical and psychological disability, especially from HIV/AIDS, has affected the church and society tremendously. The church and other stake holders are called upon to act, hence Haddad (2006: 81) makes the observation that:

We live in critical and dangerous times and our HIV-positive world challenges our theology, our tradition and our culture. It forces us to seek new understandings of God and of God's work in the world and to find ways of living as "church" that are redemptive to both men and women.

Many of our brothers and sisters in the church are HIV positive. They come to be prayed for. But at most times, instead of praying, we stigmatise and condemn them to hell. Even where we cannot heal, we can pray.

3.3.1.3 Women and HIV/AIDS

Many theories have been propounded about HIV/AIDS but most of these theories are speculations. In the past, many people saw AIDS as a homosexual disease and some Africans attributed it to witchcraft, with its origin being the witchdoctors. Others believe that HIV was developed as an instrument of biological warfare which was being used by aliens from outer space to kill the people of planet earth. Yet others see it as God's punishment for humanity. But

it has been established scientifically that the HI virus belongs to a group of viruses called lentiviruses which have also been found in non-human primates (such as Chimpanzees and African green monkeys). (Van Dyk, 2001: 4). No matter the source[s], the issue of HIV/AIDS is one of the examples of how women are vulnerable to diseases.

Women are the worst hit in the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Many reasons have been attributed to this, ranging from economics, powerlessness, violence, rape, ignorance, etc. Traditionally, women are care providers for everyone in the home. According to Phiri, Haddad and Masenya (2004: 15), the HIV/AIDS pandemic has increased women's home work load, as AIDS patients require home-based care for a long time. The condition is made worse because the majority of the women do not have financial support to carry out their care duties properly. Due to lack of knowledge on how to protect themselves from the virus, some African women and girls are being infected with HIV through the process of care giving to AIDS patients and also through sexual abuse.

3.3.2 HIV/AIDS IN NIGERIA

According to Soludo (2004: 46), before the advent of the present regime in 1999, policy makers lacked the political will and commitment needed concerning the fight against HIV and AIDS and Malaria.²⁵ The first AIDS case in Nigeria was identified in 1986 and the HIV/AIDS prevalence rate rose from 1.8% in 1988 to 5.8% in 2001. Since 1991, the Federal Ministry of Health has carried out a National HIV/syphilis sentinel seroprevalence survey every two years. In the survey of 2003, it was estimated that there were 3,300,000 adults living with HIV/AIDS in Nigeria; 1,900,000 (57%) of these were women. One may want to know whether there are factors that contribute to the high prevalence among women in Nigeria. It has to be noted that Nigeria is a complex mixture of diverse ethnic groups, languages, cultures, religions and regional political groupings, which offers major challenges for HIV prevention programmes (Soludo, 2004: 45). The preceding information may not be far from the reason why so many women are infected.

²⁵ Malaria is a major health and developmental problem in Nigeria as it affects school attendance and the ability to work. It has been estimated that over half of the Nigerian population has at least one episode of malaria annually and the majority of outpatient visits can be attributed to malaria. The group most at risk comprises pregnant women and children (Soludo, 2004: 46). The government is involved in the Roll Back Malaria Programme to mitigate the effect of malaria (ibid.).

3.3.2.1 Why many women are being infected with HIV in Nigeria

It is well known that more women than men in Africa are infected with HIV/AIDS. As noted by Abdool-Karim (1998: 15-25), women's vulnerability to AIDS is a result of both social and biological factors. Nigeria is not an exception. Among the many factors that contribute to the spread of HIV in Nigeria, is lack of sexual health information and education. Sex traditionally is a very private subject in Nigeria, for cultural and religious reasons. The discussion of sex with teenagers, girls in particular, is seen as indecent. Up until recently there was little or no sexual health education for young people and this has been a major barrier to reducing sexually transmitted infection (STI) and HIV rates. Furthermore, sexual networking practices such as polygamy, a high prevalence of untreated sexually transmitted infections (STIs), unprotected sex, poverty, and the low status of women are among other reasons (Soludo, 2004: 45).

According to Sally Baden and Heike Wach (1998: 15), research has revealed that women are at a higher risk than men of being infected with the HIV through unprotected sex. They have observed the two ways in which women's risk increases and point them out thus: the large area in the vagina through which the virus may pass and the longer stay of semen in the vagina, which allow the virus more time to have contact with the woman's mucus membrane. Women are also more likely than men to contract sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) without noticing them because they occur inside the vagina (Phiri, Haddad & Masenya, 2004: 9). The existence of STDs in the vagina increases a woman's chances of being infected with the virus but, worse still; women do not seek early treatment because of the stigma attached to STDs. Women's experience confirms this fact.

Knowing the dreadfulness of this disease, many people who are infected especially men, search for cures by all means and at all costs. For this reason, there is an increase in sexual abuse of women and girls. Some of these acts take place in the family. Let us discuss this further in the next section.

3.4 THE FAMILY

Family has been defined by Sinclair in the English Dictionary for Advance Learners (2001: 559) as a group of people who are related to each other, especially as parents and their children. The family, according to Nussbaum (2000: 243), is a place of love and care. It is also a place of domestic violence, marital rape, child sexual abuse, and under-nutrition of girls, unequal health care, unequal educational opportunities and countless more intangible violations of dignity and equal personhood. In many instances the damage women suffer in the family takes a particular form: the woman is treated not as an end in herself, but as an adjunct or instrument of the needs of others, as a mere reproducer, cook, cleaner, sexual outlet, caretaker, rather than as a source of agency and worth in her own right (Nussbaum, 2000: 243).

The family is also understood as a veritable vehicle for conveying cultural and societal values to the younger generations. So it is commonly believed that the family is the first University that a child attends in his or her life. It also follows that the parents are the first teachers to teach a child. Among the Igbo, as in other ethnic groups in Nigeria, family relationships are guided by a strict system of seniority. The freedom to use first names is only given to seniors and superiors. It is an insult to call an elder by his or her first name. So the family is where love and respect for the elderly and for authority are first inculcated. The family is also where discipline is expected to be instilled and enforced. So, the families are the custodians of heritage, traditions and identity. It is the duty of the elders to pass on the information to the younger generations.

The nuclear family consists of the father, his wife or wives (if he is a polygynist²⁶) and their children. The extended family consists of all the relatives and extended families in which parents, children, their spouses, grandchildren and other relatives live under one roof are common, especially in rural areas. This makes the concept of nuclear and extended family alien to Nigerians because to them, all the relatives are naturally members of the family and not extended. In the family structure, women's roles are pivotal, whether as daughters, wives, mothers or

²⁶ Polygyny is a system of marriage in which one man marries more than one wife. Polygyny is therefore the correct though rather pedantic term for what is popularly known as polygamy. A polygynous marriage is the common indigenous system of marriage in most, if not all, African societies (Otiye et al., 1979: 81). Polygyny and polyandry (that is, one woman being married to several men) are the two subdivisions of polygamy.

sisters. Whatever happens in the family affects the church and the communities within that nation. Let us now look at the patriarchal system of government found in some families. We shall have a closer look at culture, which is the basis, in some cases, of women's oppression in Igbo society.

3.4.1 THE FAMILY AS THE CENTRE FOR PATRIARCHAL GOVERNMENT

Since the issue of gender stereotyping is already rooted in and woven into the fabric of our lives in Nigeria, a journey back to the starting point of our lives, which is the family, is required to uproot it. It has been argued that, basically, the oppression and empowerment of women starts from the family. Korten (1990: 169) explains that the family is the most basic social unit of human society. It is the building block that is essential to the construction and maintenance of strong integrative social structures. A strong family provides enduring bonds that are the individual's most important sources of economic and psychological security. The family unit is essential to the healthy development and functioning of any society.

It must be noted that without a significant transformation of the family, the church and society cannot be safe in a society where the family is often a mechanism of suppression and subordination, particularly for women and children.

In most of Africa, the norms of relationships in the received teaching are invariably gender-based, and they are usually directed at the stability and welfare of the whole community. It follows that gender- and age-defined roles are strictly adhered to, especially during religious and social rites. All of this folk talk, including myths, folk tales and proverbs, provides a great source of imagery about women. In *Male daughters, Female husbands*, Amadiume (1987: 94), explains that a woman is likened to a breakable plate to reflect the indigenous ideas about male and female sexuality, which also supports the socio-cultural significance made of the female biological process.

It basically means that because of biological difference, a woman is sexually more vulnerable than a man. A woman gets pregnant, a man does not. Since this culture

stigmatizes pregnancy before marriage, the socialization of girls stressed sexual restraint and preparation for their future roles as wives and mothers. Socialization of boys, on the other hand, stressed masculinity, equated with virility, violence, valour and authority.

It is worth pointing out here that, in traditional society, in early childhood, all little children ran about naked (Amadiume, 1987: 94). Marked differences in socialisation only begin later in childhood, when boys begin to gang together and wander from their sisters and the home. This was the beginning of three processes into manhood and the qualities and attributes of masculinity. These processes and stages of male development in which youths were encouraged to participate up to as late as the first half of the 20th century were wrestling,²⁷ hunting²⁸ and masquerading²⁹ (Amadiume, 1987: 94-95). What finally differentiated boys from youths or men from men, the ordinary from the gallant, were the dance societies in celebration of courage, valour and masculinity.

In contrast to boys, when a girl showed signs of womanhood, menstruating and developing breasts, her movements were curtailed and she was closely watched. She could no longer wander off into the forest to pick nuts and berries with other children. Her life was no longer free and carefree as before and there were various taboos and rituals surrounding her maidenhood in the attempt to prevent pre-marital pregnancy.

For a male, full adult maturity meant self-assertion, adventurousness and self-sufficiency. A man proved his masculinity when he participated in the war dances, displayed his treasures of war or

²⁷ Formal wrestling took place in public, in village squares, and the 'strong' were praised and the 'weak' ridiculed. During wrestling, boys, young men and the elderly paired up with their age-mates.

²⁸ Hunting – ranging from small to large and dangerous animals – was also performed in age-sets; boys hunted the smaller animals with stones and catapults, men sought the larger ones, with guns, and bows and arrows.

²⁹ After the hunting stage, came initiation into the masquerade group, *ikpu mmanwu*. In these masquerades, dead ancestors and spirits were incarnated and used as a law-enforcement authority. Beliefs surrounding initiation into masquerade group claimed that one has to travel to the land of the dead and come face to face with the spirits before becoming a member. Women and little boys were made to believe that the masqueraders themselves were actually spirits which came out of ant holes, etc. Their fear of these masqueraders was therefore real and the masqueraders in turn terrorized women in particular.

from hunting wild beasts, boasted of this strength and courage, and wrestled with other brave warriors. He also proved his masculinity when he showed that he could fend for himself. For a female, on the other hand, full adult maturity meant self-restraint in sexual matters, and being less adventurous in the pursuit of pleasure. Self-sufficiency for her came only with marriage. Marriage also brought independence from her mother, but this was exchanged for dependence on the husband to whom she had been handed over and from whom she had to derive her new authority and status in society (Amadiume, 1987: 94-95).

What we learn from the above is that the family is the place where opinions are formed and characters are shaped. It is a place from where we start learning about who we are and how to perceive others. As Nussbaum (200: 2450) shows, the family is a home of love and care indeed, and we should not ignore this when we assess what different family structures contribute. But we should also remember that the family has a tremendous influence on other capabilities. It is the family, the nucleus of the larger society, which helps to create in us the pictures we have in our heads about ourselves and others. This is how the process of stereotyping begins.

3.5 Women and sexual abuse

With the scourge of HIV and the desperate search for a cure, there is a new ‘therapeutic’ concept of female virginity, especially in South Africa. It is reported that between January 2000 and June 2001, 31,780 child rapes were recorded.

These baby rapes are strongly linked to the myth that having intercourse with a virgin can cure someone of the HIV virus...The number of reported baby and child rapes are now so many that the head of the Provincial Child Protection Unit, Jan Swart, says, ‘Most of these victims are under the impression that the attacks on them are part of growing up as a child (Rubin, 2002: 41).

The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians³⁰ speaks out about issues affecting women in Africa. One of those issues is HIV/AIDS. In an effort to bring to attention the seriousness of

³⁰ The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians is a community of African Women Theologians who come together to theologise from the experiences of African women in religion and culture. The inspiration of having a

HIV/AIDS for the African woman, the Circle wrote a series on HIV/AIDS as it concerns African women. In an article entitled “African Women of Faith Speak out in an HIV/AIDS Era” in the book: *African Women, HIV/AIDS and Faith Communities*, Isabel Apawo Phiri, a prominent member of the Circle, told a story that is worth quoting here:

“On a dreadful night in 2001 in the Eastern Cape, South Africa, a ten-month-old-baby, whom we all fondly know as “Baby Tshepang” was brutally raped. It was assumed that the reason for her rape was the commonly circulated myth that sex with a virgin can cure a man of AIDS. Babies of course are guaranteed to be virgins. A few day later six men were taken into custody for the rape but they were released as there was no forensic proof (i.e. evidence of their sperm and blood) on Baby Tshepang to prove that they were the culprits (Natal Witness Newspaper, 29.10.2001). A while later another man was arrested as this time positive proof of his semen and blood was found on the baby (Natal Witness Newspaper, 18. 1.2002). These tests have been done twice (Natal Witness Newspaper, 21. 1.2002). His girlfriend testified in court that she saw him rape the baby, but she never came forward earlier because she was afraid “he would beat me”. “I saw him moving up and down on the baby. I could not move, I just held the bed and covered my mouth with my hands” (Natal Witness Newspaper, 24.7.2002). Even after the damning forensic evidence and the evidence provided by his girlfriend, the accused denied having raped the baby. He said that his girlfriend just wanted the reward money and that he has never beaten her (Natal Witness Newspaper, 26.7.2002 quoted by Phiri and Haddad, 2004: 3).

For some, the above story may sound like a fairy tale because it seems unimaginable that an adult male could rape a ten-month-old-baby young enough to be his grand-child. This is an act of wickedness that demands justice. Painfully, the above example is just one of many. Baby rape

circle is attributed to Mercy Amba Oduyoye, who became the founder of the Circle. Her vision was shared with other African women who were in Diaspora at the time and they formed what is commonly known as the International planning committee of the Circle. The leaders worked hard and the Circle was launched in Accra, Ghana, in September 1989 (Oduyoye & Kanyoro, 1990: 27-28).

has been an issue in South Africa, according to Professor Theron (Rubin, March 2002: 41), for more than 15 years.

Clarke and Linzey (2000: 717) have strongly argued that the perception of women and the moral atmosphere in a society has a lot to do with the level of rape in that society:

A society which constantly presents women as commodities, as objects of lust, whether in pornographic films and magazines or in seemingly more acceptable media, which shies from inculcating morals, which discourages all talk of restraint and self-control, which glorifies acquisition and the satisfaction of appetites regardless of their nature, such a society encourages men to think of women as things indeed, it encourages women to see themselves as things. Such a society has no possible remedy for rape. It may, thanks to the continued efforts of feminists and women in the legal profession have a legal system which expresses loudly and clearly the contempt in which it holds rapists. It may encourage women to acquire techniques and instruments of defence. It may even have relatively efficient means of catching rapists; but it will not put an end to rape. Insightful though eighteenth-century theories about the condition of women might be, it is obvious that its improvement cannot be left to the passing time.

Rubin, (March 2002: 41) has observed that “psycho-social distortion of female virginity portends a great danger”, This is not only to the child but also to the community of which the child is a member. It is therefore a challenge to the society to confront this development that is aimed at destroying a part of our humanity even before they blossom. Already it has been observed that, because the government, police and social services seem unable to put an immediate stop to these atrocities, “desperate communities have started taking the law into their own hands” (Rubin, March 2002: 41). Experience shows that there are several instances where communities have assaulted rapists. Even in Nigeria, rapist are either assaulted and some times killed by the community because for them, the act of rape is an abomination. Similarly, according to (Rubin, March 2002: 41), “in Mfuleni in the Western Cape) residents attacked a man who allegedly

raped a nine-year-old girl and in Port Elizabeth a man who raped a ten-year-old was stoned and beaten to within an inch of his life. Police had to save these alleged rapists from death”.

The high rate of HIV/AIDS in Africa should be of great concern to all. According to (Phiri & Haddad, 2003: 8).The UNAIDS report on the global HIV/AIDS epidemic of June 2003 indicated that there 42 million people in the world were infected with HIV. Of those infected, 29 million were living in Sub-Saharan Africa. In Africa, 18 million women are infected with the virus and many have not been tested. Many women are infected with HIV/AIDS as a result of rape. Nussbaum (2000: 30) has observed that, “rape is used as a weapon against women crusading for political change”. She further observed that, “in 1993, Bhanwari Dewi, a member of Rajasthan State’s Sathin movement for women’s welfare, was campaigning against child marriage when she was gang-raped by men from a community that supports this practice. Because the men were influential community leaders, police refused to register the case until it was too late to perform the necessary medical examination; a lower court in Jaipur acquitted all the accused. Although Bhanwari appealed this judgment and the Rajasthan High Court agreed in 1996 to hear her appeal, arguments in the case have not yet been heard”. At the centre of violence against women, is a demonstration of who is in power.

In addition to rape, the unfortunate incident of even killing some girls before they are born should be of a great concern to all. A Bombay example provides evidence. According to a survey undertaken by a Bombay clinic “between 1978 and 1992, 78,000 female foetuses were aborted after sex determination tests (Hughes & Bennett, 1998: 237)”. The situation is even worse for people living with HIV/AIDS. Nigeria is not free from this deadly disease. **It is worth noting that HIV/AIDS has many effects on people.** For further discussion on HIV/AIDS and its effect, we turn to the next section.

3.5.1 Effects of HIV/AIDS

Even when women themselves are not infected with HIV/AIDS, they are in one way or another affected by it. Sachs (2005: 201) has observed that:

Africa is losing its teachers and doctors, its civil servants and farmers, its mothers and fathers. There are already more than ten million orphaned children. Business costs have soared because of disarray from massive medical costs for workers, relentless absenteeism, and an avalanche of worker deaths

In Nigeria where men are seen as the bread winners of their various families, the death of husbands is linked with loss of income and other essentials of life. Most widows are dispossessed of their family property because it is not part of the Nigerian culture for a man to write a will³¹. Another effect of HIV/AIDS is well put by (Phiri & Haddad, 2003: 15) when they observed that:

“young girls drop out of school to take care of their parents or young siblings. In so doing, they lose out on opportunities to improve themselves through education. Child-headed homes have increased due to the death of parents from AIDS. As the children seek food, the girl orphans become vulnerable to abuse. Some of them are impregnated, infected, raped or married off to generate money for other siblings. Elderly grandmothers are now faced with the problem of raising orphaned grandchildren without economic support or energy for the job”

The troubling question is: If women’s health and, by implication, lives are endangered, what hope for the development that is being clamoured for today? It is a fact that African women have a greater incidence of morbidity than men. Yet a large proportion of the deaths are preventable. And since women are the primary health providers within the family, church and society, improving their health status not only helps them but also enhances the prospects for the family. The situation requires critical and urgent attention in order to boost the human resources needed for the desired sustainable global development today. Church and society cannot fully handle this situation without serious teaching on sexuality and the effects of the pandemic of AIDS on women.

³¹ If for any reason a wife tells the husband to write a will, she will be accused of planning to kill her husband in order to inherit his property. Will writing in Nigeria in most cases is connected to death and no one wishes to die.

In addition to the above, women's vulnerability is compounded by lack of economic power. The next section therefore is focused on discussing labour and economics, especially with regard to women.

3.6 LABOUR/ECONOMICS

The word labour is commonly understood by many women in Nigeria because they labour a lot, but the word economics is known by only a few. This is because many women labour without pay and their efforts, even when they have struggled much, sometimes produce little or nothing compared to what their male counterparts achieve. Oduyoye (1993: 122) stated it more clearly when she said:

Women make pots that are sold cheaply, men make ritual objects and carvings that are highly regarded, men plant yams, women have to be content with cassava. The technology that modifies men's labours is welcomed; the modernization of women's work is viewed with suspicion – the African woman still grind[s] and pound[s] the hours away.

United Nations facts and statistics show that, on the global scale, women form one-half of the world's population, do three-fourths of the world's work, receive one-tenth of the world's salary and own one-hundredth of the world's land. Two-thirds of illiterate adults are women. Over three-fourths of starving people are women and their dependant children (Moses, 1992: 195)

Most of the time, women do not do the type of job they desire to do and so do not have job satisfaction. And the jobs that women do are sometimes not well remunerated. According to Ranft (2000: 3), it is in and through work that humans find a sense of meaning and purpose in their lives; the opportunity to work is "a fundamental right of all human beings." We all know that justice demands that whoever works should be rewarded for his or her work but this is not always the case with women.

Although it is stated as a fundamental human right that any person should engage in any legitimate profession for which he/she proves qualified, gender stereotyping prevents this from

being the case most of the time. But these rights are clearly stated in Article 23 of the UDHR, as we see below:

Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection. Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

In the experience of women in most Third World countries and rural communities, this aspect of human rights is violated. The facts on the ground show that there is great discrimination against women in the area of employment. Nearly all societies and governments had been and are presently patriarchal. It is observed that men run things – and even if they don't, they take credit for it (Finger & Sandhaas, 2001: 73). The 1996 Human Development Report confirms this:

The Human Development Report 1995 estimated that, in addition to the \$23 trillion in recorded world output in 1993, household and community work accounted for \$16 trillion. And women contribute \$11 trillion of this invisible output. In most countries, women do more work than men. In Japan women's work burden is 7% higher than men's, in Austria 11% higher and in Italy 28% higher. Women in developing countries tend to carry [an] even larger share of the workload than those in Industrial countries – on average about 13% higher than men's share, and in rural areas 20% higher. In rural Kenya, women do 35% more work than men. In some countries women's work burden is extreme. Indian women work 69 hours a week, while men work 59. Nepalese women work about 77 hours, men 56. Moldova women work about 74 hours a week, and in Krygystan more than 76 hours (Pettman, 1997: 489).

Despite women's commitment to work, they still earn less. Sachs (2005: 241), in lending his voice to women's ordeal, has this to say:

It is typically women who collect water from public standpipes, often queuing for long periods in the process and having to get up very early or go late at night to get the water. It is typically women who have to carry heavy water containers over long distances and on slippery slopes. It is typically women who have to make do with the often inadequate water supplies to clean the home, prepare the food, wash the utensils, do the laundry and bath the children. It is also women who have to scrounge, buy or beg for water, particularly when their usual source runs dry. It is important not to underestimate this side of the water burden. There are no compelling international statistics, comparable to health statistics documenting the labour burdens related to inadequate water provision. It is difficult for those who have never had to rely on public or other peoples' taps to appreciate how humiliating, tiring, stressful and inconvenient this can be. Not having toilets or having to wait in long queues to use filthy toilets carries health risks and is also a source of anxiety.

It is in the above situation that most African women, especially Nigerian women, find themselves. Women are the largest group of landless labourers, having no claims to family lands, title deeds, collateral, security, loans, etc (Mere 1975: 2). Economic development genuinely benefits the male while indeed harming the women and inequality and exploitation exist right inside families. Barred from entering into contracts without their husbands, women end up as victims of gross discrimination even in agricultural development programmes. Awe (1991 :1) expresses this as follows "...they are sentenced by tradition, living on the periphery and between poverty and ignorance even though they are the mothers of the nation, bearing the burden of bringing up the nation's rural young."

Women do not easily gain access to credit facilities. Painfully, too, they produce more but enjoy less. We should not forget, however, that not all women are poor, in the Third World or elsewhere. And even when we think that women are financially poor, they have rich ideas that they, unfortunately because of gender stereotyping, mostly are not allowed to use according to their potential in development work. It is sad to say that no state treats its women as well as its men. United Nations facts and statistics (Finger & Sandhaas, 2001: 73 indicate the discrepancies

between work remuneration and property ownership of men and women. It is likely that those figures are even more against women now. The ways in which they are discriminated against will be examined next.

3.6.1 DISCRIMINATING AGAINST WOMEN

The economic discrimination against women is clearly seen in the way they are denied resources and have no equal opportunities in church or in society. In most cases, no woman is believed to make any meaningful progress in life without any reference to a man behind her progress. A woman's success in most cases is attributed to her father, husband or son. But we know that women's hard work should be respected and rewarded and not attached to male influence.

The challenge for Development workers therefore is to encourage groups especially women, to partner with men and also to ask themselves, why are things this way? Can we change them? Sometimes it is only necessary to demonstrate what is possible, and then what has previously seemed unchangeable is transformed. "Being poor, and often destitute, women are frequently among those who are most willing to defy tradition and try new ideas, learn new skills and take new chances. We should encourage new lines of endeavour for women – and for men (Burkey, 1993: 53)".

The high concentration of women in the informal sector has contributed to their not rising to the top where decisions are made. Involving women at all levels of development thinking, planning and implementation will make a world of difference, not merely to women but to the capacity of society to envisage and carry out planned social change, which will permit humankind to live in harmony with nature and itself. Such changes will take time, but women, as has become increasingly clear over the past decades, are a tremendous social resource, which no society can afford any longer to undervalue or underutilise. "To bring women to the centre stage, however, will require profound changes in the way that societies conceive of relations between the genders and the dismantling of centuries-old structures of thought and practice. In short, it will require a new education called conscientization for men and women alike because. "Women will no longer accept being treated as workhorses for development strategies planned by others; they require to be treated as partners" (Nalini Visvanathan, 1997: 366). It is not only a matter of planning

programmes, but also of owning economic resources like their male counterparts. But, sadly enough, because of male dominance due to our patriarchal system, it is often difficult for women to own properties.

Anyanwu (1993: 114) noted that the principles guiding the ownership of economic resources like land and cash crops strengthened the stereotype of a male dominated society in which women were suppressed or downtrodden. Lamenting on the human tragedy of the marginalisation and dispossession of women in general, and black women in particular, Mazrui (1991: 6) highlighted the categories of sexism that oppress women, the worst of these being malignant sexism, which, according to him, “ensures the complete economic manipulation, sexual exploitation and political marginalization of women”. Ayogu (1990: 8), in lending his voice to what is said about the lot of women, painfully observed: “...they thus groan under unjust culture, beliefs and overbearing influence of a male dominated society”. In addition, women also bear the full responsibility for household chores. Together with their children, especially their daughters, they must obtain the food, firewood and water to keep the household functioning. The fetching of firewood and water over ever-increasing distances has become a major time consumer for most families in the third world. Food preparation is time consuming and tedious – peeling, shelling, pounding and cooking with primitive tools and methods because modern tools are not available for their use. Even the primitive tools are sometimes very scarce, thereby increasing their problems. Firewood, which should be very common, is also lacking and the cost of kerosene is high, but since gender roles determine that it is women’s duty to cook, they must suffer before food is ready for the family.

Describing the ordeal, especially in rural Nigeria, Shehu (1997: 278), in an article titled ‘Technology and the Fuel crisis: Adjustment among Women in Northern Nigeria’, had this to say:

The issue of women and fuel usage in developing countries has become significant in the wake of the world fuel crisis of the 1970s and 1980s. Because of its plentiful oil supplies, Nigeria became highly dependent upon revenue from oil exports and this created social transformations within the country. While elite

men and women could continue to “modernize” during the boom, the rural folk and the “popular classes” experienced greater suffering.

None of the work done by women in family enterprises and on the land is given any economic value, and women are also being exploited in the employment field, especially in Africa. Economic planners have tended to regard the domestic work of women in the household as no different from that of the men. And since statistical indices are basic to plan formulation and fund allocation, women are woefully neglected in the planning process. It is sad to note that women are not paid for domestic work and child care which they do daily with all their energies.

In South Africa, racism and sexism added to gender stereotyping made matters worse for the South African women during the apartheid period. According to Ramodibe (1989: 16),

racism, which is built on an ideology that claims one race is superior or inferior to another, was here used to justify profit-making for one race at the expense of other races. In the racist apartheid system, black women and men were exploited jointly in the labour market, but the women were paid less than the men. This exploitation was even worse for rural women working on farms. They were the most exploited of all workers, having few rights and almost no legal protection against harsh working conditions and starvation wages. Women were forced to accept these conditions because of a high rural unemployment rate.

Women all over the world remain marginalised despite the fact that it is well known that working in partnership is more ideal for problem solving. But due to gender stereotyping, as discussed earlier in this dissertation, it remains difficult for men to work as partners with women in some quarters. It is important to note that there is great benefit in gender diversity. “Why is it proving so difficult for women to reach the top of corporations? Are they simply less ambitious? One of the hurdles that is negatively working against women, according to Ms Land, is “pervasive stereotyping of women’s capacity for leadership” (*The Economist*, July 23rd-29th 2005: 54). Everyone is unconsciously biased and most men are biased against promoting women inside companies.

Some women have laboured and have not seen the result of their labour, perhaps because they are underrepresented in the decision-making process. Some do not take part in discussions that affect their lives. In some cases, too, they have little or no control over the resources they labour to acquire. Could these denials in resources and important issues be reasons why some women in Nigeria and else where in the world find themselves below the poverty line? Our next section looks at women and poverty.

3.7 *WOMEN AND POVERTY*

Another issue which is seriously affecting Nigerian women is poverty. Not only about food and economics, but in all areas of human live. As mentioned earlier, poverty is not only about economics and this is confirmed by Hughes and Bennett (1998: ix) in the following statement:

... if poverty were simply an economic problem, money would have been the way to solve it. But poverty is not only material. It is also cultural and social, political and structural.

Poverty is a relative concept which does not have a specific definition. Poverty is hunger. Poverty is lack of shelter. Poverty is being sick and not being able to see a doctor. Poverty is not being able to go to school and not knowing how to read. Poverty is not having a job, is fear of the future, living one day at a time. Poverty is losing a child to illness brought about by unclean water. Poverty is powerlessness, lack of representation and freedom.³² The African story is told in a paradoxical setting of a hitherto over-abundance of natural resources entrapped in a vicious cycle of poverty, environmental degradation and exploitation and the greater poverty (Okediran, 1998: 244).

Myers (1991: 580) adds to this by introducing a spiritual and relational dimension to poverty by arguing that the heart of poverty is spiritual, relating to relationships that do not work and power that is misused. This means that, for Myers, poverty is neither lack of money nor lack of material possessions but something spiritual.

³² From: <http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/mission/up1.htm>2004: 1

From the above discussion it is clear that poverty cannot be restricted to money alone but that it is experiential, contextual and relative. Pieterse (2001: 30) quotes May and Govender's definition of poverty in the following lines: "[P]overty is the inability of the individuals, households, or entire communities, to command sufficient resources to satisfy a socially acceptable minimum standard of living". In this case, society maps out what is accepted as the minimum standard of living although minimum standard may also be relative depending on who is looking at it. Some people are satisfied with what the society calls minimum while others are far from being satisfied with such. Yet, some women are even far from what the society calls the minimum. Despite all these constraints, women, out of their poverty, give generously. Women give life, as was mentioned earlier in this chapter.

Burkey (1993: 4) defines poverty in terms of basic needs that an individual must meet in order to survive as a human being. He outlines these basic needs as clean air and water, adequate and balanced food, physical and emotional security, physical and mental rest, and culturally and climatically appropriate clothing and shelter (Burkey, 1993: 3). Burkey continues by saying that human race does not depend on the survival of a single individual, but on the survival of communities; hence the individual needs should include those of the community. This is the message of *ubuntu*, which means, I am because others are. The word *ubuntu* is an important one for African's especially South Africans. August (2005: 87) tells us that the term *ubuntu* as derived from the expression *Umuntu ngwumuntu ngabanye Bantu*. According to him, the concept of 'ubuntu' means 'each individual's humanity is ideally expressed in relationship with others' The community defines their poor in their own context and jointly intervenes by sensitising and mobilising the community to participate in joint actions that can help to alleviate poverty.

De Beer (1997: 4) mentions two types of poverty identified in a World Bank Report: absolute and relative poverty. Absolute poverty is described as a situation where incomes are so low that even a minimum standard of nutrition, shelter and personal necessities cannot be maintained. He qualifies absolute poverty as a condition where an individual is so poor that the next meal means the difference between life and death. About 20% of the people of the world live in absolute

poverty; 80% of these live in rural areas of predominantly developing countries (1990 figures in De Beer, 1997: 2).

Relative poverty refers to people whose basic needs are met, but who, in terms of their social environment, still experience some disadvantages. In other words, while managing to survive, some women in Nigeria are materially disadvantaged compared to men living in the same community or society. Therefore, whereas absolute poverty refers to a desperate situation – the difference between life and death – relative poverty refers to a comparison of levels of poverty.

Whether it is absolute or relative poverty, women are the worst hit. And it is always difficult to solve any problem without getting to the root of it. This is why we have to listen to Hughes and Bennett (1998: 254):

If women created in God's image constitute the majority of the world's poor, it would be ridiculous to begin to tackle the issue of poverty without consulting them or understanding why this half of the world's population should be so disadvantaged. Furthermore, those intimately involved in the care of the poor have discovered that listening to women and empowering them is a very effective way of impacting whole families, communities and societies for the better.

But is it still so that women bear the brunt of poverty? This is briefly discussed below.

3.7.1 Are women bearing the brunt of poverty?

The assertion that women constitute the bulk of the poor is universal (Olusi, 1998: 261). When we are dealing with the issue of poverty, one aspect of changing social mobility requires special note: the change in gender roles. Traditional society tends to be strongly differentiated in gender roles, with women almost always getting the short end of the deal. In a setting where the total fertility rate – the average number of children per woman - is typically at least five, and often much higher, women spend most of their adult lives rearing children. Traditionally homebound, women live lives of back-breaking labour on the farm, endless walking to collect fuel wood and

water, and child rearing (Sachs, 2005: 37-38). By the time women could complete all these tasks, they have little or no time for self development which could place them better in the society.

Nigerian women are not excluded from the searing heat of poverty; they, rather, seem to be having a lion's share of it in the situation in Nigeria. Reiter (1976: 1), in summarising the plight of Nigerian women, argued that: "...they are the poorest of the poor, doubly oppressed by national and international injustices and by systems that give males the whip. Men enjoy greater privilege, women bear greater burdens." This unfairness is legitimised by tradition, socialised into women's attitudes, often enshrined in law and enforced whenever necessary by male violence. This means that poverty is both experiential and contextual. Women experience poverty of various sorts in their different contexts. Although money can be of help in solving the problem of poverty, this, as has been said earlier, cannot be solved by money alone. Needless to say, most of the time, the money meant for the poor does not get to the target group, most of whom are women, and women continue to bear the brunt of poverty in many parts of the world, especially in Africa.

Cone (1993: 384), summarised the feelings of most non-Latin Americans on the issue of the poor and so-called development in these words:

We detect a certain rigidity in the understanding of who the poor are, a rigidity that leads to exclusivism in spite of some attempts to be open and not albeit overly dogmatic. At this point we can learn a lesson, a negative one, from models of capitalistic development in Asia, when the people ask questions about their participation, they are often told: wait; first the skilled people must do their work of developing the country; then you will be included. Our experience has been that the people are never included, and they continue to be simply the *objects* and not the *subjects* of history. The basic question is this: do the poor speak for themselves or do others speak on behalf of the poor and incorporate them or accommodate them into a given schema? This question applies particularly to the participation of the blacks and the indigenous people in the process of liberation.

Development without liberation is disguised slavery. This is why, in Africa and particularly in Nigeria, the question: Do the poor speak for themselves is relevant. Have we not continued to

see women as the objects and not the subjects when it comes to matters of importance in church and society? Women have continued to struggle for survival despite the disadvantaged positions they find themselves in. Women have formed many groups to transform themselves and their environments. We shall see example from Nigeria and South Africa on how women have proved to be catalysts for change in their environments.

3.7.2 *WOMEN'S GROUPS AS CATALYSTS FOR CHANGE*

Despite their oppressed situations, Nigerian women and indeed African women have something to offer when talking about development. We draw examples from Nigeria and South Africa to illustrate our point.

3.7.2.1 *WOMEN, POVERTY ALLEVIATION AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION IN NIGERIA*

That many women in Nigeria and other African countries are living below the poverty line is a fact. But, despite this disadvantaged position in which they find themselves, Nigerian women, like other African women, play vital roles in development activities. No sustainable development can take place when women are neglected. Women have also sought ways of helping one another to come out of economic, social and spiritual poverty. An example is the micro-credit system.

The local micro-credit system is a system by which a small group of individuals with a common goal and vision for which funds are needed gather together and plan on how much money to contribute daily, weekly, monthly or yearly as the case may be. They also decide and agree upon how to distribute the money according to members' needs, with little or no interest. This is mostly very beneficial to the poor rural women. From their own share of the money, they are able to start petty trading, buy land for farm work or even pay for their children's education. Many Nigerian rural women are still alive today because of this system. In the rural areas where farming is the major source of income, women form groups and take turns to farm for one another. This method of farming in groups for one another not only saves them money but also

energy and enables them to achieve more. Women also build networks across borders, because, as Adeney (2003: 179) has observed:

Empowerment occurs as women affirm relationships within and across cultures both as a spur to creativities and as a way of life. Sharing ideas, working together, formulating strategies of resistance, and supporting one another's projects validate gender equality as a shared value. Recognizing that shared value then fosters solidarity and empowers women to carve out new space for work in the world.

The predominance of women in the rural areas has resulted in women assuming leadership roles in many fields. This is especially so in respect of community-based organisations, most of which are women's association or are dominated by women. These associations form a network of cooperation and assistance and can play a vital role in meeting the challenges of rural poverty (De Beer & Swanepoel, 1998: 13).

Women's groups in Nigeria have contributed greatly to the micro development projects in their various communities. The August meeting, which is held once in a year, is a forum for women to think of and execute a development project for their communities. Women also use this opportunity to settle inter- and/or intra-communal conflicts. This August meeting is an important event that has changed the communities for good.

The *August Meeting*³³ phenomenon among the Igbo of South-eastern Nigeria, which began in the late 1980s and has since assumed permanence, is another aspect of the socio-cultural and economic development initiative of women. Ajaegbu (1985: 52) observes that: "during this period, which is usually marked by the massive home-coming of urban women to their respective rural communities, these urban women, uniting with the rural women, organise themselves for the purpose of raising funds for different developmental projects. The projects could be their own initiative or that of their male counterparts – their husbands". The activities of these women over the years have really given meaning to life, especially for the rural dwellers where these projects

³³ There are many women's groups, especially in Nigeria, who are agents and catalysts for social and community development. Many of these women, who reside outside their communities (*Diaspora*), often hold their annual meetings with their home-based sisters in the month of August to plan for their communal projects.

are usually located. These meetings are also seen and used as avenues for discussing social problems encountered by women themselves and in the society. Thus the August Meeting has become a very viable means of socio-cultural and economic development which attracts a large crowd as it is held in August when agrarian activity is reduced, affording opportunities for all to attend. Odoemene (2003: 15) comments as follows on the achievements of Nigerian women:

Enviably achievements have been attained by women in all areas of endeavour and economic ventures that can foster self-reliance and economic sufficiency. A quiet revolution is still taking place in the rural areas of Nigeria today. Women in particular and ... rural dwellers in general, have suddenly become aware of their socio-economic and political power for enhanced development. They have asserted themselves as a preponderant social force, which can effectively control situations. They were, and have remained social activators. Nigerian women cannot be excluded from playing their role as nation-builders in Nigeria. Rather, their role then will not only be complementary to that of the men folk, but will be comprehensive, covering every facet of Nigerian nation-building.

Women in Nigeria have contributed enormously to the development of their communities through the August Meeting and other Women's Action Groups. The women's groups in churches are also contributors to human and economic development of the church and nation. The Women's Guild of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria is a clear example. These women in their different Presbyteries and Synods have, among other things, completed many projects such as church building and erecting residential houses for church workers, purchasing of vans for mission work and sponsoring the education of some ministers in theological colleges.

Another women's group that is worth mentioning here is the Good Women Association of Nigeria under the Christ Apostolic Church.³⁴ This is a group of women who, through their struggles, made a remarkable impact on the ministry of the church. Their record of achievements, among others, includes the establishment and maintenance of Babalola Memorial

³⁴ The Christ Apostolic church of Nigeria is a fusion of two movements – The Precious Stone Society and the movement around the revival of Apostle Ayo Babalola (Akintunde, 2002: 85).

Girls' Grammar School at Ilesa, in Oshun State, Nigeria and The Christ Apostolic Church School of Midwifery at Ede, which also benefits all people regardless of their sex or gender (Akintunde, 2002: 91).

Just like their counterparts all over the world especially in Africa the South African women are also making their marks. The section below discusses briefly women's groups in South Africa.

3.7.2.2 WOMEN'S GROUPS IN SOUTH AFRICA

A large number of community based organizations are found in rural areas of South Africa. By far, the largest proportion of these groups is formed spontaneously. Such community based organizations include burial societies, Choirs, Saving clubs and other women's groups. The strongest of these groups was the Zenzele Women's Association, found in all the former homelands particularly in the Nguni-speaking areas. (These areas are situated in KwaZulu-Natal, the Eastern Cape and part of the Mpumalanga province.) The main purpose of the association was to spread knowledge of home economics among its members to improve their living standards (De Beer & Swanepoel, 1998: 13)

In and through these groups, women are also making marks in their various communities and churches. These Women's Groups bring life to the entire congregation through their prayers, evangelism outreach and the encouragement they give to one another. Haddad (2002: 102) states that:

Vast numbers of African women in South Africa would describe their membership in their local prayer union or *manyano* as one of the most important aspects of their lives.

This group came into being as a result of the early pre-1900 work of missionaries amongst African women and girls that laid the foundation for the formation of groups that corporately became known as the manyano (prayer union) movement, an indigenous movement of African Christian women (Haddad, 2002: 102). Although it was through a struggle that the indigenous women gained control over the Anglican women's organization (Haddad, 2002: 103), the fact

remains that these women have contributed much to their church and community. It is to be appreciated that these indigenous women, who went through untold hardships and suffering during the colonial era, were able to resist the colonial form of Christianity and found their own way to express their faith (Haddad, 2002: 107). It is this new way of expressing their faith that has been passed down to the younger generation. Sharing their stories is a way of encouraging women to know that they can do something for themselves, their families and their communities, that even in the face of persecution. An example is this story from Haddad (2002: 110):

When the children were growing up, I took on temporary jobs. We were earning very little money in those olden days. One would sometimes work for nine pence. Yes we were working for nine pence a day. I once went to a farm while I was a girl to work for a farmer. How much did I earn a month? I was earning one pound a month, every month. I was getting three pounds for six months. There was no money... we were suffering. We used to make mielie [maize] in a stone out of mielies with our hands and cook it because there was no mielie meal in the olden days.

The women worked on farms and in other places, thereby contributing to the economic development of their communities. Thus, the benefits of the economic contribution of women in any society cannot be overemphasized. But women also need to earn a reasonable amount in order to escape from the abyss of man-made poverty. It must be pointed out here that women's poverty sometimes is the result of institutionalised inequality and the oppressive structures in which they find themselves. Although poverty is not only about economics, it has a lot to do with the basic needs of human life. We all need a new mind-set if we must experience transformation in our development. As stated above, development without liberation is distinguished slavery. Women in some parts Nigeria suffer this disguised slavery in the name of development. But as we have seen from the women's groups in Nigeria and South African, women also have a role to play in order to transform their lives and environments. Women cannot achieve the needed transformation without the support of all stake holders. In this case, how would the global attention given to women, especially in leadership and politics, be localised? Women need to be part of any decision that affect their lives. The next section will be used to discuss women in politics and leadership positions.

3.8 LEADERSHIP/POLITICS

The Nigerian men because of their patriarchal orientation most times think that leadership positions are exclusively for men. It must be pointed out that leadership qualities do not depend on gender. It would therefore be wrong to think that men can always perform better than women or women better than men in leadership. Unfortunately, many people believe in the saying that “Women in State Affairs are like monkeys in glass houses (Meider, 1985: 273-277). The expression implies that women in State would look awkward. Little wonder, then, that many women are denied positions in politics and state affairs. The discrimination against women in politics is so strong that even when they manage to get to the top, they are accused of going through the wrong channel. Offiah (1987: 1) states this more clearly:

When a woman through her own sweat manages to get to a high position, it is said, she used ‘bottom power’. Women legislators were said to have been favoured by rigging of elections. In the Parliament, their argument did not carry much weight both because they were very few and because they were women. Women are discriminated against in every aspect of life and in politics in Nigeria.

If women have more space to express their potential they could prove their worth. Unfortunately the leadership in most countries of the world is still almost single-gendered, especially in Africa, although South Africa is an exception due to government efforts towards gender balance in leadership roles; at this point it is worth noting that the successes women enjoy in South African politics today were not handed to them on a platter of gold. According to Bazilli (1991: 5), when ‘inequality within inequality’ was mentioned during the apartheid era, it mainly referred to women who were discriminated against in almost all spheres of life. When the black women of South Africa could no longer bear these injustices, they took a bold step which yielded great fruit for this nation.

We are all gifted differently by God and, rather than discriminating and stereotyping, we should work in partnership with others to glorify God who is the giver of all gifts. We should not

disempower any group by denying them the space to use their gifts for the benefit of the entire humanity. This was confirmed by Bazilli (1991: 10) in this statement that any political philosophy that continues to locate women primarily within the private realms of the family is fundamentally disempowering to women

At this point, it is important to note, as mentioned earlier, that one of the issues that has received much global attention in recent years is connected to the nature of women's participation in public and ecclesiastical leadership positions. The question here is whether African women have the capacity to be a "positive social force in society for enhancing the consolidation of those values and attitudes that make for wholesome cohesion and so make harmonious and integral human development". From the achievements of women everywhere who have struggled to get to leadership positions, we could say that women have great potential and will achieve more if their potential is harnessed. The need for the church and society to harness women's potential cannot be overemphasised because, without women's participation in leadership, there will be no peace.

The history of Nigeria is replete with examples of women who accomplished enviable political feats. Queen Amina is a notable example (Olusi, 1998: 270). She is said to have ruled Zaria, now an Islamic heartland, for thirty-four years early in the fifteenth century and, under her rule, that kingdom became the most powerful in central Sudan. Even today, many women are still rising to the challenge of our times in the political arena. The incumbent Federal Minister of Finance in Nigeria, Dr (Mrs.) Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, who was serving the World Bank as Vice-President and Corporate Secretary, became the first-ever female to occupy this enviable position, which had previously been the prerogative of men. Her outstanding performance is proof that women can handle political challenges, like their male counterparts. But for the discriminatory attitude against women, they would have made more impact in our world.

Emerole (1991: 16) pointed out that women play both covert and overt roles in politics. With regard to the first, it should be clear that a good number of our important politicians, political scientists, philosophers and political administrators had their humble beginning from a rural mother, who gave birth to them and nurtured them to adulthood. Women also often offer moral

and wise counsel to their “children” who are active in politics. Many more will still be borne by the same womenfolk in the future. Odoemene (2003: 12) has added his voice in saying that it should be remembered that women in Nigeria in their overt role in politics have been associating themselves with the politics of the country, notwithstanding their seeming apathy for this sector. From the time of the first republic to the end of 1995, prominent women have been playing essential roles in the development of this country. This received a boost with the creation of the Ministry for Women Affairs. Furthermore, associations like Women in Politics (W.I.P.), Women in Nigeria (W.I.N.), the National Council of Women Societies (N.C.W.S.) have added spice to the political participation of women (Odoemene, 2003: 12).

In traditional Africa, women have generally also exercised effective power in a corporate manner. A celebrated example in Eastern Nigeria was the 1929 Aba riots, the “women’s war”, which effectively overturned or modified colonial policy with regard to taxation and the installation of chiefs. According to Jaja (1988: 18), the heroic and definitely intimidating reaction of women was epochal, stunning and unprecedented in colonial history. As Lord Passfield, the then Secretary of States for Colonies, himself confessed in a dispatch in 1931:

The situation with which the different officers were confronted was without precedent, so far as I can judge, I might almost say in the history of the British Empire. Disturbances in which the women have taken the foremost or the only part are not unknown here and elsewhere in the Empire, but administrative, police and military officers in Nigeria could hardly anticipate demonstrations by hundreds, or even thousands, of native women – sometimes accompanied by men, sometimes apparently entirely by themselves developing in some cases at any rate, into definite attacks on the property of government or of private individuals and in some cases threatening life.

In that riot, as in every other riot, loss of life was inevitable. Although some women lost their lives, the impact of their courageous exploit lives on. As Jaja (1988: 20) has observed,

Although some of the women lost their lives in that riot,
the blood of the Martyrs of November Days in 1929

had done more than watered the soil of freedom movement in Nigeria.

This is because, after the riot, women gained more confidence to fight for their rights. This was echoed by Isikalu (1988: 676) who said that "... the trial of civil liberty blazed by women rioters in 1929 was a gift of those women to the women of this generation".

Despite the increasing awareness and participation of women in politics, it remains a well-known fact that women are still under-represented in key decision-making positions in almost all governmental machinery throughout the whole of Africa. It is true that the political door is open to women in some countries but there are still many hindrances around the 'open door' of politics. The huge amount of money expected from the politicians, the rough and tough struggle of undoing the other in order to get there, the indecent acts surrounding politics in some countries, have really made it difficult and even very discouraging for women political aspirants to engage in the game. Maybe it was as a result of all these that Gnanadason (1989: 72) commented that, "Woman is trapped within a vicious cycle of violence that constantly seeks to exploit and destroy her being". Women in Africa and, in particular, Nigeria should not relent in participating in politics with a view of transforming the system. Women should continue the struggle to get to the top. This is because, from what has been observed women, even when they are involved in politics, are so few in number that they remain marginalised. This can be seen at the political apex where important policy decisions are taken. Women are under-represented in most legislatures and in judicial systems where laws are passed and applied because they are denied the opportunity to make inputs, even in laws that affect them. But as we can see from what is happening in the political arena of South Africa, although the movement towards women's emancipation is slow, their joy is that the journey has been started and there seem to be hope for women in Africa. There is a sharp contrast between the space women occupy in South African and in the Nigerian political arena. Nigerian women's political participation is still among the lowest in the world. The same can be said of political parties' gender sensitivity. While women's membership in parties has greatly improved from the days of the 1st Republic (1960-65), their positioning within the party hierarchy and influence over party decisions are minimal

The reason for this is not hard to find. According to history, Nigerian political parties are traditionally and intrinsically male-dominated. This trait and the trend of women's marginalisation in party politics, which runs throughout the political history of Nigeria, is perhaps the most critical factor in the political underdevelopment of Nigerian women. Almost all political parties, since the start of local politics, have at best paid lip service to women's political development. In some cases, the male politicians seek the women's vote but not their welfare.

Today, the story of the South African woman is somehow positively different from what it used to be ten years ago. Haddad (2000: 39) stresses that the South African Parliament ranks favourably in relation to the rest of the world with regard to the number of female members, in Parliament. Some of the issues that need urgent attention in discussions, among others, are how to transform those cultures that have hitherto disempowered women and factors affecting women's participation in leadership and political arenas which are briefly outlined in this dissertation.

3.8.1 FACTORS AFFECTING WOMEN'S POLITICAL WILL IN NIGERIA

There are many factors that affect women's political will all over the world and especially in Nigeria. Our survey in chapter five enumerated some of the obstacles that affect women in the political life of the nation. Among these obstacles are lack of funds, cultural influence and the institutionalised patriarchal structures which make politics very difficult for women. One would have thought that women, being in the majority, would have political power, but despite the fact of women comprising half of the population of Nigerian, their voices are hardly heard. This is unfortunate because politics is not a game of numbers, as has been observed by Ofong (2002: 40):

If politics were to be a game of sheered numbers in Nigeria, then women are bound to occupy the major political positions available. However we know that those who control the economy of the state also control the politics. Thus those who control state power in Nigeria use it to divert all kinds of resources, including state funds. Women lack access to state resources and are handicapped financially to fund the Nigerian brand of politics.

It also can be argued that colonialism, culture and protracted military rule contributed largely to stifling women's participation in Nigerian politics, as Anya (2003: 71) comments:

Colonialism, feudalism, imported religions, patriarchy,
and military rule destroyed the spirit of heroism, patriotic radicalism,
and progressive vibrancy of Nigerian womanhood in the struggles for
women's rights, women development and national development

Furthermore, women's perception of politics as a dirty game and continued fear due to the thought of violence has further alienated them from mainstream politics. In Nigeria there seems to be no critical understanding of the difference between a visible agenda for women and an impacting agenda for women. While, severally, emphasis is laid on women's numerical strength, translating such into the attainment of power has been difficult as women are perceived as a supporters club, team of cheerers and clappers in contrast to their male counterparts who always dominate in leadership and positions of power and authority. Most time women are deceived by gifts and empty promises. The rich politicians in Nigeria go into the rural villages with food items and money seek women's votes. As a result of poverty, many women receive these gifts and vote for the wrong candidates. There is no equality in the distribution of resources despite the fact that some bodies like the UN and the WCC have made some efforts to encourage equality and dignity in women's struggles.

3.8.2 UNITED NATIONS SUPPORT FOR WOMEN

Moses (1998: 162), points to the fact that the United Nations, like the World Council of Churches, has engaged in efforts to support women. She also stresses that, it is in an effort to achieve equality and dignity that women's struggle has been going on for many decades with the help of the United Nations, the Church and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). Below is the chronology of issues in the women's struggle through five decades of the existence of the body:

- 1945 - UN Charter – equal rights for men and women
- 1947 - Status of Women
- 1952 - Political Rights for Women

- 1957 - Nationality of married Women
- 1962 - Consent of marriage, minimum age of marriage and registration of marriage
- 1972 - First World Conference on Women held in Mexico, nearly 100 Countries adopted the plan of action on the 19th of July
- 1974 - Berlin – Discrimination against women
- 1974 - WCC Geneva – Uniting Hope
- 1975 - International Women’s Year
- 1975 - UN World Decade for Women
- 1975 - Nairobi – Breaking Barriers
- 1978 - UN Voluntary Fund Support – over 300 projects
- 1978 - Faith and Order core group for years ahead
- 1978 - Faith and Order Commission at Bangalore adopted
- 1979 - UN Mid-decade Conference – Employment, Health and Education
- 1980 - Mid-decade Conference in different parts of the globe
- 1981 - Women in changing World
- 1982 - “Unity and the changing Community”, Lima, Peru
- 1982 - Elimination of Discrimination against Women
- 1983 - NGO Conference – Status of Women
- 1985 - World Conference of the decade for Women
- 1988 - Ecumenical Decade – Churches in Solidarity with Women
- 1995 - IVth World Conference at Beijing

Although this effort by the United Nations has yielded some fruit in some countries, the issue is that there must be a grassroots awareness of the problem in conjunction with the global solution, commitment to finding a local solution, and solidarity with those women who are victims of oppression. This is a crucial demand when we consider the fact that the contribution of women in the struggle for independence in Africa and in the liberation of Southern Africa from racism is considerable. But this contribution has not been well compensated through commensurate political responsibility. Although one may say at this point that South Africa is an exception, Ali Mazrui in Uzuoku (1996: 139) succinctly summed up this point when he said:

As combatants, African women were part of the crusade for the empowerment of the continent. As diplomats, African women later represented the sovereignty which they had helped Africa to acquire in world affairs. But as power brokers, African women seem to have been on the whole part of the periphery rather than at the center of politics.

This, to a large extent is as a result of the patriarchal foundation in Africa and the general discrimination against women due to the patriarchal culture of male dominance. But for development to take place in any society, men and women must see themselves as partners.

3.9 SUMMARY

In surveying the landscape, we have seen how women are affected in key societal issues some of which are education, health, economics, labour, etc. It is common knowledge that every human being has dignity that deserves respect. The idea of human dignity is usually taken to involve the idea of the equal worth of the rich and poor, rural and urban, female and male, girls and boys, with all being equally deserving of respect by virtue of being human, and this respect should not be abridged on account of gender differences not in education, politics health and other important issues such as have been discussed in this chapter. Women should fashion their lives in accordance with their own view of what is deepest and most important to them. From our survey in chapter five, education among others is deepest and most important to women. Gender justice which allows equal participation of men and women in all areas of human endeavour should be the watch-word in church as well as in society, and especially in leadership and political life of Nigeria.

We have argued that leadership qualities do not depend on gender. The marginalisation of women in leadership positions robs our communities of the potential that is slumbering in women. Women contribute much to the development of their communities but, due to the activities of patriarchy, they are sidelined and the needed goal of a transformed society has not been achieved.

This situation, painful to say, is almost the same in the church. We shall have a closer look at the church context.

CHAPTER 4 GENDER STEREOTYPING IN CHURCH: CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Every study, including theology and development, is contextual. Having looked at gender stereotyping in Nigerian context, we now want to look at the same issue in the church context. According to Samuel (1999: 230), “context is always local. Context says that theology, Christian mission and understanding are always local.” Hendriks (2004: 71) also observes that “all of theology and all theological deliberations have a contextual nature.” Doing theology and being a church is a process where we accept that all theological formulations and institutional designs are influenced by context. Thus theology is contextual just as development is. Also, it is only in our context that the text becomes meaningful and relevant. David Bosch (1991: 422-423) also affirms:

Interpreting a text is not only a literary exercise; it is also a social, economic and political exercise. Implicitly, one has to concede that *all* theology (or sociology, political theory, etc) is, by its very nature, contextual.

Therefore it is important that we, in our study of theology and development, reflect on the conditions of women who form a great percentage of the population in the Nigerian context.

The underlying assumption in this chapter is that women have been subjugated and relegated to the background and do not participate at equal levels in crucial issues of life in the church because of gender stereotyping. The inequality experienced by women is also attributed to the theological and historical biases. Therefore, critical as development may be to Nigeria and the Presbyterian church of Nigeria, the conditions of women and the factors that gave rise to them must be understood and addressed.

We shall commence this discussion by looking at a brief historical sketch of The Presbyterian Church of Nigeria and women’s journey in the PCN.

4.1.1 THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF NIGERIA: A BRIEF HISTORICAL SKETCH

The history of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria is somehow tied to the Efik. The Efik are mainly found in Calabar, which is located along the Lower Guinea Coast in the Bight of Biafra, separated from the Bight of Benin by the Niger River Delta. It was among these people and in this area that Scottish missionaries arrived in 1846 to plant the Church that later came to be known as the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria.

Rev. H. M. Waddell, Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Edgerly, three Jamaicans, Andrew Chisholm, Edward Millar and a former slave named George were the pioneer missionaries. The team sailed from Liverpool on board the boat called 'Waree' on January 6, 1846 arrived at Fernando Po, a Spanish occupied island opposite Old Calabar, on April 2. And on April 10, 1846, they were accompanied by John Beecroft, Governor of the island, with whom they arrived at Duke Town to establish the link between Scotland and Old Calabar. The first convert was Esien Ukpabio and after 30 years of ministry, the mission had fewer than two hundred members with very few workers (Livingstone, 1917: 25, 79).

It is important to note the system of government in the PCN. The system of government of Presbyterian Church of Nigeria which is known as 'Presbyterianism' is founded on democratic principles based on the Word of God. It is democratically organised, with the faith common to all Christians, especially the Reformed Faith. It is governed by elders and reflects a deep loyalty to the sovereignty of God. Its doctrinal basis is on the conviction that "the Bible is the word of God and the supreme rule for faith and practice" (Constitution of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria).

4.1.1.1 Women's struggle for space in the Nigerian Church

Women in Nigeria like their counterparts all over the world have continued in the struggle for space both in the secular and sacred arena. From our survey which is elaborated in chapter five, although it seems women are all over the places, when it comes to major issues of life they are denied space. This is mostly seen in the leadership and decision making activities. In all the

Presbyterian parishes where we conducted our survey as could be seen in chapter five, none has up to 50% of women in the leadership/decision making positions.

4.1.1.2 Women and the Presbyterian mission in Nigeria

The Presbyterian women in Nigeria benefited greatly from Scottish and Canadian mission work in Nigeria. From the onset of the Scottish mission in Nigeria, women had priority in the agenda. After some years of missionary labour, the position of women in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria became cause for unease in the minds of people everywhere. Accordingly, a special committee met to discuss this at the Henshaw Memorial Church on Thursday, the 19th of June, 1947. It was convened by Rev. A. T. H. Taylor. Present also were Revs. E. Utit and Uwakwenta and Elders Usang Iso and Asuquo. By the direction of the Synod it was named “The Committee on the Ministry of Women in the Church.” After a heated debate on the pros and cons of the women in the ministry, the trend of the debate fortunately swung in favour of women. Thus, Synod, inter alia, resolved:

“Being of the opinion that the election of women members to Sessions would be for the spiritual good of the whole church, and that their participation in all its Courts, would increase the efficiency and representative character of the courts, the Synod, after consultation with both Presbyteries, declared the office of Ruling Elder to be open to men and women alike; and that a person should not be debarred on the grounds of his or her sex from performing any of the duties proper to the said office (Aye, 1987: 130).

This was a watershed decision as far as the position of the women in the church is concerned. But whereas Scotland is known to have pioneered and championed the cause of women in general, it was Canada that gave teeth to the ordination of women into the ministry of Word and Sacraments in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria. The decision by Canada to enter Nigeria was almost fortuitous. The process began at an ecumenical conference in Germany with conversations between Laura Pelton of the Women’s Missionary Society and her counterparts in the Church of

Scotland (Johnston, 1988: 97). At this point the women's discussions came to the attention of the General Board of Missions, the principal mission agency of the Presbyterian Church of Canada. The Canadian initiative to share in the work of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria came to fruition in November 1954. Canada has been highly instrumental in transformative mission, especially among women, and more than any other mission partner of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria. Regarding formal theological training for women, Otu (1982: 12) writes:

At the end of August, 1972, the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria nominated Miss Mgbeke Okore for the Presbyterian Church in Canada's three years scholarship to study Christian education in Ewart College, Toronto. She took her Diploma in Christian Education and then at the University of Toronto, her B. A. in Religious Studies. She lived in Canada from 1972 to 1976.

4.1.1.3 The Presbyterian Church and women's Ordination

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, to be trained is one thing, to be ordained by the church is another thing. So it took at least three years for the church to make up its mind on the issue of ordaining women into the ministry. At the August Synod of 1979, the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria approved the acceptance of qualified women for ministerial training with a view to ordaining them for service in the Church (Min. 2081(4)). It has to be observed that, whereas Esien Esien Ukpabio was ordained as the first male minister in the PCN in 1902, it was not until a century and a decade (20th February 1982) later that the first female minister, Rev. Mgbeke George Okore, was ordained in the church.

4.1.1.4 The ordination of the first female minister in the PCN

It is important to note that women's role in The Presbyterian Church of Nigeria has witnessed a lot of changes. From the status of congregational members, women have risen to various leadership positions in the ministry of the Church. Having ordained her first female elder – Miss Grace Owen – in April 18 1954, the second female elder - Mrs Louisa Anwan – was ordained in 1956 (The Presbyterian Church of Biafra, 1951: 6), and having ordained the first female minister

– Rev. Mgbekwe Okore – in 1982, the PCN became the pacesetter for women’s ordination among the mainline churches in Nigeria. At present, the Methodist and the Anglican Churches are yet to ordain a woman as minister in Nigeria.

According to Okore in Kalu (1996: 242),

The Presbyterian Church of Nigeria has been the only church in Nigeria to see the ordination of women as one of the great issues of Christian justice for the women.

However, granting this justice to the women in the PCN was not an easy task for the Church. It must be pointed out here that the ordination of the first PCN female minister was not without hitches. Okore is quoted as saying, “I did not receive my ordination on a platter of gold”. It has to be repeated that the first female minister was ordained in the PCN more than a century after the ordination of Rev Esien Esien Ukpabio in 1902. Although the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria had approved the acceptance of qualified women for ministerial training with a view to ordaining them for service in the Church at the August Synod of 1979 (Min. 2081(4)), it took at least three years for the church to make up its mind on the issue of ordaining them. The first female minister of the PCN had a tough journey.

Okore’s story in Kalu (1996: 242-247) reads as follows:

Before I became a minister, I was a teacher by profession. When I was called, I resigned my teaching appointment and was sent to Canada where I studied for four years and received an M.A. degree in Religious Studies and a Diploma in Christian Education from the University of Toronto and Ewart College respectively. From 1976, when I returned, to 1979, I served as the Principal of Hugh Goldie Lay Training Centre in Arochukwu, training male and female leaders. In 1980, I did the post graduate course in Theology at the Trinity Theological College, Umuahia. I was the first woman to study with men in this institution and it was not easy. My male colleagues in their pre-occupied minds did not make me feel welcome. They could not figure out why I was there and would wonder why a church would want to ordain a woman as a minister. But at my ordination and as God would have it, they turned up en masse.

My ordination did not come to me on a platter of gold. There was controversy when the decision was first taken. Many people (especially, non-Presbyterians) fought hard to keep me out of the pulpit. At first, there was pressure on me as the first and the only woman minister. I knew my church was using me as a ‘tryout’ to see if a woman could make it. As ‘a house set on a hill’ or as an open album, I knew that all eyes were watching and all ears were listening to see and hear how I was performing. My fear was that if I did not do well, I could be the first as well as the last woman to attain such height; I could bring shame not only to my church but to all women. This was the pressure, the force as well as the challenge. I give thanks to my God who made it possible for me to scale through both natural and man-made [hurdles].

... When I was licensed to preach the Word in 1981, the first Parish I was posted to was very hesitant to have a woman as its minister. After my few months stay there, the members started seeing God’s handiwork in my ministry and they started treating me with grater love and respect. ... There was a great revival and my parish whose membership was about 1,400 increased to about 4,600 so much that we started having accommodation problem[s]. ... I would like people to understand that men alone cannot do the work in the ministry.

Rev. Mgbeke Okore was ordained in February, 1982. By August 2004, the number of female ministers in the Presbyterian church of Nigeria was fifty-seven (57)³⁵ which is good news for women. But compared to the total number of ministers we have in the PCN, this number could be seen as low. The statistics reveal this fact.

4.1.1.5 Statistics on women’s ordination and training

The state of female ministerial ordination is revealed in the following statistics:

Total number of ordained ministers in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria	670
Total number of ordained female ministers as in August 2006	64
Total number of ministerial students in school as in August 2006	53

³⁵ This information was obtained from the office of the Deputy clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria.

Although the above statistics show clearly how low the number of ordained female ministers in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria is, the PCN is much ahead of the Methodist, the Anglican and even some Reformed Churches who are yet to ordain a woman as a minister in Nigeria. On the other hand, the African Independent Churches (AICs) seem to have favoured women better in this regard. They have created an enabling environment that allows women opportunities and minimal limitations in the exercise of their gifts and also in leadership responsibilities.

When we consider events among the AICs, we note that women have made a break-through in their struggles for recognition. In what follows, we will consider how these women rose to become founders of churches and administrators of organisations. But before doing so, we will take a general look at the AICs and the rate at which they are growing.

4.2 THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH AND WOMEN'S ORDINATION

Ordination, despite being open to women in some churches, is still a profoundly male event. In the Roman Catholic Church, a group of male priest passes on their authority to other men. Even in Protestant churches where women have been allowed to enter the ministry, it is likely that men determine the criteria for ordination and decide who can be ordained (Japinga, 1999: 131).

The ordination of women into the priesthood has been controversial since the time of the early church. Several people have pitched their tents on both sides of the controversy. Books and articles have been written in support of their views by both schools of thought (Kattey, 1992: 4). Furthermore, the burning issue deliberated upon at the Lambeth conference³⁶ of 1988 was the Consecration of Women Bishops, not just the ordination of women into the priesthood, for, as it is now widely known, the ordination of women priests in the Anglican Communion has become a

³⁶ The Lambeth Conference is the gathering of Bishops of the Anglican Communion held every ten years at Lambeth Palace, the residence of the Archbishop of Canterbury. The Conference issues encyclicised letters, series of resolutions and the reports presented by committees.

practice and is no longer a topical issue except, of course, in the dioceses and provinces dominated by the most chauvinistic of men (Kattey, 1992: 4). Nigeria is one of the countries where you have most of those chauvinistic men. This is evident from the sermons, mass media interviews and other speeches of some of the bishops of the Anglican Communion. The Archbishop and these bishops of the Province of Nigeria are all saying the same things namely:

- i) that the ordination of women priests in the church of the Province of Nigeria is not yet a priority as, for one thing, no woman has applied for selection;
- ii) that the priesthood of women in the church is not supported in theology;
- iii) that the priesthood of women is not in keeping with Nigerian customs and traditions; and
- iv) that the level of social and religious development in Nigeria is not of the same standard as elsewhere in the world, therefore, it will take them some decades to get ready and to try to catch up with the rest of the world. (Kattey, 1992: 76)

His Lordship, Bishop Otubelu was actually heard saying that the ordination of women priests in the church of Nigeria will not take place in at least the next 15 years; while some others are saying it will not take place in their lifetime (Kattey, 1992: 76).

Even in cases where women are ordained, the problem of posting arises. Narrating her experience with female theology students at the Stellenbosch University, Denise Ackerman (in Cochrane & Klein, 2004: 49) has this to say:

At Stellenbosch University there are few women in the classes that I teach. Quite a lot of women have trouble getting a calling, a "*beroep*", into the Dutch Reformed Church. Communities don't easily call women. This shows that there is a huge residue of the particular ideology about what a woman should be and do. She is still not seen as a theological thinker, or a person of authority in the church; that is for men. There are exceptions. Today women are ordained in all the

mainline churches³⁷, except of course, among the Catholics, the largest church in Christendom. It's a male empire! It's extraordinary that in the twenty-first century that is still the case.

4.2.1 SOME ARGUMENTS AGAINST FEMALE ORDINATION

There have been arguments in many quarters regarding the ordination of women. Japinga (1999: 141) observes that “while many Protestants argue that the Bible prohibits women from holding leadership positions in the church, many Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christians argue that tradition does not permit women to be priests”. In many quarters this controversy can be traced back to Paul. Bible teachers and scholars have aligned themselves depending upon interpretation (or misinterpretation) of Paul's writing. Many church leaders quote Paul as saying that women should keep silent and so should not be ordained. One of such letters that some churches hold unto is the First Letter to Timothy (2: 11-14).

A woman should learn in quietness and full submission.

I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man;

she must be silent. For Adam was not the one deceived;

it was a woman who was deceived and became a sinner.

Is this statement really true? Was Adam not deceived? Why did he, in the first place, accept and eat the fruit? I see this as shifting responsibility to another. Even today, people hardly accept their wrongdoing; they rather look for another person to shift the blame to. Although I do not intend to discuss this matter further here, I see this as the case in 1 Timothy 2: 11-14. And it is surprising to see how this passage from the letter to Timothy is used to argue against women's ordination. Although there seems to be a change in mind-set regarding this point in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, some still argue that, if women were to be allowed to be ordained, some people will leave the church and congregations or denominations may divide. And some who see women's ordination as a threat argue that “the church is already composed of

³⁷ This source tells us that all the mainline churches in South Africa ordain women, excepting the Roman Catholic Church. In my own country, Nigeria, of all the mainline churches, as far as I know, it is only the Presbyterian church of Nigeria that has taken the ordination of women seriously.

a majority of women, and if women are allowed to be ordained, they will gain more power in the church and more men will leave” (Japinga, 1999: 141). Further argument according to Japinga, (1999: 141), is that “Feminisation of the church will result in further loss of power and prestige for male priests and clergy. Ministry will become a “pink-collar” profession and will no longer be respected”. One of the most common statements often heard from people in Nigeria is God forbid bad thing. How can a woman give me the sacrament? In some quarters, the arguments goes further to say that, “The intellectual and spiritual deficit inherent in female nature renders women unfit for ministry”.³⁸ Japinga (1999: 141).

Some of the opposition to women’s ordination and leadership is rooted in stereotypical assumptions about the nature and ability of men and women. For many, men are designed to lead and organise while women are designed to follow and nurture. Men are spiritual and intellectual beings while women, on the other hand, are bodily and emotional beings and for this reason, according to the argument, it seems unnatural for women to exercise authority. It does not feel right to have a woman in charge, telling men what to do (Japinga, 1999: 141).

One important thing to note is that pastoral abilities are not gender specific or connected in any way to hormones or reproductive organs. It may be true to say that women are comfortable nurturers because they have been taught to be and have been affirmed when they did well. Why then are women, being good nurturers, not given the space to pastoral nurture in the church with their God-given gifts?

We should know the importance of diversity in the church for it is when we all use our various gifts that the desired goal, through partnership in ministry, will be met. It then follows that there is need for agitation. Women should no longer be satisfied with the inferior roles they play. The church and society must take the issue of the exploitation of women seriously. Women should not be remembered during fundraising only, or for cleaning of the church, cooking for the Board or Session meetings, and other minor jobs in the church as is evident from the empirical survey discussed in Chapter five of this dissertation. The church and society must recognise the

³⁸ Thomas Aquinas argued that women are in a state of subjection and cannot receive the sacrament of ordination. The sacrament would be invalid for them because the authority granted to a priest simply cannot be given to a woman (Japinga 1999: 141).

importance of women and the transformation they bring to their environments. It is sad to say that women are neglected and thereby feel that they are not needed. This feeling of not being needed is expressed by a woman, a former member of the Gereformeerde Kerk (Reformed Church) who voiced her frustration thus:

In the Dopper Church I feel irrelevant; the reason why I have no qualms about leaving the church is that I know I will not be missed, as I was never needed. It is difficult as a lay person to play any part in a church which defines itself, not in terms of a body with members with gifts but in terms of functions and positions. So women assume an inferior position and never take responsibility for anything more consequential than baking for functions. If I attend Sunday Service, keep the children quiet and do not concern myself with matters too high for me, take no responsibility for what happens to the congregation as a body nor for what I read in the Bible, if I pray for the congregation without being allowed to know what is happening in the congregation, then I can be a suitably submissive, passive and slowly dying feminine member of the Reformed Church (Ramodibe, 1989: 16).

Sadly, this feeling of not being needed is experienced by many women in the church, both locally and globally. In most churches women make up the greater number of the population but do not have a voice. Despite their large population there is hardly any church where women have equal numbers with men in terms of leadership positions. They are to be seen and not heard and, in some cases, are neither to be seen nor to be heard (Kattey, 1992: 41). While some churches have reluctantly opened the door of ordination for women and tried to allow them space in some areas of leadership, others have not yet seen the need to do so. For too long women have been bound by those who should loosen them.³⁹

The argument against women's ordination is not only a Protestant issue. In the Roman Catholic Church, the ordination of women also is just a dream that may never come true for some people. After the death of Pope John Paul the II, many thought that his successor would look into the issue but the new Pope, to their disappointment, is not ready to change the tradition of the church,

³⁹ The attitude of the Church Fathers towards women is a clear example of this.

at least in the foreseeable future. According to (Uchem 2001: 18), “the Church’s continued ambivalence about women, concretely signified in the church’s denial of the ordination of women, nullifies all the beautiful affirmations of women’s equal dignity found both in Igbo culture and in the church documents. She further states that:

The dignity and the vocation of women – a subject of constant human and Christian reflection – have gained exceptional prominence in recent years. This can be seen, for example in the statement of the church’s *magisterium* present in the various documents of the Second Vatican Council, which declares in its closing message: The hour is coming, in fact has come, when the vocation of women is being acknowledged in its fullness, the hour in which women acquire in the world an influence, an effect and a power never hitherto achieved... . At this moment, when the human race is undergoing too deep a transformation, women imbued with a spirit of the gospel can do so much to aid humanity Uchem (2001: 18).

I agree with Uchem that these beautiful words will not catch people’s imagination as long as women are excluded from ordination in the Roman Catholic and some other mainline churches.

However, the good news is that some protestant churches have created space for women in the ordained ministry. One such church is the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria. Also worthy of note is the African Independent Churches as we can see from the discussions below.

4.3 THE AFRICAN INDEPENDENT CHURCHES (AICs⁴⁰)

In Nigeria, the AICs are growing rapidly. Many people especially women, find satisfaction and fulfilment in the AIC because they are more open minded towards women. They usually start in small ways but gradually grow extensively, as is observed by Anderson (2000: 90):

An African Pentecostal movement often begins with an individual founder who has a spiritual experience, usually in dreams or visions, which is perceived as a divine call and which results in a desire to proclaim a new message.

Most of the AICs existing today were formed in the 20th century, with a few dating back to 19th century. The roots, however, go much further. For instance, “one of the first AIC movements south of the Sahara was initiated in 1700 by a woman, Kimpa Vita, in the then Portuguese kingdom of Congo, near the town called Sao Salvador. Donna Beatrice, as she came to be known, proclaimed the coming judgment of God as she protested against the formalisation of the Catholic Church (Daneel, 2001: vi)”. “She aimed at destroying all crosses, crucifixes and images of Christ which she regarded as mere fetishes replacing the old ones. She also preached a utopian message which included the restoration of the ancient Congo Empire under a new king. In 1706, all the chiefs of Portuguese Congo were called to Sao Salvador. Faced with political upheaval the Portuguese authorities imprisoned Donna Beatrice, who had risen to the status of a national heroine, declared her a heretic and burnt her at the stake. Her followers were forcibly subdued (Martin, in Daneel, 2001: iv)”. This did not stop women from moving ahead. Through their struggles, they were able to carve names for themselves in the AICs. The prominent roles played

⁴⁰ Salient features of AICs, among others, according to Daneel (2001:vi-vii), are as follows:

- “The AICs on the whole are Christian Churches founded in Africa by Africans, primarily for Africans. The processes of inculturation in leadership, worship, healing and biblical interpretation contribute to a strong sense of belonging in these churches. Here, one finds one of the most potent factors contributing to effective outreach and rapid growth.
- In some regions of Southern Africa, the AICs already constitute some 40% to 50% of African Christianity. Far from being a mere peripheral sectarian or protest phenomenon, the AICs are at the core and represent one of the cardinal developments of Christianity in 20th century Africa.
- In size they range from minute groupings comprising one or two families to the enormous movements of Lekganyane (South Africa), Maranke (Zimbabwe) and Kimbangu (Congo), each of which count millions of adherents”.

by women, both in the founding and leadership in these AICs, and the woman's touch they bring to bear in their theology, testify to the fact that women have great potential in ecclesiastical leadership. Women do evangelism in a variety of ways, including personal witnessing to their faith in their daily activities, house to house evangelism and distribution of tracts in market places and other centres within their respective communities (Kalu, 2005: 435).

4.3.1 WOMEN FOUNDERS

Women founders of religious movements are not a recent phenomenon. "A geographically focused study in the town of Calabar, South-eastern Nigeria, by Rosalind Hackett has identified six AICs founded by women out of 248 known religious institutions (Kalu, 2005: 424)". The founding of churches by women in Africa is the ultimate act of religious independency and self-determination. Kalu, (2005: 424) further states that "Since the establishment of Christianity in Africa, there has always been an upsurge of female religious leadership, particularly in the prophetic, revival movements, African-instituted churches and Neo-Pentecostal Christianity". In these churches, women have experienced a measure of Christian ministerial freedom and equality hitherto denied them in the mainline churches. Not only are they visible in ecclesial leadership as founders of churches, bishops, pastors, and evangelists, but "women's involvement in the churches are prominent in churches with a pneumatic emphasis. Hence their leadership and participation is mainly evident in the Spiritualist/Zionist/Apostolic/ Aladura AICs, the charismatic/Neo Pentecostal churches and the revival movements. The Aladura churches in Nigeria gave women room to express their leadership abilities (Kalu, 2005: 424-436).

In the more recent Charismatic and Neo-Pentecostal churches, women play even greater leadership roles. They are allowed the freedom of expression of their gifts. This may be due to the Pentecostal theology that provides avenues for Charismatic gifting regardless of gender. To a great extent, the attitude towards women's leadership has been positive in the AICS. "An examination of structures of authority in these churches reveals an egalitarian structure influenced by a democratic spirit (Kalu, 2005: 424)". In Nigeria, there has been an increase in women-founded Charismatic/Pentecostal churches, particularly in Yorubaland. Since the 1970s Dorcas Olaniyi founded the Agbala Church in 1979, after several religious experiences

interpreted as signs of her call to the ministry. She is the archbishop of her church, which has opened several branches in Nigeria and in New Jersey in the USA (Kalu, 2005: 430)".

There are many other women who have struggled through and have used their potential in serving humanity. Mercy Amba Oduyoye is one of them. This is a woman who has a passion for her fellow women and has done everything within her power to ensure that other women were and still are liberated from their oppressed positions. "She neither kept the vision to herself, nor was afraid of what 'they' would say. She acted courageously" as Njoroge pointed out (in Kalu, 2005: 447). The zeal and passion for other women and her decision to make a difference in other women was born at a meeting. According to Njoroge (in Kalu, 2005: 447): "Having attended a women's meeting at Cartigny, Switzerland, Oduyoye left at the end of the meeting full of determination to make a difference in her world. She started collecting names of any woman enrolled as a students and/or teacher in theological institutions and religious departments of secular and Christian universities. Clothed with a passion for justice and with great courage, Oduyoye did not allow any difficulty on the way to deter her from the commitment and motivation gained from Cartigny (Kalu, 2005: 447)". Oduyoye to my mind was addressing, the injustices around her at that time. She challenged the status quo calling the church to take up its responsibility of addressing the unjust structures that work against women. The church is also called upon to be a public institution that should transform the social order in its environment. We shall briefly look at the church as a public institution.

4.3.2 THE CHURCH AS A PUBLIC INSTITUTION

The concept of public has "a long and complex history, which follows a specific socio-political development that, in its turn, already standardises the concept of public such that it lends legitimacy only to one "public" of political liberalism composed as "society" (August, 2005: 19)". For purposes of this dissertation, we shall concern ourselves with public as it applies to the church.

The public Church has been described by Hessel and Hudnut-Beumler (1993: 299) as:

the church that is not satisfied with being private – it is more than a rescue mission and salvation train for individuals. The spirituality (or spirited mission) of a public church is concerned with more than healing individual hurts or gathering in believer’s communities. It combines faith commitment with civil dialogue, prophetic passion with public sense”.

The public church prepares the way for the full reign of God. It seeks the transformation of the social order that affects, and should be affected by, people of faith. Elliston, (1989: 146) sees the public church as “a church oriented to public ministries and open to the world, speaking and acting beyond its walls for the common good so that others notice, interact, and respond. It is people embodying their faith in social concert and coalition. It is the followers of Jesus going where his renewing spirit is already at work and where they can make a public difference”. It has been described as one of the strongest, most powerful social forces affecting social transformation

Being the light of the world and the salt of the earth, the most urgent responsibility of the church therefore is to concentrate directly on developing a vigorous public witness that among other things, uphold respect and dignity for women. According to Hessel (1993: 18), such a witness to policymakers at all levels of government should be designed to foster community rebuilding and justice-oriented policies. These justice oriented policies should aim at creating equal space for women Hessel (1993: 9) further states that:

The church is called to work for shalom – to be a laboratory of vital new community. Knowing that the world is an intricate organism created by God for the benefit of all creatures, and a home within which humans experience life’s highest purpose”. In this light, one cannot overstate how sociologically and theologically pertinent it is for mainline churches to break out of the ecclesial *cul-de-sac* into which the disestablishment mind-set and related denominational timidity have placed them. To pursue the mission of social transformation and reconstruction requires that the churches recover theological-ethical vigour by nurturing members in kingdom values while working with low power groups as well as holders of institutional power to rebuild community life and to revitalise government.

When we talk about the low power group, women quickly come to mind because they have been treated as such in church and society. The gender stereotyping that goes on within the church endangers peace everywhere. The church cannot speak peace to the world if the oppression of women through stereotyping continues. In many cases women's voices are not heard, despite the fact that they are more in number. Such continued oppression cannot engender peace within the church's membership. The world has heard much preaching by the church and is looking for more concrete actions that can end the oppression of women. According to Hessel (1993:17):

Only an authentic witness and ministry, immersed in a community of social action and reflection alert to shared public responsibility establishes the right for Christians to be heard or even the responsibility of Christians uttering a renewing word. To cultivate such authenticity, congregations and larger church bodies as well as theological institutions should do something more than retell the story. That something more, in response to an individualistic society and personalistic church, is to teach and embody a coherent social ethic that grapples with issues of justice across a range of particular policy issues and social practices.

It therefore follows that any theology, development, transformation etc that does not listen to and include the rest of the human race should be questioned. God's salvation is for all – female and male alike. Among other functions, the church should play its role as public institution.

Wilbanks (1993: 35) focuses, among other things, on the role of the church as a public institution; I summarise his thoughts in the following way: The church needs to contribute their particular theological and ethical convictions to broader public discourse. This will require experimentation as the church learns to express her theology of transformation in varied public discourse. The church in its public witness needs to focus on analysis of dominance and advocacy for social transformation, thereby overcoming the injustices of gender, class and race dominance. Churches need to be engaged in service ministries as an integral dimension of congregational life, thereby caring for the poor, the homeless, the aged, those living with HIV/AIDS, etc. The church needs to educate and equip its members for creative public involvement and also model in its own communal life its conviction about God's own transformative activity in the world. But in some

cases the church shies away from its advocacy role and one of the reasons for the shying away, according to August (2005: 309), is that “they do not believe they can make a difference especially to big problems such as unemployment and poverty and biblical ignorance about God’s desire for justice.” Hessel and Hudnut-Beumler (1993: 230) tell us that:

The public church succeeds best when it is both faithful to its principles and broadly representative. It should offer positive account of the good life, of the place of human beings in the created world, of right relationship between the rich and poor, neighbours and strangers, men and women.

If these goals must be achieved, then partnership with women is not an option but an imperative because it is in our diversity that we find solutions to our multifaceted human problems. This diversity impels us to explore the various metaphors that portray the church as an agent of change.

4.3.3 THE CHURCH AS AN AGENT OF CHANGE

As a community of people, the church consists not only of individual members, but also of different levels of organisation ranging from local to regional, national and even to international as we saw earlier in this work. In my own understanding, the church is a community of women, men and children from the same or a different race, language, culture, etc. who come together to worship God. It is a community of forgiven sinners. It is a community where everybody is somebody and Jesus is Lord. It is a community that has a sense of calling and mission for the advancement of the ideals of the kingdom of God on earth. The kingdom of God is about justice and the church cannot effectively talk about justice when the women in the church are treated unjustly. The church should indeed be an agent of change.

When we talk about the church as an agent of change, its responsibility is both to the church members and to the society as a whole. The church’s responsibility in society emanates from the increasing realisation that people can empower and equip themselves in many ways by organising their own lives. In the area of morals, the church should take the lead. Morality must be formed,

cultivated and instilled. The church should regard it as its own calling to promote the important issues like character formation, identity, virtues, traditions, community, authority, discipline, role models, etc. (August, 2003: 50-51). Powers (2003: 27) agrees that “the church must announce the good news with acts and words: words that proclaim the love of God and the strength of God’s reign among humankind, that reveal the presence of Jesus Christ the liberator in human life; words that denounce all that is opposed to this reign and negate the presence of God. And at the same time, in order to give concrete expression and truth to these words: acts of effective service in the promotion of human dignity. They are acts and words that confirm and explicate each other mutually. Quoting the *Book of Confessions* by the 1991 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA), Hessel (1993: 20) writes:

[T]he Spirit moves to give and renew life, to unmask idolatries in church and culture, and speaking through voices of peoples long silenced, impels the church to work with others for justice, freedom and peace.

By so doing the church can nurture a community of faith that can give hope to the hopeless. This community of faith is one that will not only sympathise with the poor but also empathise and work in solidarity with them.

Similarly, a total liberating evangelisation of the church will seek to realise a living synthesis of announcement, of testimony and of action. “It proclaims Jesus Christ as king of justice, love, truth, liberty, fellowship, and of commitment to transformational action in the world that actualises the message of the word of God; the realisation of the reign of God through a struggle of solidarity and a more *koinonial* society, and with a testimony of a quality of life and a model of living together in a more human fashion (Powers, 2003: 27)”. In this way the church could act as a public institution engaging humanity in the theatre of daily life with the aim of transforming and binding the broken pieces together, not only in the church but in the larger society. This transforming role is important in understanding the church as a public institution.

4.3.4 WOMEN AND THE CHURCH

The church is not complete without women. The church, should live the life of the kingdom, which is a life of justice for all, men and women alike. Is the church living up to this expectation? Do people hold unto some epistles of Paul to dehumanise women? We will look at some of the biblical texts, especially Pauline epistolary documents, to buttress the point about the church.

It is a well known fact that the story of the Church and women in history is one of joy and pain, of honour and disgrace, of affirmation and denial. This situation, though, can be traced to the Old Testament, is amply reflected in the New Testament Church and is particularly seen in Paul's ambivalent position and writings. We shall draw some examples from the first letter to the Corinthians and the first letter to Timothy.

4.3.4.1 Paul, Women and the Church in 1 Corinthians 11: 2-16, 14: 26-40 and 1 Timothy 2: 8-15

Although the majority of respondents in the survey discussed in Chapter five of this dissertation disagree that Paul's epistles are hindrances to women's participation in church leadership, many Christian churches in the world still use the texts listed above as a basic argument and proof to determine women's role and position in the church and in their communities. And these passages are taken also as a proof to confirm what many cultures consider as women's role and position in society. The Nkoma Synod in Malawi of the Presbyterian Church of Central Africa serves as an example. According to Kawale (2001: 230), the "Nkoma Synod has used 1 Corinthians 14: 32-37 and 1 Timothy 2: 11-14 as a biblical basis to bar women from taking part in leadership roles". Kawale further states that, the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa⁴¹ which evangelised and established what is now called Nkoma Synod in Malawi, is a member of the Reformed Ecumenical Synods (RES) which has its own theology that bars women from holding positions in the church. It is reported that, when the RES met in Australia in 1972, churches that accepted women in the ministry became objects of the wrath of the RES. In item 12 of the meeting,

⁴¹ It is worth noting that the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa which evangelised Nkhoma Synod, Malawi, now ordains women while the people they evangelised have not yet seen the need to do so.

it is said that Synod removed from its membership all the member churches who allowed women to the ministry. It was stated that allowing women to [the] ministry was deviating from Reformed doctrines” (Kawale, 2001: 230).

In this regard, it is good to note that Paul’s position on women is a theological paradox that has puzzled Christian people over the centuries and still puzzles them. So care and caution must be exercised with the interpretation of the texts. As we said at the beginning of this chapter, context is important in our interpretation of any text.

Having said that, it is very important to note that, the role and position of women in general is not a matter which started with the presence of Christianity, but belongs to a very long history of the world. Biblical histories, especially of the Old Testament, indicate that women in early Judaism, of which Paul was a product, had a social-cultural status influenced by the patriarch, where the father had extensive power to determine the activity of the rest of the family. (Witherington, 1992: 957). “The father was a priest for the whole family and this honour and responsibility of exercising the priesthood usually was bestowed not upon the mother, but upon the first-born son after the death of the father (Wight, 1980: 180)”. This was as a result of the gender stereotyping of the time. Because Paul was a product of this environment where gender roles were strictly adhered to, he somehow reflected this in some of his epistles as seen below.

The big question concerns why women were silenced in the church of Corinth and not in other churches that Paul planted? His teaching in the church of Galatians was that in Christ all are one. There is neither male nor female, Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free (3: 28). In the letter to the Romans he praised many women as leaders and workers in the gospel of Jesus Christ (Rom 16: 1-7, 12). How is it then that the same Paul is creating division in the Church? For many who may be more comfortable with the Corinthian passages than that of Galatians it will be appropriate to acknowledge the fact that we may not have understood Paul’s intention in the Corinthian texts and so should not quote Paul out of context. It is very important that we employ contextual interpretation to avoid stereotyping. So many reasons have been given for the text that advises:

For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in all churches of the saints, the women should keep silence in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as even the law says. If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home, for it is shameful for a woman to speak in church. (1Corinthians 14: 33-35)

The reason behind this text admonishing women to refrain from speaking in the church may be peculiar to the Corinthian churches only. According to Halley (1981: 10), sensuality prevailed to an unprecedented extent in the church of Corinth. The notoriety of this city was such that it became part and parcel of the Greek tongue to use the word “to Corinthianise” to refer to playing the wanton (Kattey, 1992: 25). The bad reputation of the city became proverbial in foreign languages (Halley, 1981: 10). It was into such a city that Christianity penetrated. With the freedom in the new religion, there was no distinction between slaves and masters, Jews and Gentiles, males and females. It is assumed that, because of this freedom, women wanted to use the opportunity to show off, although this is an assumption which may or may not be true. Many have blamed Paul for not being clear on this point about the silence of women in the church.

4.3.4.2 The Role and Position of women as portrayed in 1Timothy 2: 8-15

Paul’s ambivalence comes out even more clearly in this passage, It is important to note that the first epistle of Paul to Timothy gives a graphic picture of Timothy as a young pastor without much experience. Paul, his spiritual father, writes to encourage and instruct him on the qualities of a pastor of the church and on dealing with false teachings in the church. At the same time, he also instructs him about the importance of his relationship with various groups in the church including widows, elders, slaves and false teachers. The epistle reveals the personal warmth and love that Paul had for Timothy. And also, the warning about the dress code of women.

Many scholars have tried to understand why Paul wanted women to dress decently. Knight (1992: 135) points out that there is evidence that women were inclined to adorn themselves with pearls, gold and expensive clothes at the time. Paul’s prohibition on the use of gold and fashionable apparel stemmed from the fact that pagan women were placing emphasis on

jewellery and braided hair and most of those women were harlots in the Roman Empire (Knight, 1992: 135). The present problem in many churches that rely on these texts to determine what women should wear is that they do not consider the fact that the Ephesians' context was different. Should we say women should not braid their hair today because Paul prohibited it? Although only Paul knew what he had in mind when making such laws, my argument here is that we should not interpret Scripture out of context. I think women should always be neatly and beautifully dressed to the glory of God. Despite the controversy about women, their roles and dressing, Paul still commended women for their contributions, as stated below.

4.3.4.3 Notable women in some of Paul's epistles

We shall be looking at those women whose names and contributions are mentioned in some of Paul's epistles. Many were mentioned by Paul for their contributions in many areas of his ministry and the important roles of these women cannot be overlooked. Let us start with Phoebe.

(a) **Phoebe**

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea. I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and give her any help she may need from you, for she has been a great help to many people, including me (Romans 16: 1- 2).

She is recommended as a servant and helper of the church in Cenchrea. The word servant is derived from "diakonos", and refers in some early Christian texts to a specific church office, but many churches today interpret the office in the light of the appointment of the overseers of tables as in the book of the Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 6 (Grady, 20003: 120).

The translation of "diakonos" has caused some disagreement among translators and exegetes. Some have argued that when the word "*diakonos*" refers to an individual "male", it is always translated as "minister" in the King James Version. Paul, Timothy and Epaphras are always referred to as "minister". But because Phoebe is a woman, she cannot be called "minister" (Spencer, 1985: 114). Kenneth Taylor, for example, describes Phoebe as a "dear Christian woman" whereas Timothy is a "worthy pastor" (1 Tim 4: 6, Living Bible, in Spencer 1985: 144).

James Hurley writes that if the name of Phoebe in the text were Timothy's or Judas' or any male name and if they were called "*diakonos*" one hundred percent of the scholars would presume "*diakonos*" meant "minister" (Hurley, 1981: 124).

In Romans 16: 2, Paul refers to Phoebe as a *prostatis*, which can be translated "presiding officer". The term definitely carries with it a significant weight of authority, so we can conclude that Phoebe was not just running a women's ministry or setting up Sunday school for children. She was an envoy of Paul's, carrying apostolic directives – and Paul expected the churches to listen to her. Kroeger (1980: 16) points out that *prostatis* is often used in the writings of the early church fathers to denote someone who presided over communion.

(b) Priscilla

"Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow-workers in Christ Jesus. They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the gentiles are grateful to them" (verse 3).

Priscilla is called a woman minister (Rom 16: 3). Paul referred to the couple as his fellow-worker in Christ. The Oxford dictionary (1995: 571) defines the word "fellow" denotes one who is associated with a thing or a person of the same class or kind. We could read that Priscilla and Aquila were sponsors of Paul and they shared in the same work of ministry in which Paul was involved. I believe that Priscilla was a woman of stature whose name was even mentioned before her husband's.

The text clearly reveals the ambiguity of Paul's words. We nowadays have churches which allow women to be involved in some areas of leadership, but never in the pastoral ministry. Some churches do not ordain women either as elders or as ministers. When they do, they look for different names, other than the accepted names for such ordained positions. In Grady (2003: 119), this question was posed: "Are Women Elders called Elderettes? A female member has this to say:

My pastor told me that the list of qualifications for elders in the New Testament make it clear that only man can serve in the role.”

Many churches which strongly oppose the ordination of women on the basis of Paul’s ambivalence in some of these passages have refused to see the other side of Paul as revealed in other epistles of his in which he praised and encouraged women as leaders.

(c) Junia

Junia was another respectable woman who had outstanding apostolic courage. She suffered with Paul in prison. According to Grady (2003: 121), no one questioned the name of this woman who is mentioned in Romans 16: 7 up until the thirteenth century. Junia was a common Roman name. However, translators later began changing her name to “Junianus” because they could not accept the idea that Paul referred to a woman as “outstanding among the apostles”. But even the early church father John Chrysostom (347-407), who by no means had sympathy for women, acknowledged that Junia held a powerful position in the New Testament Church. He wrote in his commentary on Romans: “Indeed, to be an apostle at all is a great thing; but to be even among those of note: just consider what a great encomium that is. O how great is the devotion of this woman that she could be even counted worthy of the appellation of Apostle.”

From the discussion above it is clear, however, that the issue of gender stereotyping has a long history. Having heard from Paul, let us next consider what the Church Fathers had to say about women.

4.3.4.4 Women and the Church Fathers

The Church Fathers did not help matters with regard to the issues about women. It is astonishing to read or think about how some Church Fathers regarded women, especially as one would have expected the name of ‘Church Fathers’ to denote persons who would use pleasant or rather godly words. From their negative and offensive description of women, I continue to wonder if they were really born of women.

Here are some examples from Uchem (2001: 136,145):

“Among all savage beasts none is found so harmful as woman”. “Woman is a sick she-ass ... a hideous tapeworm ... the advance post of hell...” Although Augustine acknowledges that no human being was created by God to be the slave of another, ... he insisted that all these forms of slavery were the offshoot of sin and must be retained as an appropriated punishment for women, the descendants of Eve. Tertullian also shared Augustine’s views by lending his voice thus: “Woman! You are the devil’s doorway. You have led astray one whom the devil [did] not dare attack directly. It is your fault that the Son of God had to die; you should always go in mourning and rags”.

As if those derogatory utterances and insults were not enough, these fathers of the church debated as to whether or not a woman had a soul. Eventually, they conceded that she might be saved after all, indirectly through attachment to a man in marriage.

The surprising thing is that, to date, some people still have this mind-set and treat women as second-class citizens who do not have any right to belong. More surprisingly, even those who claim that they have been saved and redeemed by the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ still indulge in the sin of dehumanising women. We must take seriously the new identity we have in Christ as recorded by Paul in Galatians 3: 26-29:

You are, all of you, children of God through faith in Christ. All baptized in Christ, you have all clothed yourself in Christ. There are no more distinctions between Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female, but all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

We are all one and equal before God. Some men feel threatened when equality with women is mentioned. I want to say that equality is not the same as sameness. That women are equal with men does not mean that they are the same as men. But in God’s wisdom, men and women were created in God’s own image and likeness. God has not said that all should be women or men but intends partnership for humanity through unity in diversity. Having examined Paul’s view of

women and having taken note of the Church Fathers' attitude, we next consider the church in Africa. Does the church have a different story to tell about women? We shall discuss this in the next section.

4.3.4.5 Women and the Church in Africa

Understanding biblical and theological anthropology has remained a struggle, even in the Church in Nigeria and Africa. Women comprise the greater percentage of church membership in Africa. But making up the numbers is one thing; having real freedom is another. Nthamburi (1986: 1) observes:

The African states have been through the traditional society, colonialism and have now entered into a state of independence. As they experience these historical events and changes, African women labour under disabilities in employment, law, and sad to say, in church.

She further observes that the “contemporary African is at once traditional, colonial, and neo-colonial. The countries are independent – almost all of them – but it is a fact that little is done independently of global politico-economics managed mostly by the nations of the Western hemisphere. Women share the bitter fruits of the exploitation of Africa by outsiders, but women's disabilities also have authentic roots in Africa's indigenous structures. It is clear that the problems of African women have both internal and external roots. They are internal in the sense that some of the existing cultures oppress women and external in the sense that, when the society is negatively affected, women are affected the more”. This oppressive situation of women is found in religion, culture and colonialism

Edet & Ekeya (1989: 4) further stress this point that “as in colonisation, so with “Christianisation” a cultural and religious alienation or lopsidedness has been introduced into Africa. One such experience is that brought about by evangelisation in a structurally and ministerially male-dominated church”. This is not to deny the element of male domination in most African cultures. Edet & Ekeya, (1989: 4) add that “if the lot of women in Africa has been

subjugation and oppression in the traditional culture, colonialism and mainline Christianity have increased the subjugation and oppression”.

Experience shows that women’s story, whether in the Bible or in African traditional society, has been that of ambivalence, although women proved to be worthy partners for the Gospel ministry at the inception of Christianity. Luke stands out among other Evangelists in giving us an extensive account on the centrality of the role of women in the work and ministry of Jesus Christ even though they did not form part of the Twelve. Jesus encouraged women like Mary to participate in his work rather than just prepare meals (Luke 10: 48). Women followed him to Galilee and helped him in his work. They were present at his crucifixion, first to announce his birth (Luke 1: 29-56), last to witness his death and first to witness his resurrection. Having played such important roles in history, why, then, are women treated with contempt?

As shown earlier in this dissertation, Paul’s ambivalence with regard to the place and authority of women in the church has caused more confusion than consensus in the church throughout the centuries. The confusion is even greater in the African churches that now see those of Paul’s epistles mentioned above as a yardstick for measuring women’s roles in the church. Unfortunately, and partly because of this ambivalence in Paul’s writing, the church has never spoken with one voice concerning the place of women in the Christian fold. The result therefore is that people have different perceptions and positions on this matter. Among the reformers, Calvin was one who saw women’s freedom in the church as a future possibility. This idea can be derived from his persistent teaching that:

... the silence of women in the churches is a time-bound apostolic advice rather than divine law for all time... (Douglass, 1986: 270-273)

It is not clear whether Calvin saw much of women’s freedom in his lifetime but events today are fulfilling his “prophecy”, especially in the protestant (Reformed) Churches which are rooted in him. It seems, however, that we still have to deal with tokenism when it comes to the role of women in church and theology. Professor Denise Ackermann, in Cochrane and Klein (2004: 49), captures the situation aptly in the following lines:

We are still in the tokenism mode. If a conference programme needs window dressing (for the benefit of funders?) invite Elna Mouton, or Annalet van Schalkwyk, or Tzili Resenberger or Denise Ackermann. If the conference is about the church, ask a woman to address the overused topic “Women in the Church”. In my view women’s place in the church is today more a male problem than mine. So why are men not giving papers on the paucity of women in ministry or the academy? Why are they not devoting their theology to the ethical issues that are raised by gender discrimination? Why are they not in dialogue with women scholars on issues of common interest? There are many highly respected feminist theologians, Biblical scholars and church historians in the world today with whom they might dialogue.

If there is room for genuine dialogue between women and men, perhaps there will be more understanding on the issue of partnership in all areas of human life, especially in the church. The ordained ministry should be open to all in spite of gender. It is not only in the area of ordination that women should be recognised, but in all activities of the church. As is observed in chapter five where the analysis of our survey was done, we could see that women, because of their stereotyped positions are left with the mean jobs of cooking, washing and cleaning while what most people consider as the most important, which is preaching, is left for the men.

4.4 SUMMARY

This chapter has focused on how the church perceives people in their environments. It has showed that different societies have different ways of looking at people, especially men and women in their contexts. Because of institutionalised structures and culturally created lenses, men are seen differently from how women are perceived.

Such perceptions determine the roles assigned to both sexes, whether in the church or in the larger society. The process of assigning roles to people according to their genders is called gender stereotyping. The underlying assumption in this chapter therefore is that women have

been subjugated and relegated to the background in crucial issues of life, both in the church and in society, on the basis of cultural, theological or historical biases.

The chapter also examined the role of *the church as ekklesia* in en-gendering partnership among the various members of the body of Christ. In addition it argues that the church should encourage partnership between men and women in spreading the gospel with love and compassion which is the enfleshment or embodiment of the values of love, justice, peace, care etc. of the kingdom of God. As an agent of change and social transformation, the ecclesia should be a community of God's people within the larger human community. In this regard, gender balancing must be a priority in the mission of the church in the world. And the incarnation of God in the person of Jesus Christ remains the clearest example and challenge for the church's active engagement and participation in community development.

We observed however, that Paul's ambivalence in some of his epistles especially 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy are part of the reasons for the denial of women's leadership in the contemporary churches. While the covering of hair is a blessing in some churches, in others, it is a source of discomfort because of the competitions that go on among women and their head-gears. Although Paul had condemned the leadership of women in Corinth, there were notable women like Phoebe, Priscilla and Junia who worked with him. It was also noted that the Church Fathers did not help matters due to their misogyny.

On the issue of women's ordination, while the PCN has been applauded for being the pace-setter, the journey was not an easy one for the first female minister of the PCN. So many debates still go on about women's ordination and many other (mainline and Reformed) Churches in Nigeria have not yet seen the need to accept women in that leadership position.

But from the contributions of the female AIC Church Founders, we conclude that women have all it takes to be leaders. We saw that if women are given more space, they will do more exploits as they are already doing in the family.

The core argument and conclusion drawn from this chapter are that: Humans live in context and every study, including theology and development is contextual. Therefore, it is important that in our study of theology and development, we reflect on the conditions of women who form a great percentage of the population in both the church and society in Nigeria and the whole African continent.

In what follows in the next chapter, we shall be looking at the empirical survey that was carried out to establish how gender stereotyping has affected women in major issues of human life.

CHAPTER 5 EMPIRICAL SURVEY OF WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY: ANALYSIS OF DATA

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of the study was outlined in chapter one. Chapter two looked at conceptualisation. We discussed the importance of context in chapter three while in chapter four we surveyed the landscape as it relates to some important issues such as education, health, leadership/political positions of women, and other relevant aspects. This survey helped us to get to know, to an extent, the position of women in these areas. Our focus in this chapter is to report and discuss the findings of the empirical survey conducted in Nigeria on women’s participation in church and society.

The aim of the empirical survey was to ascertain the levels of participation of men and women in different activities and functions of the church and society in the Nigerian setting, and to find out how much space women occupy in leadership positions and other sensitive activities. We shall analyse the aspect of very crucial relevance to this work. In future research, we shall do the analysis of other relevant points that are not elaborated here.

The exercise was conducted through the distribution of questionnaires among men and women in the Presbyterian Church in three geographical locations, namely the urban, suburban and rural areas, as well as in some ministries of the Abia State government. The survey tested their understanding, practice and attitude towards women, and determined whether or not there was enough space for women to use their potential. In this regard, a pilot survey was conducted in some parishes of the Presbyterian Church. These included the Presbyterian Church, Jos Parish; the Presbyterian Church, Okota Parish, Lagos; and the Presbyterian Church, World Bank Housing Estate, Umuahia. The feedback from the pilot study facilitated the review of the survey location. A copy of the questionnaire used in the final survey can be found in Appendix 5.

This report will include the following: the participants in the survey, frequency distribution of responses, a bivariate analysis of responses and a conclusion with the findings of the empirical research. Our analytical tool will be the Statistical Package for Social Sciences – SPSS (cf. Kirkpatrick & Feeney, 2005: 1-115).

5.2 SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

The survey participants refer to the people who responded via the questionnaires that were distributed. We used stratified systematic sampling and the stratification was limited to geographical location, gender, age bracket, level of education and duration of service or leadership. The reason for adopting this method was to help us obtain a greater degree of representation, which decreases the probable sampling error.

In our survey of the church, respondents were taken from among the adult male and female members of the Presbyterian church of Nigeria, in urban, suburban, and rural congregations, while the survey of the society selected respondents from different ministries and corporations of the Abia State Government and Public service. An impressive 100% recovery of the questionnaires was recorded, because of the method of distribution and recovery that was used and also because the number of questionnaires distributed in each were not so many. 15 questionnaires were distributed and recovered from each of the following churches: St. Paul's PCN, Ogbor Hill Aba (urban church); St. Marks PCN, Oyigbo (suburban church); and the PCN Akanu Ohafia (rural church). So, the first part of our report on the distribution of responses is based on the 45 questionnaires distributed and recovered from the three geographical areas of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria. Furthermore, four questionnaires each were distributed at the following ministries and corporations in Umuahia, Abia State's capital: Ministry of Finance; Abia State Broadcasting Cooperation; Labour Union; Bureau of Establishment; Bureau of Common Services and Service Monitoring; and Abia State Transport Corporation. The second part of the report in this section is therefore based on the 24 questionnaires distributed and recovered from the Abia State ministries and corporations. For a detailed frequency distribution of the particulars of our respondents, see Tables 5-1a to 5-1e and 5-25a-5-25e at the end of the chapter.

5.3 FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSES

The frequency distribution of the responses to the survey questions by the respondents will be outlined in this section. A brief explanation of each question's relevance to our study on Women's participation will be given, followed by the data. Some evaluation of the information provided will also be done here, and a cross-tabulated bivariate analysis of selected fields will be done in the next section.

5.3.1 What is the Percentage of women in your Parish? (Q2)

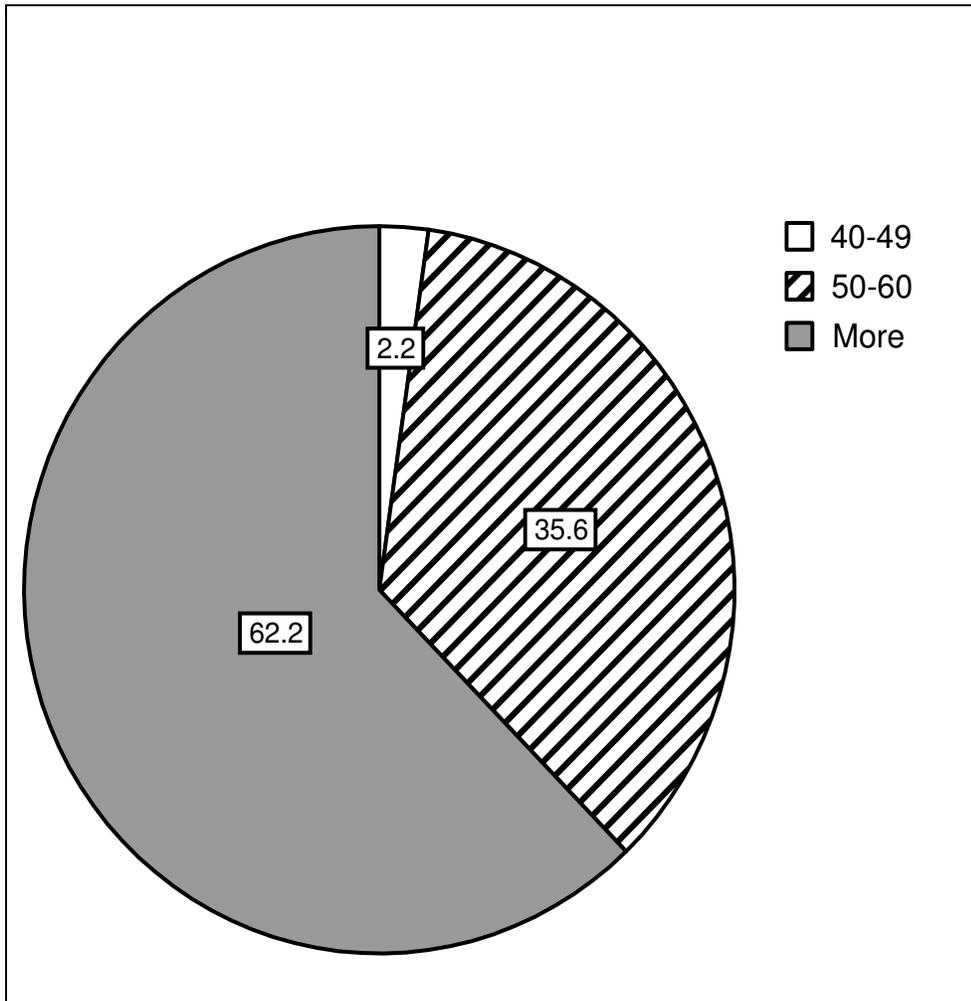


Figure 5-2: What is the Percentage of women in your Parish?

The purpose of this question was to ascertain the population of women vis-à-vis that of men in the church, using the Presbyterian Church as our case study. From the answer given to this question, the assumption that we have more women than men in the church is proven to be true. Figure 5-2 (cf. Table 5-2) shows that 62.2% of respondents selected “More”, meaning that the percentage of women in their parishes was above 60%; 35.6% of respondents chose 50-60% of women in the parishes; while 2.2% of respondents chose 40-49% as representative of women in the parishes. In every category of response the returns indicate the percentage of women in the parishes as 50%, and higher than the population of men in the same locations. Although women

are more in number in the church, the next question attempted to find out whether or not they had enough opportunity to use their potential in the church.

5.3.2 Space for women to express their potential in the Church (Q3)

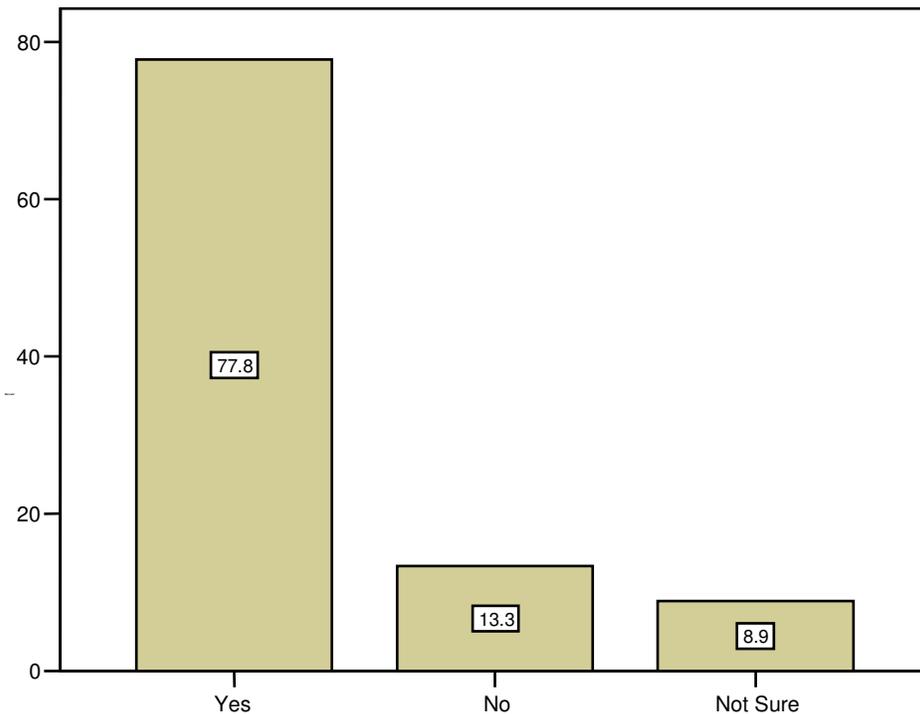


Figure 5-3: Do you think women have enough space to give expression to their talents in the Church?

The purpose of this question was to find out whether women have enough space to express their talents in the church, compared to their male counterparts. Three options were given to the respondents: Yes; No; and Not sure. Figure 5-3 (cf. Table 5-3) shows that 77.8% of respondents replied YES; 13.3% did not agree with this, while 8.9% were not sure. This return indicates that, in principle, women have enough space to express their potential. But another question concerns why, if women are allowed to give expression to their potential or talents, their voices are not heard. Do women have this freedom in all areas of church life or are there some areas that they

are still not utilising? The next question was meant to provide an idea of the level of acceptance and the percentage in the expression of their potentials.

5.3.3 Women Participate more than men in preaching...? (Q4)

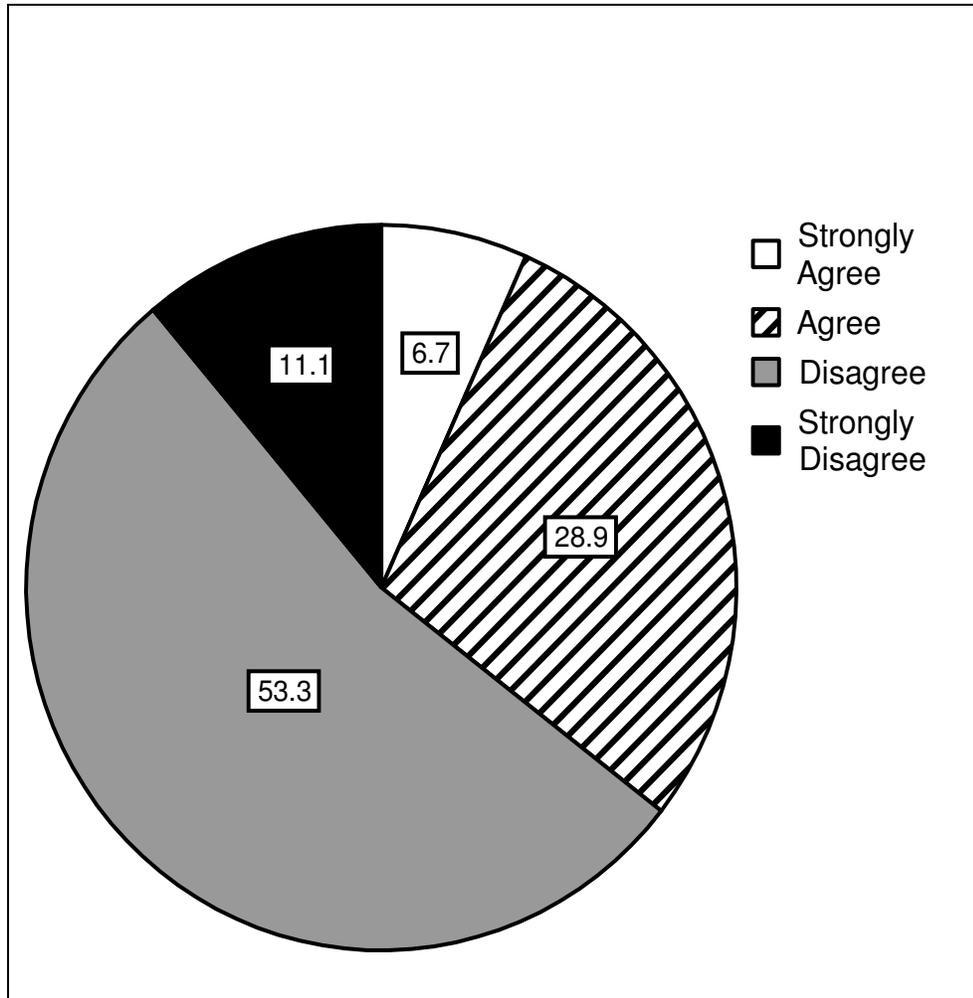


Figure 5-4; Women participate more than men in the following activities: Preaching

Even though the answer to the previous question mainly suggested that women were given freedom to give expression their talents, this question and the answers given, revealed that their male counterparts still dominated in preaching. Figure 5-4 (cf. Table 5-4) indicates that a cumulative percentage 35.6% of respondents “strongly agreed” and “agreed” that women participate more than men in preaching. A cumulative 64.4% of respondents “strongly disagreed” and “disagreed” that, women participate more than men in preaching. This result is not

surprising because for many, preaching is the highest activity any one could participate in. Women Participate more than men in praying? (Q5)

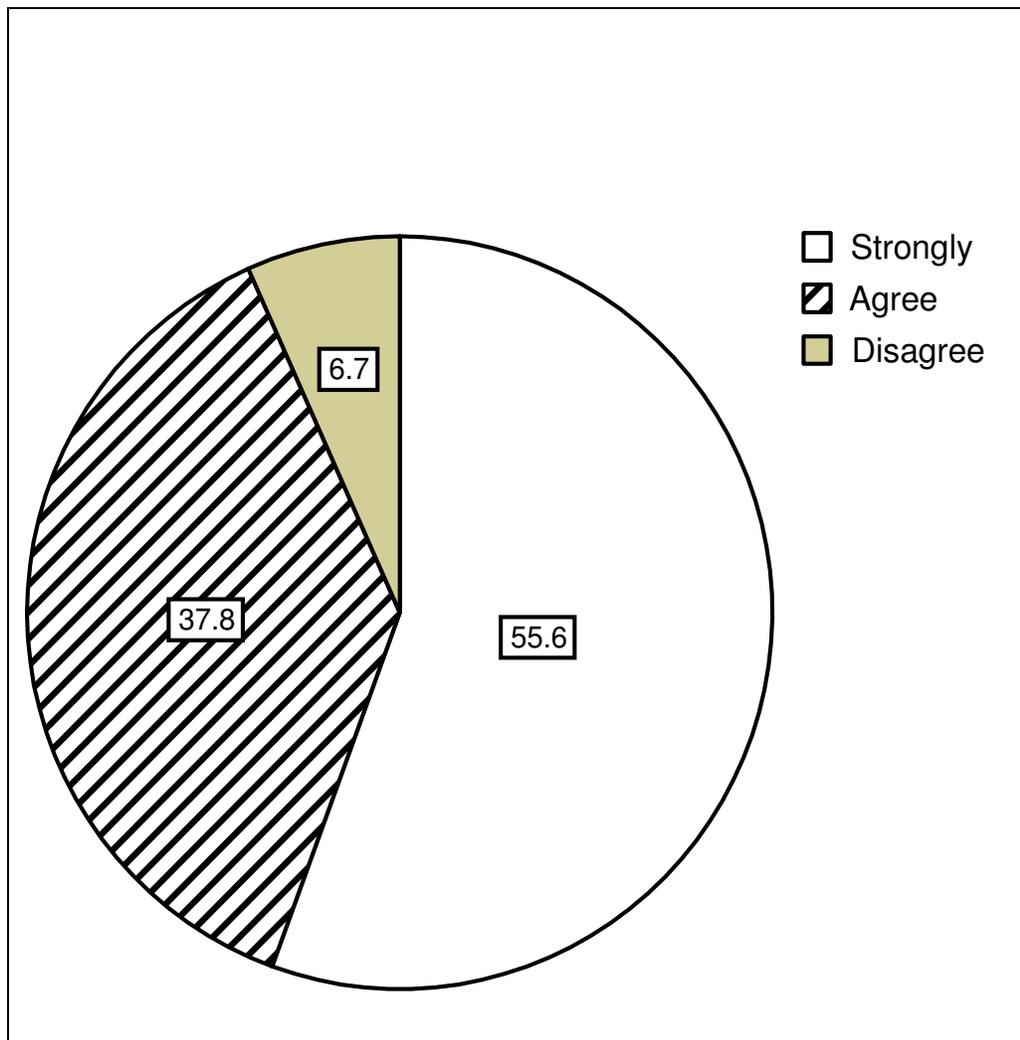


Figure 5-5: Women participate more than men in the following activities: Praying

In the area of Prayer, the distribution of the responses shows that women participate more in praying than men do. A cumulative 93.4% of respondents thought that women participate more than men in praying activities, while 6.7% of respondents disagreed (cf. Figure 5-5; Table 5-5). Prayer can be said to be the life wire of any church. If we have such high cumulative from respondents including men, it means that women are the life wires of the church and as such, should be allowed space to participate in all areas of activities including preaching. It may be argued that the one who prays more preaches better because he/she always hears from God.

5.3.4 Women Participate more than men in Church cleaning...? (Q6)

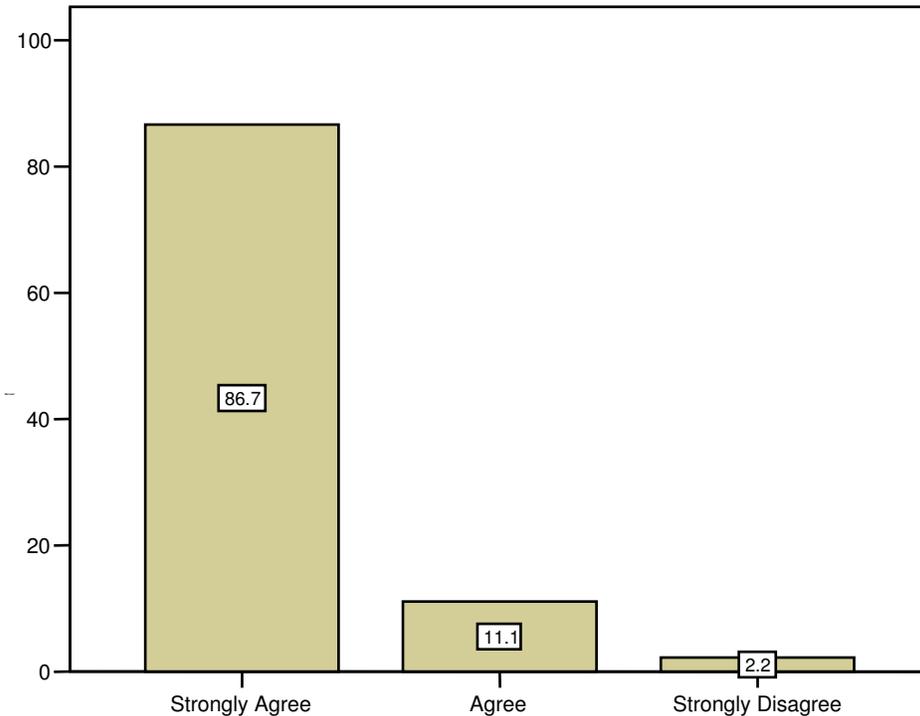


Figure 5-6: Women participate more than men in the following activities: Church cleaning.

The response recorded in the chart above (Figure 5-6; cf. Table 5-6) shows that women perform excellently in church cleaning. The percentage of respondents who “strongly agreed” and “agreed” that women participate in church cleaning to a greater extent than men came to 97.7. Only a minute 2.2% of respondents indicated that men do more cleaning in the church than women. Gender stereotyping has put women in a position where what is seen as ‘mean jobs’ are left for them to do. One may argue that, culturally speaking, this is their duty. This is as a result of the patriarchal church and society women find themselves in. But could they not also preach as much as they can clean the church? As has been said earlier, people should serve God with humility of heart in spite of their gender.

5.3.5 Women participate more than men in cooking for meetings...? (Q7)

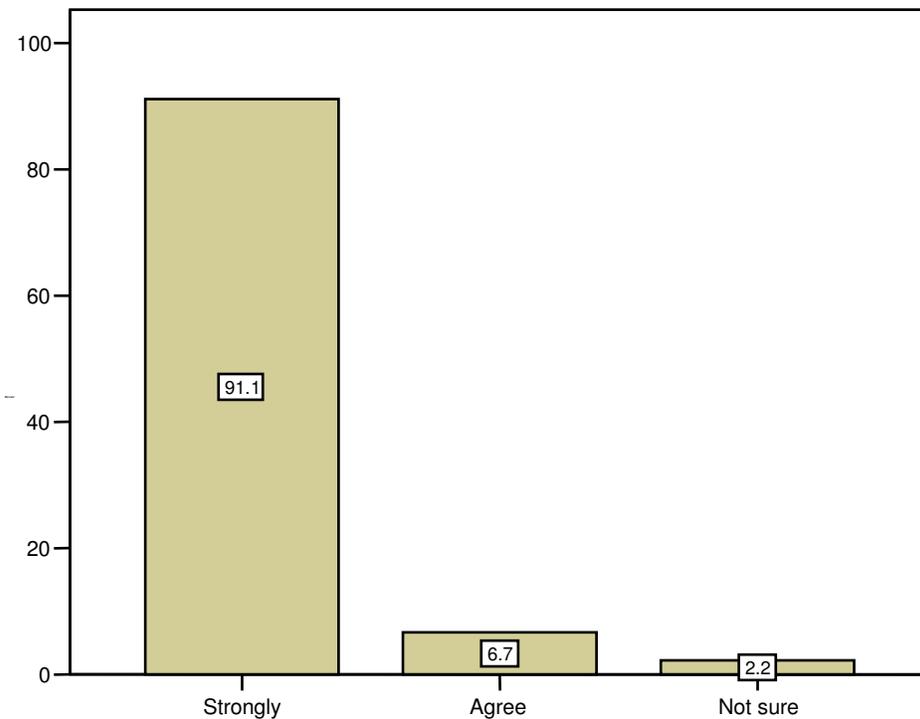


Figure 5-7: Women participate more than men in the following activities: Cooking for meetings

The chart above (Figures 5-7, cf. Table 5-7) shows that 97.7% of members agree that women participate more than men in cooking for meetings. How can we justify the assumption that those who cook physical food cannot do much more in providing spiritual food, like preaching? Does this response affirm the notion that women's place is in the kitchen and not in the public place? Although many deny the fact that women's place are in the kitchen, this survey confirms that in Nigeria, for most people, women's place are in the kitchen. I may add that this scenario is not only seen in Nigeria but in most parts of Africa if not in all countries of Africa.

5.3.6 Women Participate more than men in fundraising...? (Q8)

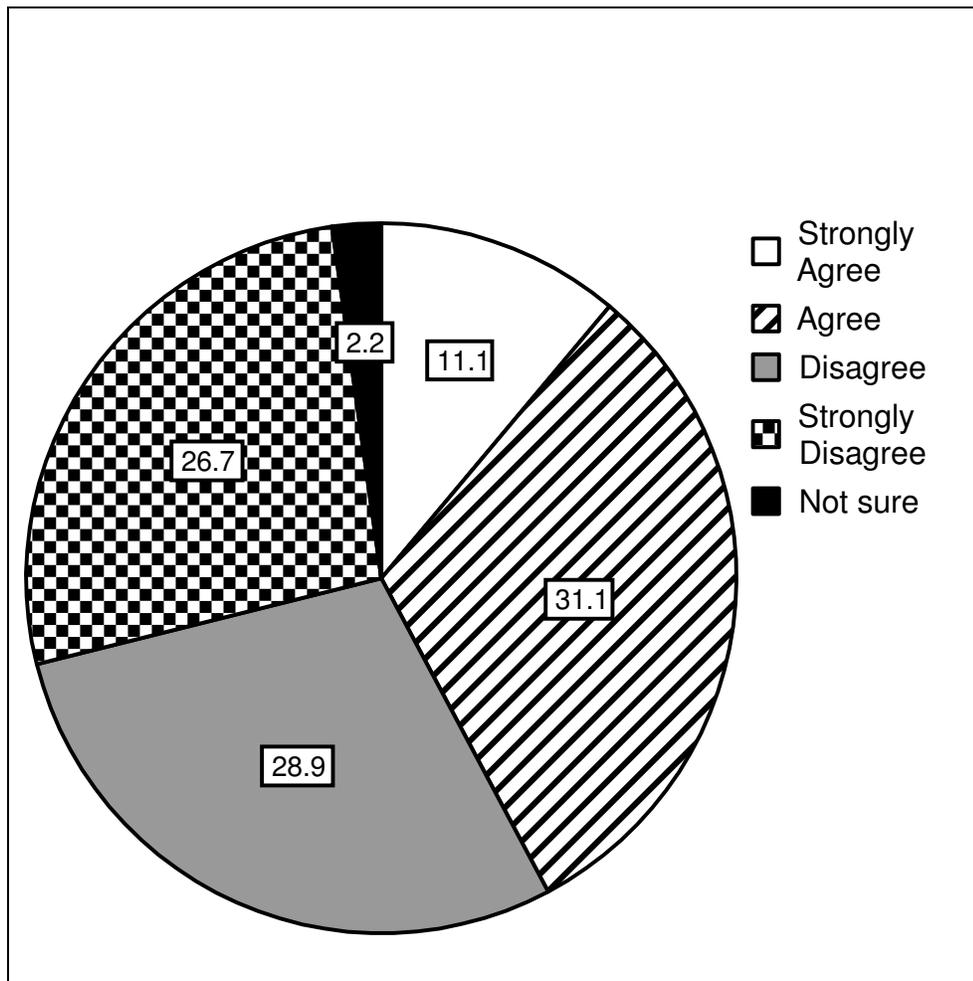


Figure 5-8: Women participate more than men in the following activities: Fundraising

Fundraising is one of the major activities of the churches in Nigeria. A cumulative 42.2% of respondents thought women participate more than men in fundraising; while a cumulative 55.6% disagreed. Apparently, men participate more than women in fundraising even though women are more in number. What could have led to this kind of response? Could it reflect a polite way of asserting the male superiority over women, or is it the cultural influence of thinking that everything a woman has is from the husband, including her donation to the church? Activities in the churches suggest that women constitute the nerve centre of fundraising in most programmes of the churches. Are women given fre hands to manage the funds they raise? Howbeit, the cross-tabulated bivariate analysis below (Section 5.5.1) may explain the situation better.

5.3.7 Female theological education is a priority in the PCN (Q9)

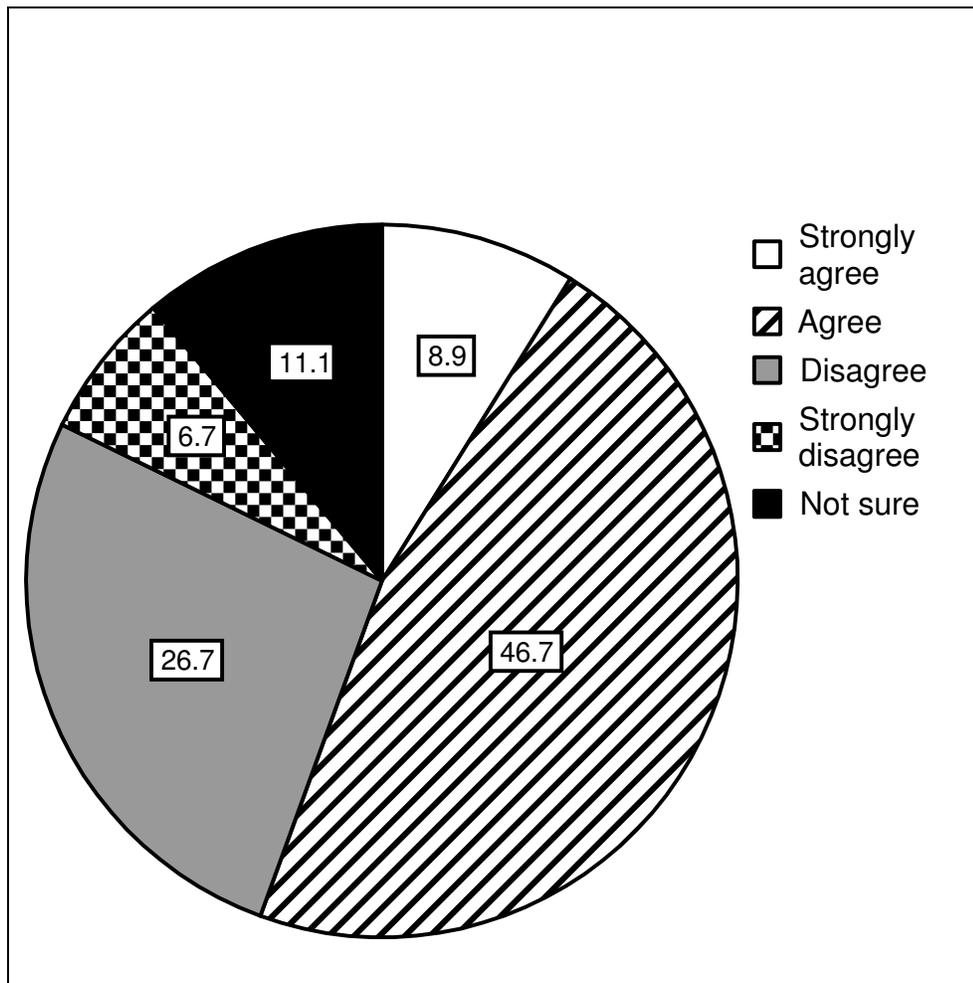


Figure 5-9: Female Theological education is a priority in the PCN

Although a majority of people agree that theological education is a priority, we should be informed here that this does not apply to other mainline churches in Nigeria. So far, the PCN is the only mainline church that ordains women in Nigeria. Figure 5-9 (cf. Table 5-9) shows that a cumulative 55.6% of the members of the PCN agreed that female theological education is a priority in the church's policy; while a cumulative 44.5% of members either disagreed or were unsure. The high percentage of disagreement or uncertainty suggests that the adoption of female theological education in the PCN is not completely accepted by members. The bivariate analysis below (Section 5.5.2) may throw more light on the categories of people who are uncomfortable with the theological training of women.

5.3.8 The possibility of a woman Moderator of General Assembly (Q10)

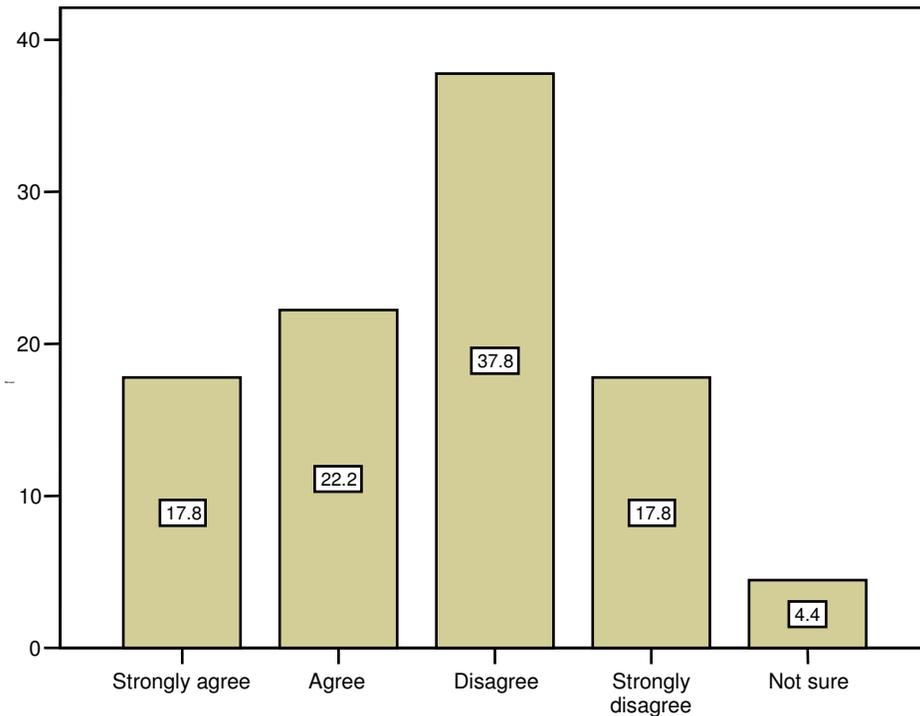


Figure 5-10: The church will be comfortable with the election of a woman as the Moderator of the General Assembly?

The Moderator of the General Assembly is the highest office in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria. Even though most people in the PCN think training of female theologians is a priority as our previous question suggests, the returns presented Figure 5-10 (cf. Table 5-10) indicates that the church is not yet ready for a female General Assembly Moderator. A cumulative 40% of members agreed that the church will be comfortable with the election of a woman as the Moderator of the General Assembly; but the remaining 60% of members either disagreed or were uncertain about the election a woman as moderator, which shows their discomfort. The bivariate analysis below (Section 5.5.3) may reveal which categories of people are not comfortable with the election of a female General Assembly Moderator.

5.3.9 The ordination or leadership of women in the Church (Q11)

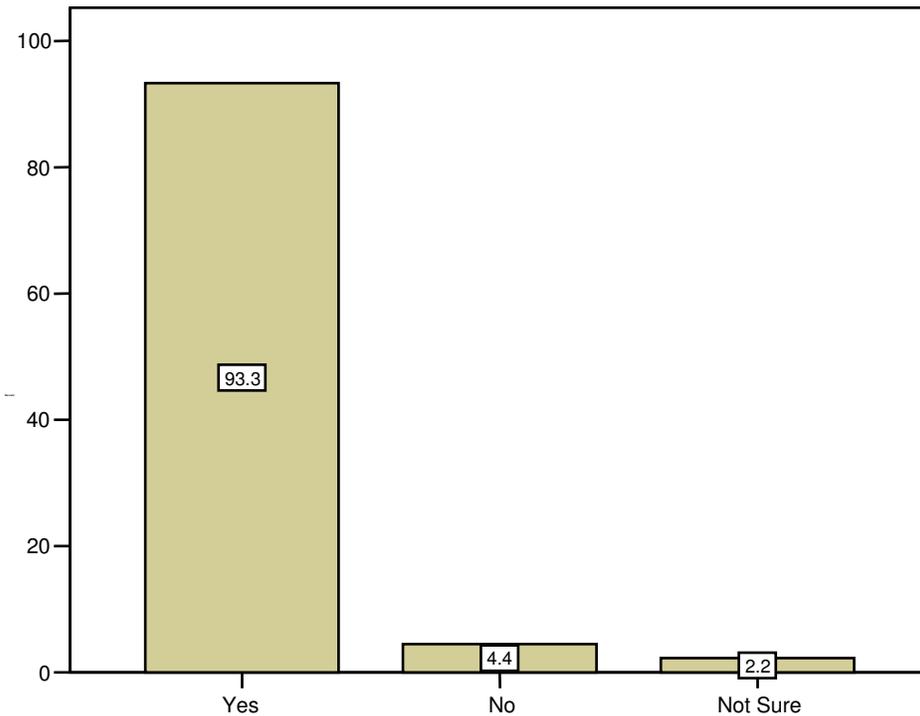


Figure 5-11: Are you happy with the ordination/leadership of women in the Church?

Although the respondents agreed to the ordination and leadership of women in the church, their responses indicated that the church is not yet ready for a woman to occupy the highest position in the church. The next set of questions were designed to lead us into knowing the areas women are negatively influenced and why some people still believe that women should not be at the head, despite agreeing to women's leadership. From Figure 5-11 (cf. Table 5-11) it is clear that 93.3% of respondents were comfortable with the ordination/leadership of women in the church. But how can we reconcile this response with Section 5.3.9 in which a greater number of respondents said they would not be comfortable with the election of a woman as the Moderator of the General Assembly? However, this confirms the point that women are not yet accepted at the apex of the church no matter their contributions to the growth of the church.

5.3.10 Negative influence on women's leadership: 1 Corinthians 14: 34 (Q12)

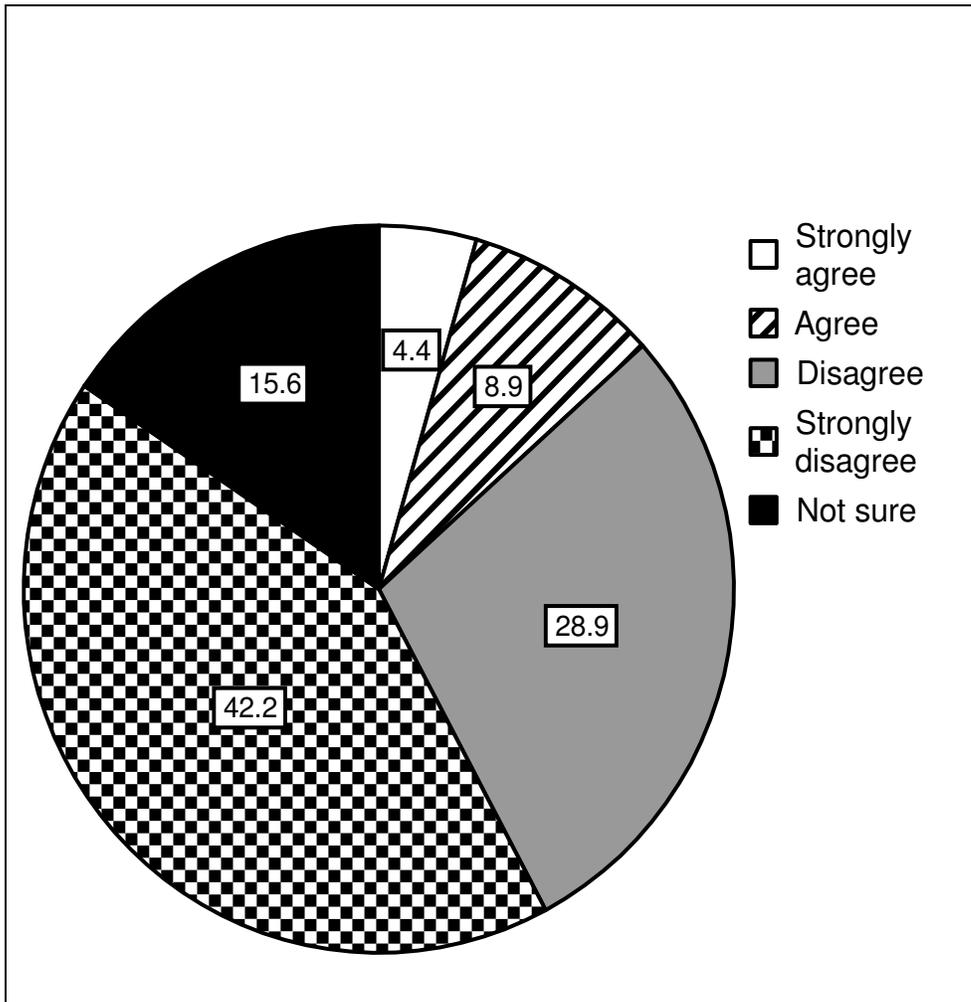


Figure 5-12: Some of the issues that negatively influence women's leadership positions in churches: Paul's Epistles, in 1Cor. 14: 34, prohibit female ordination.

There is no doubt that certain issues negatively influence the leadership of women in the church. In what follows, we focus on questions that seek to verify the opinions of members of the PCN on such issues. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 14: 34 wrote, "The women should be silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak. Rather, let them be in submission, as in fact the law says." Many have used this text against the leadership of women in the church. Surprisingly, the survey produced a cumulative 13.3% of members of the PCN who agreed that the passage works against women's leadership in the Church; while a cumulative 71.1% of respondents disagreed that the passage works against women's ordination/leadership in the church. Could one say that there has

been a change in the mind set of the Presbyterian members? It could also be a good sign that the message of Paul that in Christ there is neither male nor female is being carried.

5.3.11 Negative influence on women's leadership: Culture (Q13)

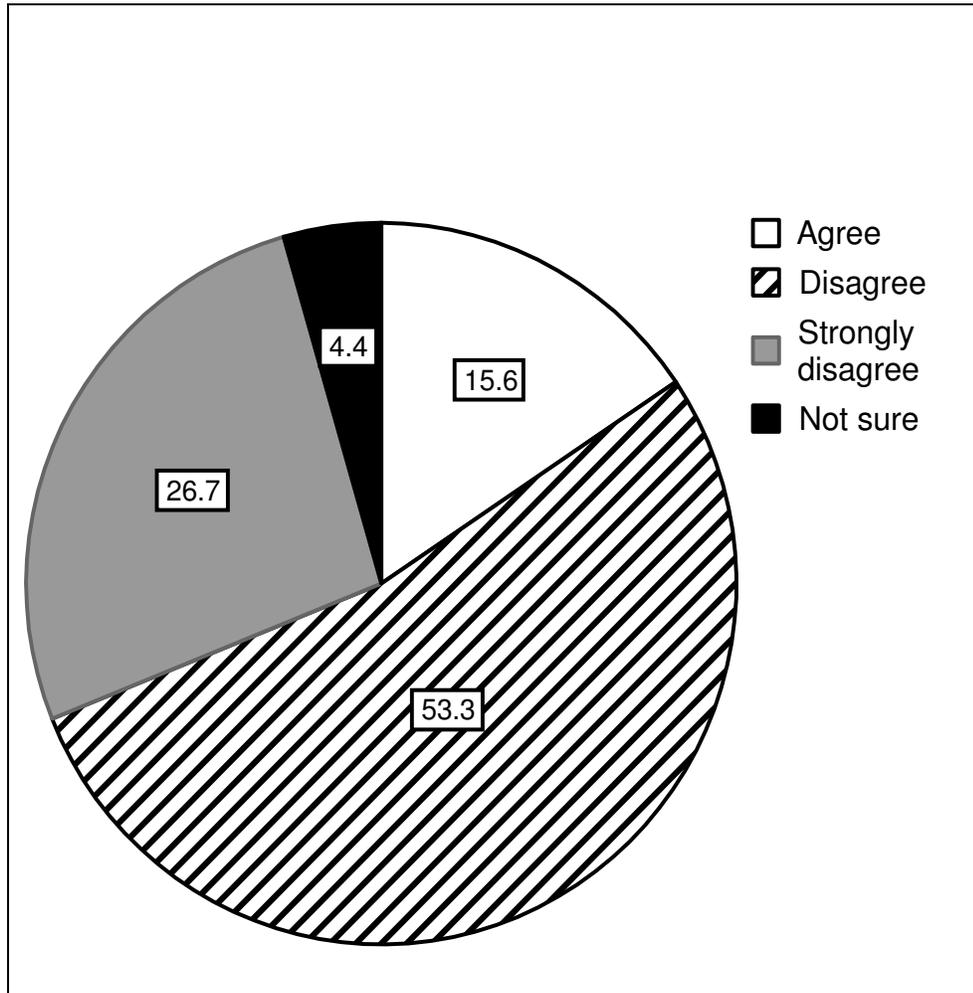


Figure 5-13: Some of the issues that negatively influence women's leadership positions in churches: Our culture is against female ordination/leadership

The respondents strongly agreed that culture is the greatest hindrance to women's participation in leadership/decision-making positions. Figure 5-13 (cf. Table 5-13) indicates that a 68.9% of respondents agreed that culture is one of the issues that work against the ordination or leadership of women in some churches; while a cumulative 26.7% of respondents disagreed that culture works against female ordination/leadership. In the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, some parishes prefer male ministers to female ministers in protest that it is against their culture.

Negative influence on women's leadership: Women's place is in the home (Q14)

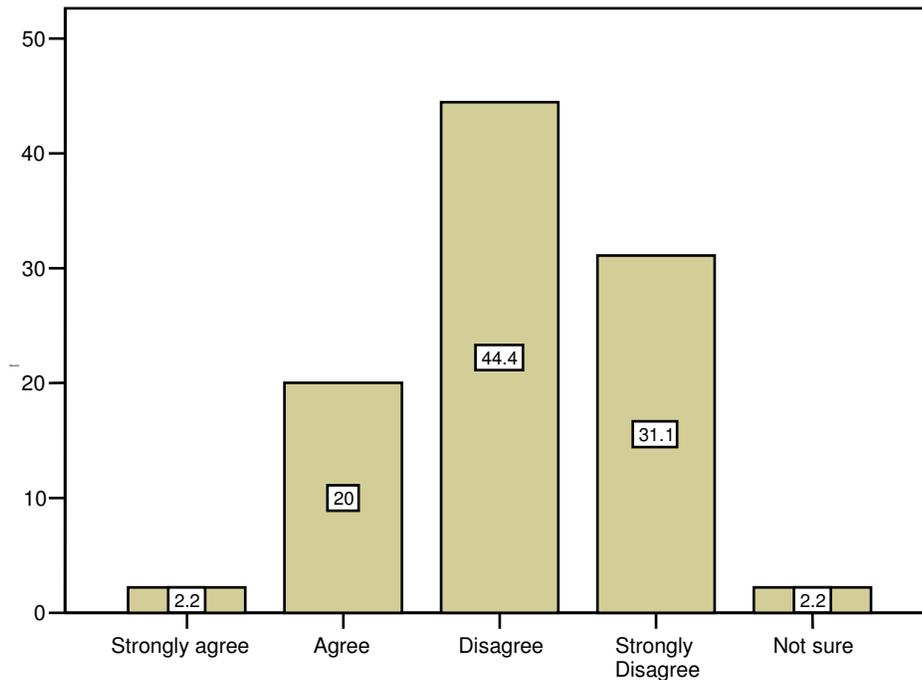


Figure 5-14: Issues that negatively influence women's leadership positions in churches: Women's place is in the home.

With regard to this question, the greatest percentage of respondents strongly disagreed that the woman's place is in the home. This is surprising because experience and practice indicate that many believe that a woman's place is in the home. This was confirmed by the high percentage of respondents agreeing to the fact that women do the work of cooking and cleaning more than men. However, it is also encouraging here that a greater number of respondents disagree to this because it may indicate that a change of mind-set has occurred. A cumulative 75.5% of respondents disagreed that the place of a woman is in the home and not in public places; a cumulative 22.2% of respondents agreed that the place of a woman is in the home and not in public office.

Negative influence on women's leadership: Menstruation/pregnancy (Q15)

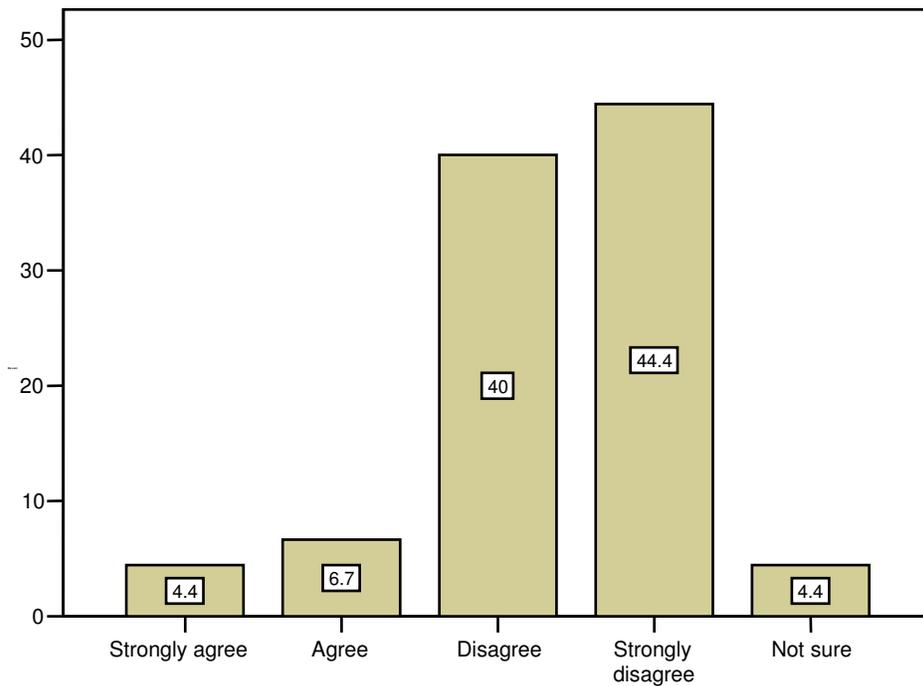


Figure 5-15: Issues that negatively influence women's leadership positions in churches: Women are not naturally pure (menstruation/pregnancy)

This question has a cultural connotation. Some people go as far as quoting Leviticus chapter 12 .In verse four of this chapter, it is written that a woman must not touch anything that is holy or enter the sacred tent until the time of her purification is completed. The aim was to find out to what extent this view has influenced our respondents in their attitude towards women's leadership. A Cumulative 11.1% of respondents agreed with the thinking that women are impure because of menstruation and pregnancy has a negative influence on their leadership positions. But a greater percentage of respondents (a cumulative 84.4%) did not think so any more. This is the good news that Christ has liberated women from the law that kept them in bondage. (cf. Figure 5-15; Table 5:15).

Percentage of women on Church Boards (Q16)

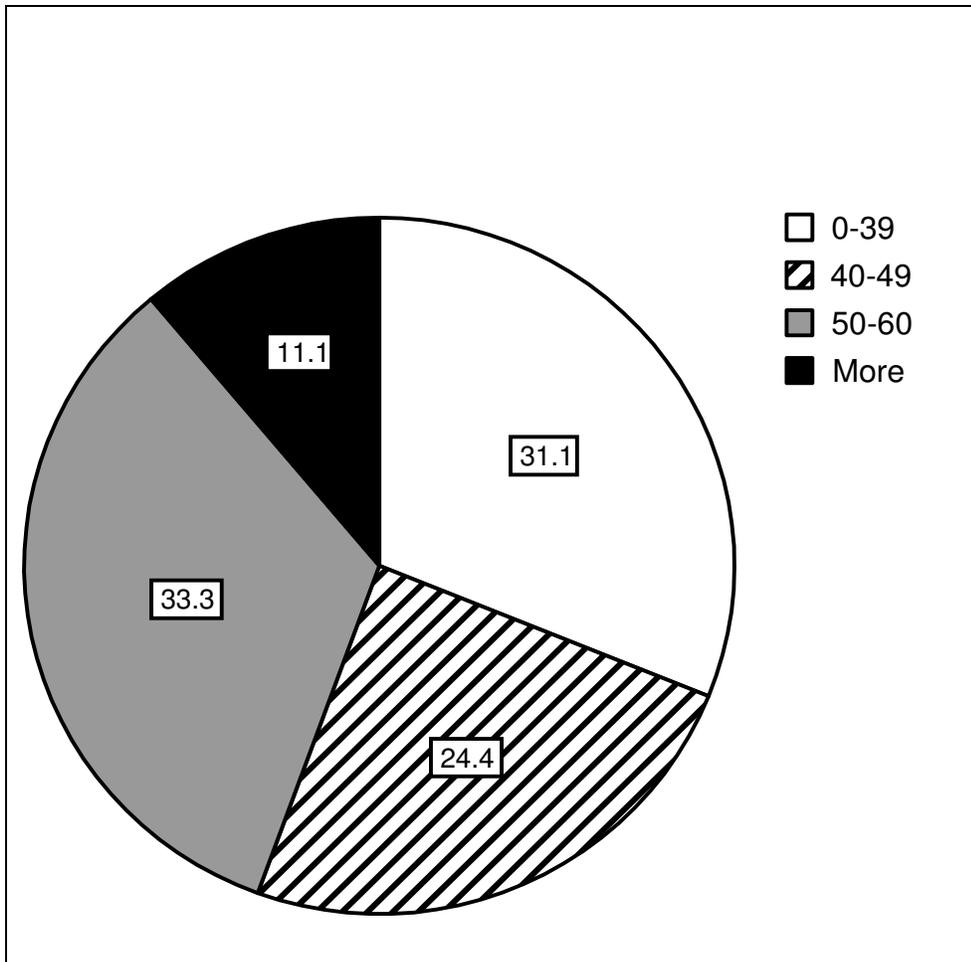


Figure 5-16: What percentage of women are Board members in your Parish?

The Board is one of the leadership/management bodies of PCN parishes. Although the General Assembly of the Church had approved 1/3 representation of women at all meetings, this question sought to find out how much space women occupy in the actual leadership position. Figure 5-16 (cf. Table 5-16) shows that a cumulative 55.5% of respondents indicated that less than 50% of Board memberships are filled by women. It is a point of concern to note that women, who constitute more than 75% of the different parishes, were not able to reach a comparative percentage in the Church leadership. Could this be a case of the minority lording authority over the majority?

5.3.12 Greatest challenges facing women: Lack of education (Q17)

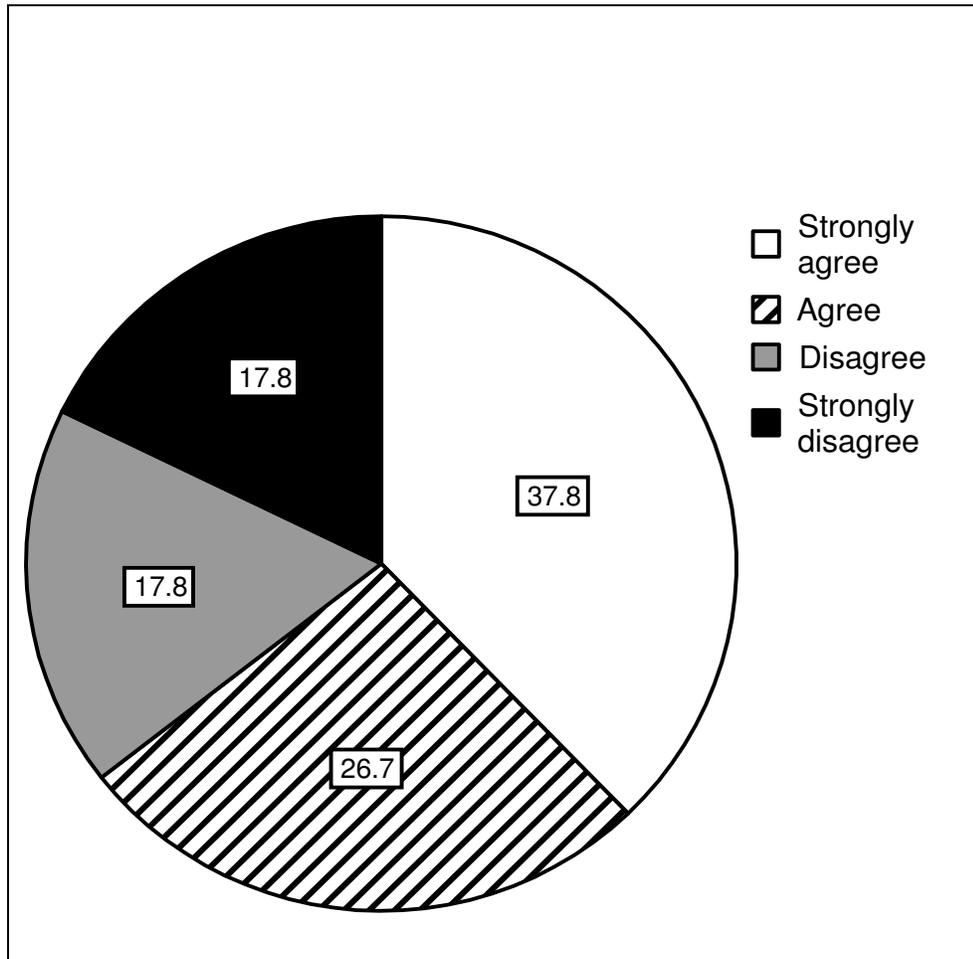


Figure 5-17: The greatest challenges faced by women in church leadership: Lack of Education

From Figure 5-17 (Table 5-17), it is clear that a cumulative 64.5% of respondents agreed that lack of education is one of the greatest challenges facing women in church leadership; a cumulative 35.6% of respondents disagreed. The need for women's education cannot be over emphasised. Women cannot be empowered successfully in other areas of human endeavour if they are not empowered educationally. In chapter four of this dissertation the need for women's education was stressed. It was also seen as one of the key issues that needs urgent attention both in church and government. The reason that the education of women was a waste of money and resources in the past affected women terribly and urgent steps must be taken to address this challenge.

5.3.13 Greatest challenges facing women: Negative cultural influence (Q18)

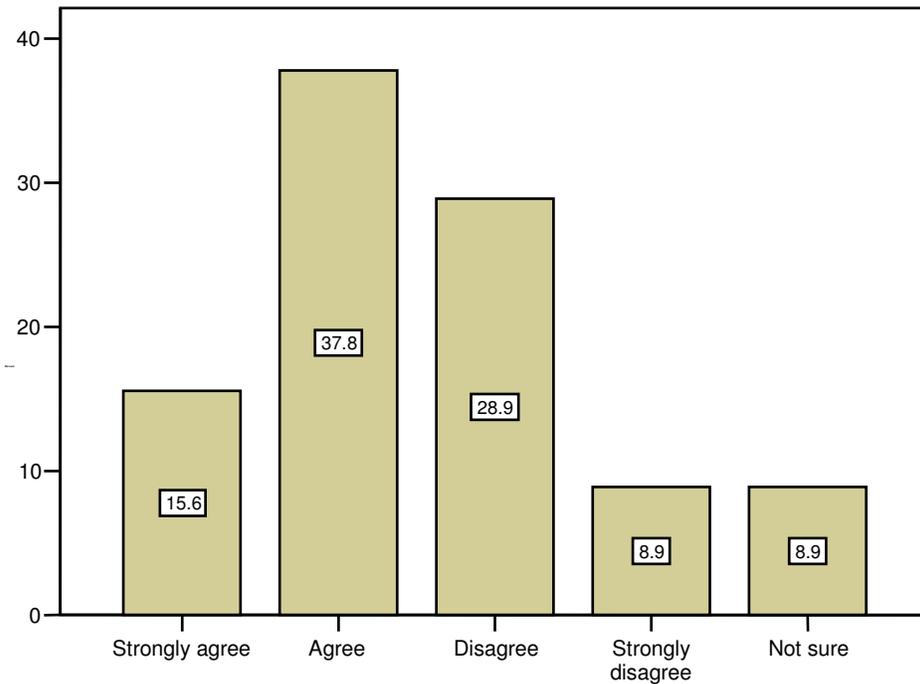


Figure 5-18: The greatest challenges faced by women in church leadership: Negative cultural influence (especially regarding widows)

Other factors affecting the effective integration of women as leaders are negative cultural influences. Figure 5-18 (Table 5-18) shows that 15.6% and 37.8% of respondents “strongly agreed” and “agreed” respectively that a negative cultural influence is one the greatest challenges facing women; while 28.9% and 8.9% of respondents “disagreed” and “strongly disagreed” that negative cultural influence was a challenge. The issue of culture is one that cuts across every facet of the Nigerian society. The proverb that “women in state affairs are like monkeys in glass houses” is an example. Any wonder then why it is difficult for men to allow women space in leadership? But it must be pointed out that good leadership does not depend on gender but on ones ability and availability at any given time to lead.

Greatest challenges facing women: Domestic pressure (Q19)

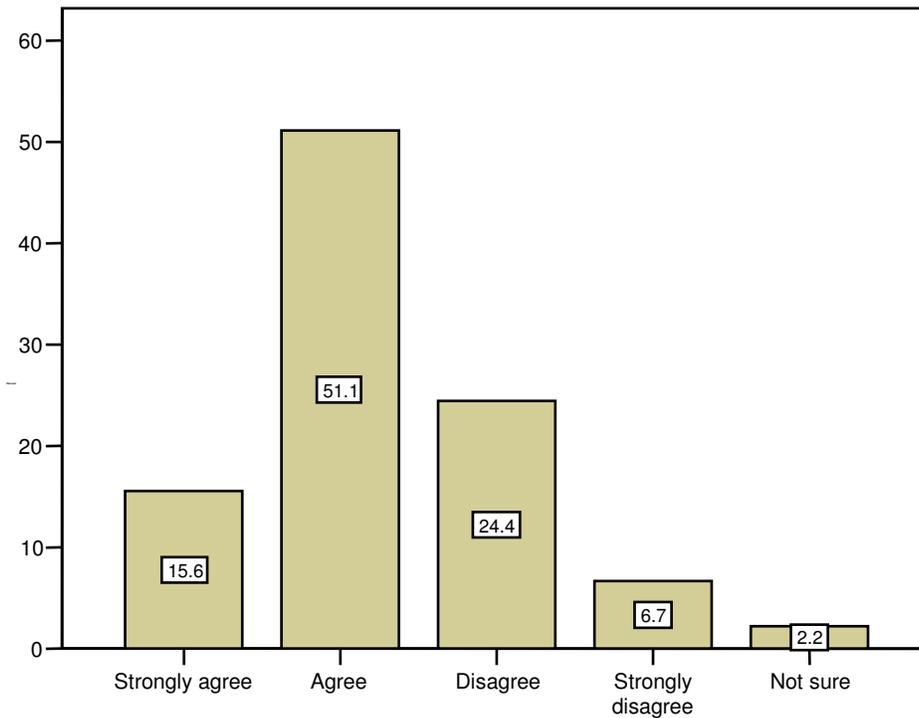


Figure 5-19: The greatest challenges faced by women in church leadership: Domestic pressure

A cumulative 66.7% of respondents thought that domestic pressure is one of the greatest challenges facing women; while a cumulative 31.1% of respondents disagreed (Figure 5-19; cf. Table 5-19). In the Nigerian patriarchal setting, women do most of the domestic work. So this question sought to determine the degree to which this affects women in taking up leadership positions in the churches. Women face domestic pressure from all angles. The pressures come from husbands, in-laws and other relatives. Women hardly have time for self development. In some cases they are expected to be engaged in child-bearing most of your lives. In a situation where a woman has 6-10 children, the chances of self development will be very lean because raising up of children is not an easy task especially when left in the hands of mothers alone as the cases are in most communities in Nigeria.

5.3.14 Greatest challenges facing women: Lack of interest on their part (Q20)

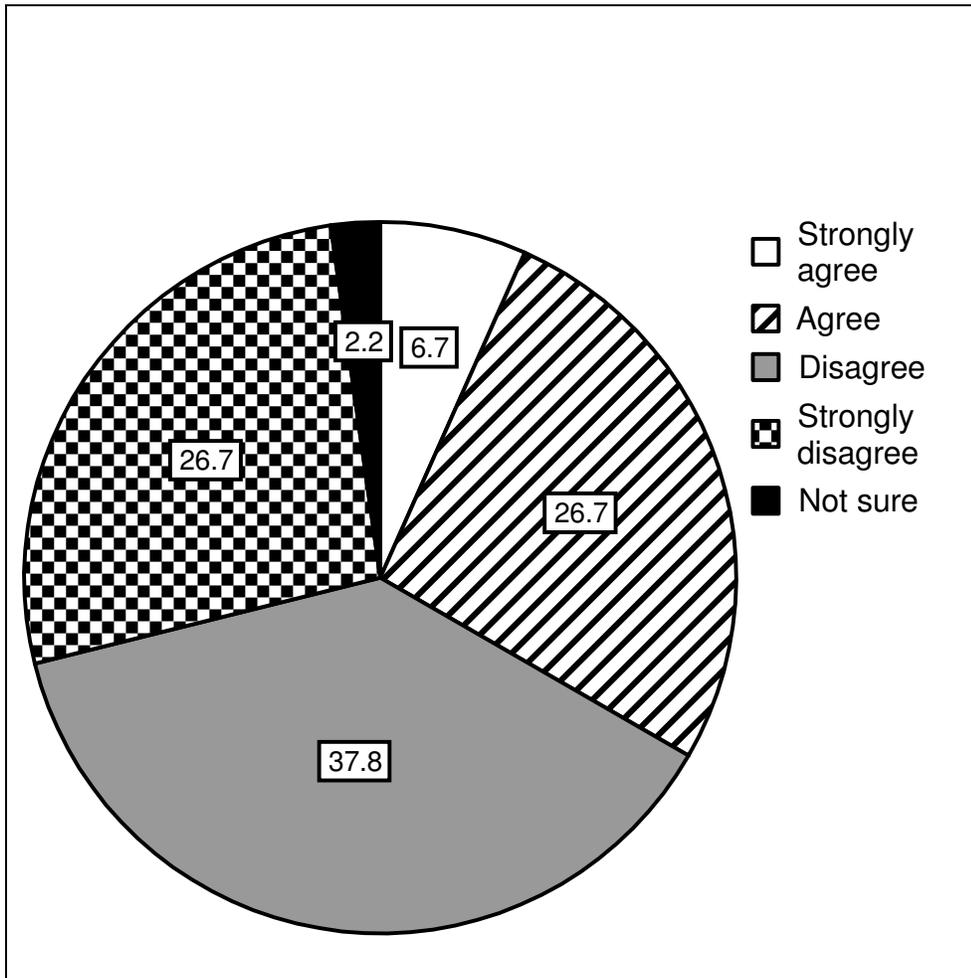


Figure 5-20: The greatest challenges faced by women in church leadership: Lack of interest on their part

Figure 5-20 (cf. Table 5-20) indicates that a cumulative 33.4% of respondents agreed that lack of interest on the part of women is one of the greatest challenges facing women in church leadership; while a cumulative 64.5% disagreed that it is lack of interest on the part of women that is working against their participation in church leadership. The structural injustice in the church which is as a result of patriarchy, is part of what works against women. In cases where women have shown interest to work for the church and to serve God with their potentials, they have most times been reminded that they are women trying to do men's job. However, women should show more interest and should not loose heart in their struggles to attain the leadership positions in the church.

5.3.15 The best way to encourage women's leadership: Education (Q21)

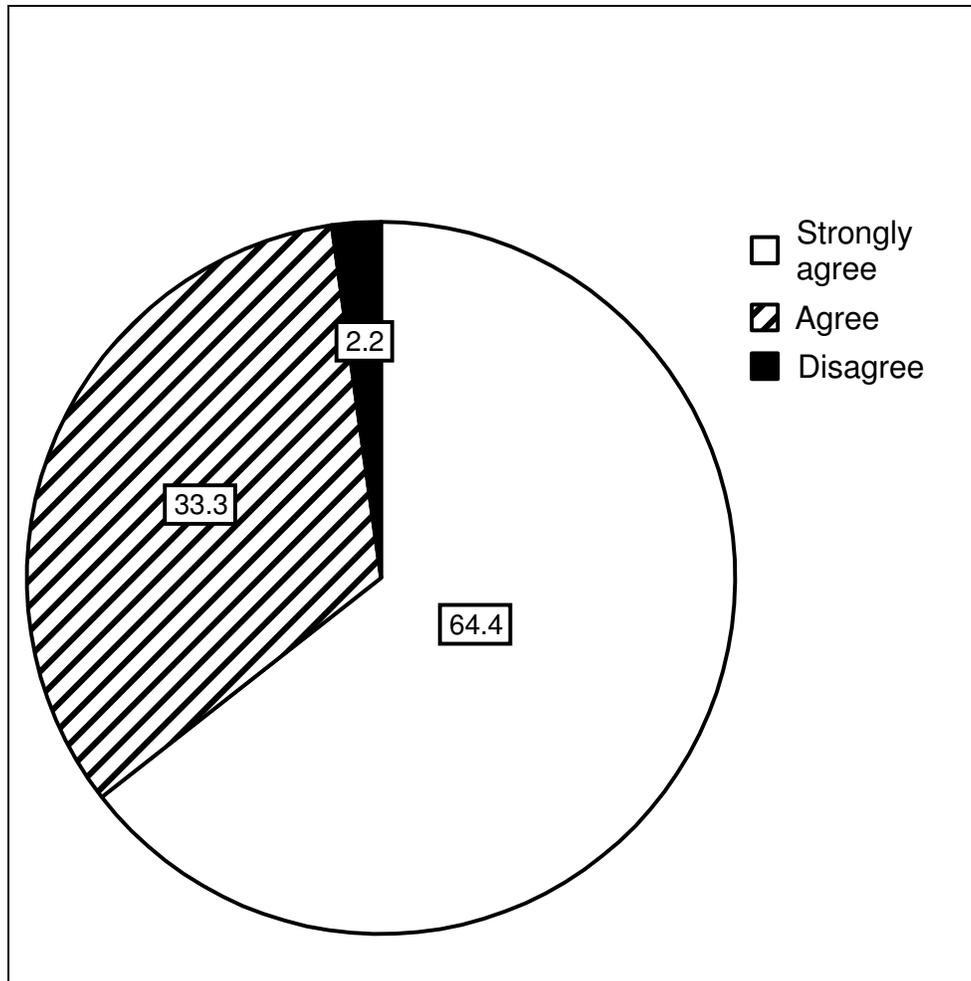


Figure 5-21: What do you think is the best way to encourage women to become more involved in the church's leadership? Educate them.

The next group of questions sought to verify some of the possible ways by which women could be encouraged to participate in church leadership. Figure 5-21 (cf. Table 5-21) shows that a cumulative 97.7% of respondents agreed that the education of women is one of the best ways to encourage them; while 2.2% of respondents disagreed. As has been said earlier in this chapter, the need for women's education cannot be over emphasised. Almost 100% of the respondents agree to the fact that nothing can replace women's education. A society or church which does not take the education of its women seriously is working towards failure.

5.3.16 The best way to encourage women's leadership: Free access to leadership (Q22)

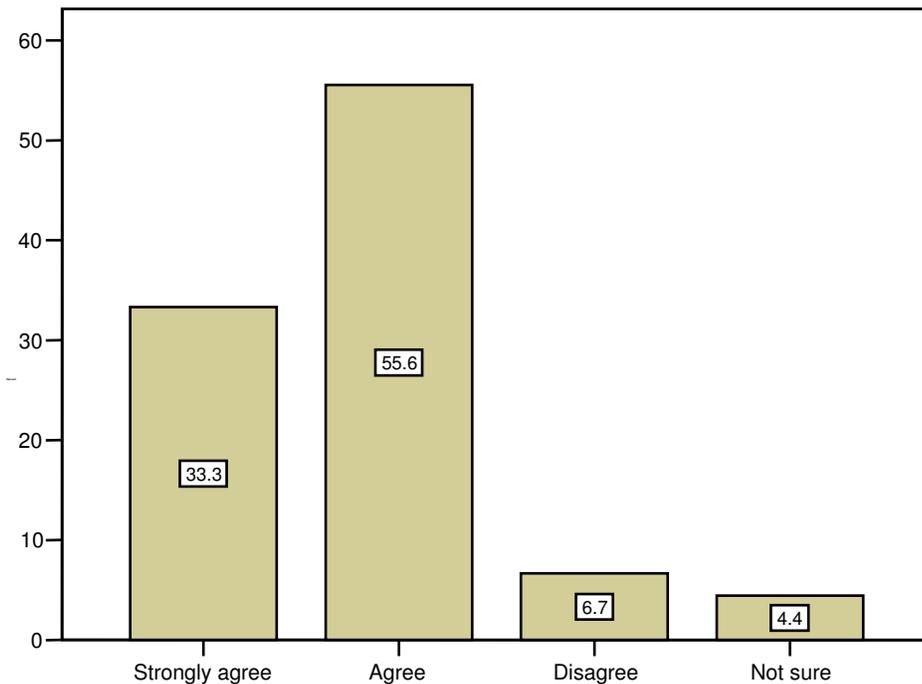


Figure 5-22: What do you think is the best way to encourage women to become more involved in the church's leadership?: Allow more women into leadership positions.

The question suggested that access to leadership is more open to men than it is to women. It was an attempt to evaluate the willingness of the churches to accept women's leadership. A cumulative 88.9% of respondents agreed that more women should be allowed to participate in leadership positions; while a cumulative 11.1% of respondents disagreed or were unsure. Apparently, there is a very high level of acceptance of women's leadership (cf. Figure 5-22; Table 5-22). Still, this openness is with some reservations: whereas women's leadership is generally accepted, this research (see Q 10) shows that people are not comfortable with the

thought of having a woman at the apex of church leadership.

The best way to encourage women's leadership: Punish cultural perpetrators (Q23)

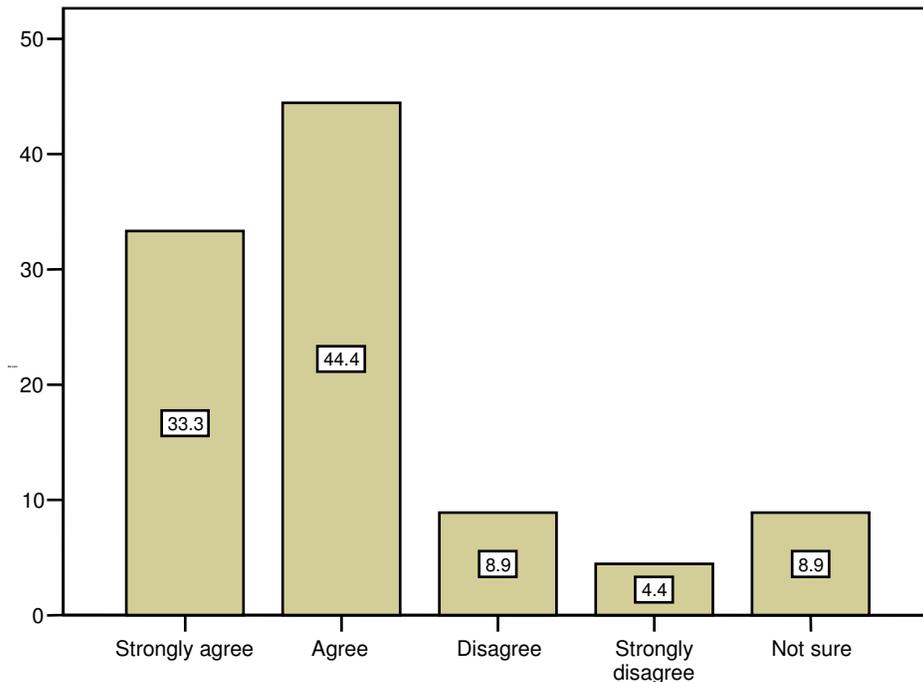


Figure 5-23: What do you think is the best way to encourage women to become more involved in the church's leadership?: Punish perpetrators of cultural oppression against women.

From Figure 5-23 (cf. Table 5-23), it can be shown that a cumulative 77.7% of respondents agreed that perpetrators of cultural oppression against women should be punished; a cumulative 13.3% of respondents disagreed. It is a fact that some of the perpetrators of cultural oppression against women are leaders in the church. Some of the male leaders deny widows of the right to their inheritance by discouraging them from pursuing such rights. From the views of the respondents if perpetrators of cultural oppression are punished, women will have more freedom and confidence in themselves to participate in the leadership positions of the church. But because some leaders are involved in this act, they would not want to uphold this policy of punishing perpetrators.

5.3.17 The best way to encourage women's leadership: policy on equal participation (Q24)

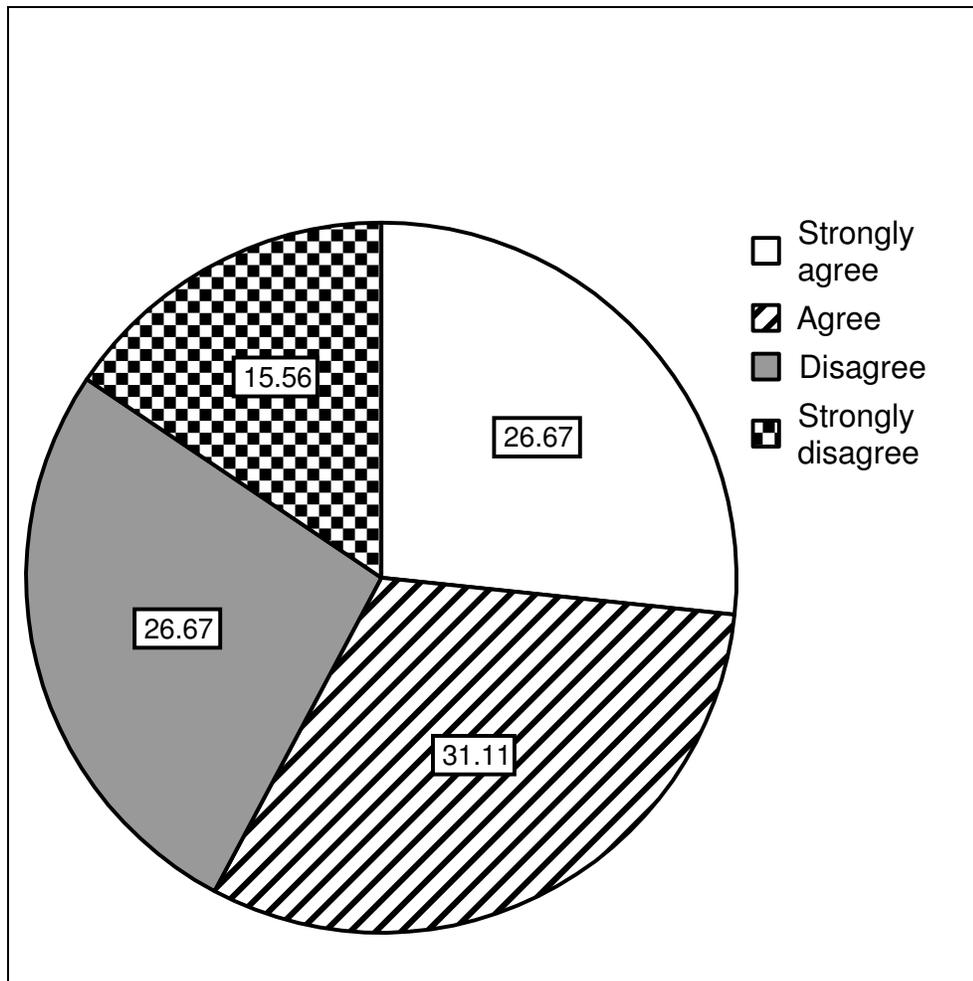


Figure 5-24: What do you think is the best way to encourage women to become more involved in the church's leadership? Deliberate policy for equal participation of male/female members in all board/committee meetings

Figure 5-24 (cf. Table 5-24) shows that a cumulative 57.78% of respondents think the church should have a deliberate policy for equal participation of male/female in all boards/committee meetings, while a cumulative 42.23% of respondents disagreed. Having deliberate policy is one thing and having a change in attitude is another. Men in the church should start seeing women as co-workers and partners. The fear that women are trying to take up what belongs to men should be erased. In a church where women have greater number of membership justice demands that they at least have equal members as men in the decision making bodies of the church.

5.4 GOVERNMENT

5.4.1 The Percentage of Women on the staff Roll (QQ2)

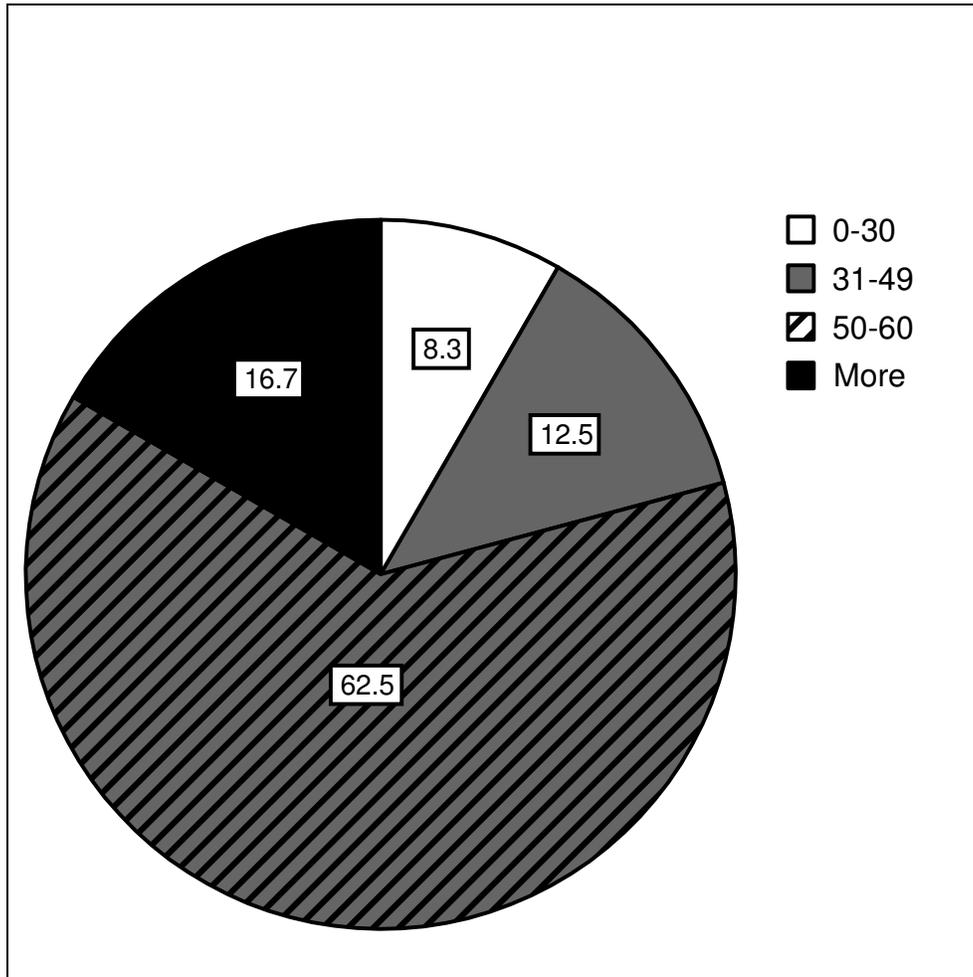


Figure 5-26: How would you rate the percentage of women on your staff roll?

The purpose of this question was to ascertain the population of women on the staff roll of the government, using the Abia State Public Service as our case study. From the answers given to this question, one may be right in saying that we have more women than men in the government, just as in the church. According to the respondents, the percentage of women is more than 50% (cf. Figure 5-26; Table 5-26). Although women are more in number on the government pay roll, the next question dealt with whether or not they have enough space to use their potential in government. The next question will lead us to that.

5.4.2 Space for women in the establishment (QQ3)

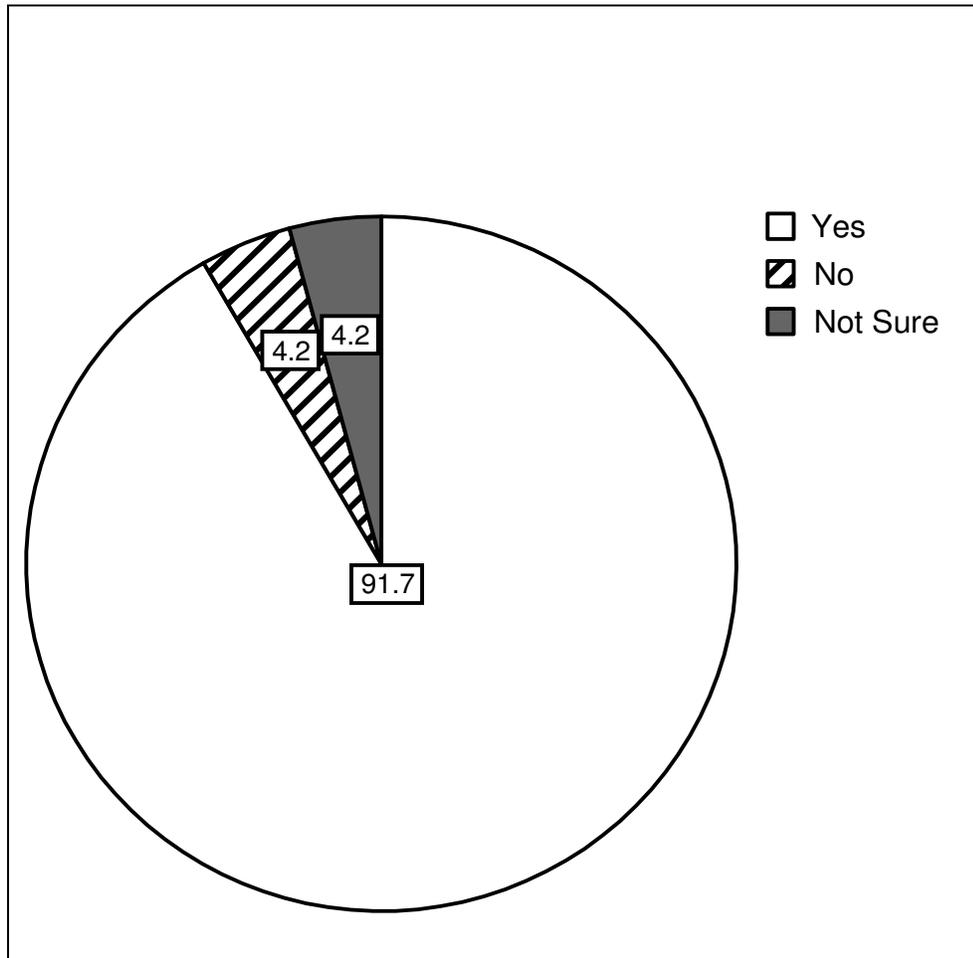


Figure 5-27: Do you think women have enough space to use their potential in your establishment?

The purpose of this question was to find out whether women have enough space to apply their talents in government. Three options were given to the respondents: Yes; No; and Not sure. Figure 5.27 shows that 91.7% of respondents replied YES; 4.2% did not agree to this, while 4.2% were not sure (cf. Table 5-27). Apparently, this return indicates that women have enough space to express their potential. But another question is why is it that women's voices are not heard if they are allowed to use their potential or talents? Do women have this freedom in all areas of government or are there areas from which they are excluded? The next question gives us an idea of the level of acceptance of female leadership.

5.4.3 Are you comfortable with women's leadership? (QQ4)

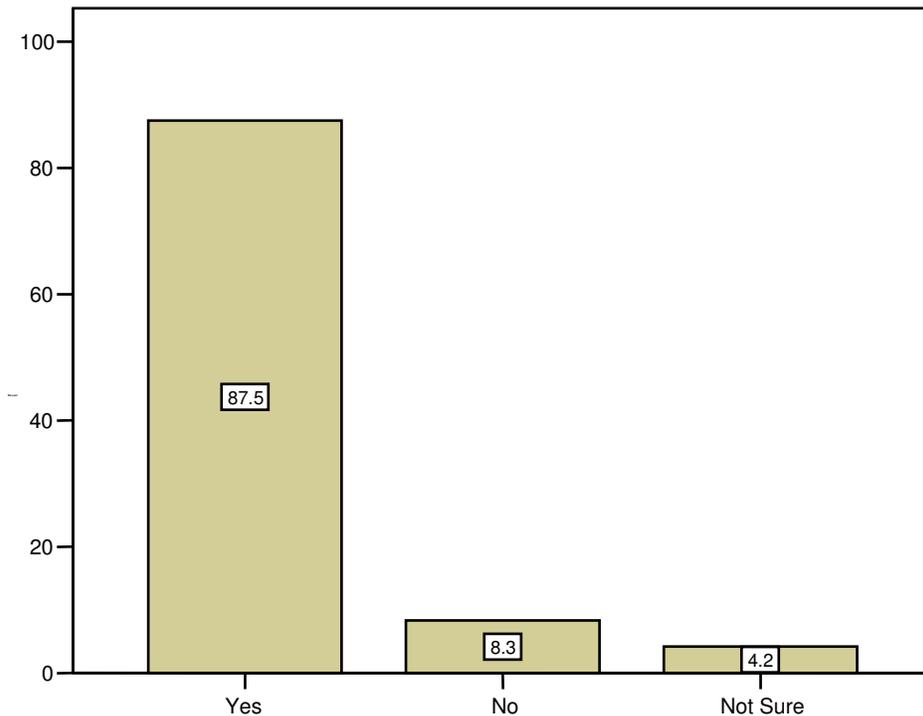


Figure 5-28: Are you/will you be comfortable with the leadership of women in your establishment?

Figure 5-28 (cf. Table 5-28) indicates that 87.5% of respondents answered in the affirmative about being comfortable with the leadership of women in their establishments. It must be observed here that for decades the government of Nigeria has been in the hands of men. The domination of men in all affairs in the country is a well known fact. It is encouraging that a greater percentage of the respondents answered in the affirmative that they would be comfortable with the leadership of women in their establishments. Let us look at the next table to see how much space women actually occupy in the leadership of these establishments.

5.4.4 Percentage of women in decision-making bodies (QQ5)

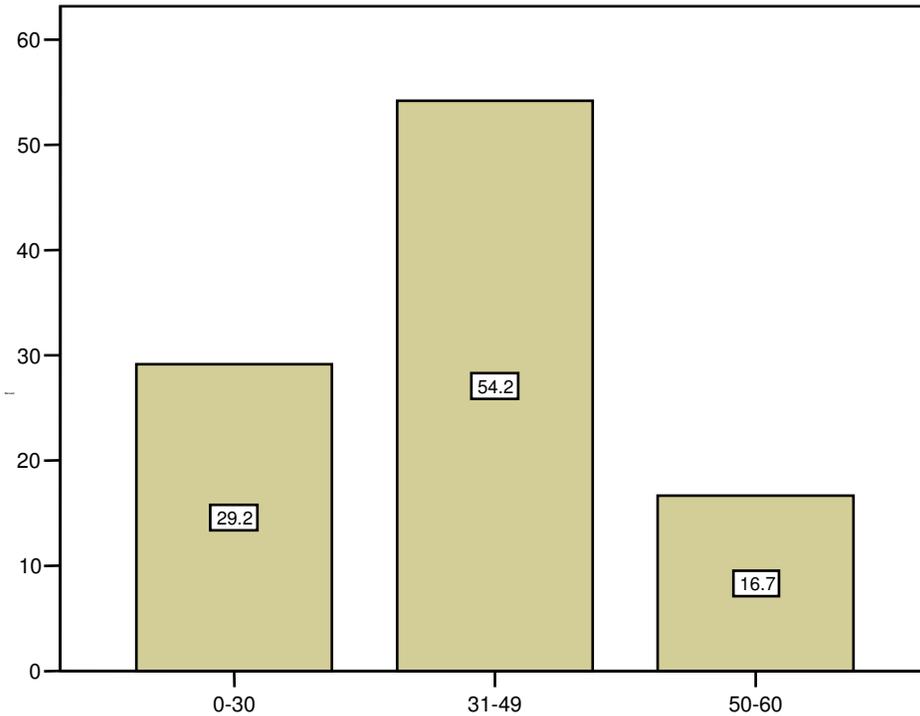


Figure 5-29: What percentage of women are members of your Boards/Decision-making bodies?

From Figure 5-29 (cf. Table 5-29), we see that there are more women on the pay roll and the number of those who would be happy under the leadership of women is more, but the reality on ground is that women do not comprise up to 50% of the Boards/Decision-making bodies of government. A cumulative 83.4% of respondents indicated that the percentage of women in decision-making bodies was less than 50; while 16.7% respondents claimed they comprised more than 50%.

5.4.5 Are women active in state politics? (QQ6)

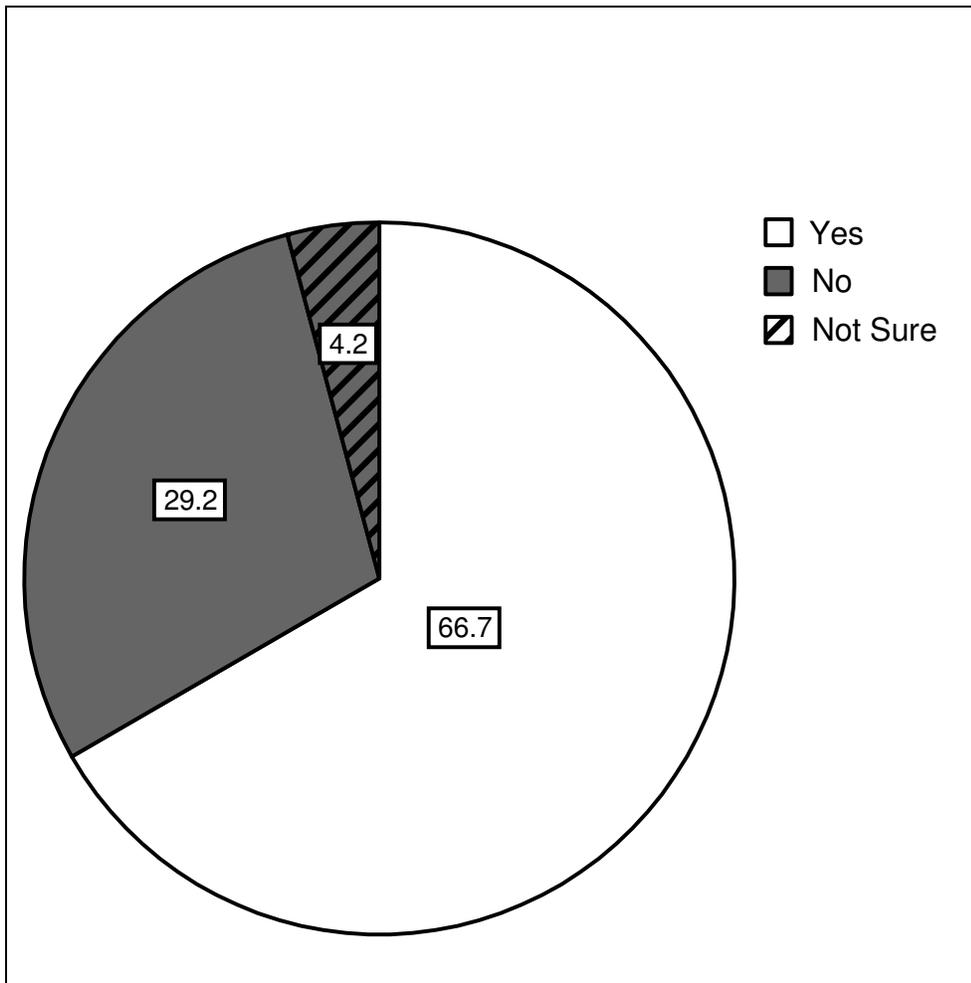


Figure 5-30: Are women active in politics in your state and/or local government?

From the answers given by respondents as reflected in the chart above, we see that women are active in the political activities of the State/Local Government. 66.7% of respondents agreed that women were very active in state/local government politics; 29.2% respondents disagreed (cf. Figure 5-30; Table 5-30).

5.4.6 Is women's participation in politics a priority for the nation? (QQ7)

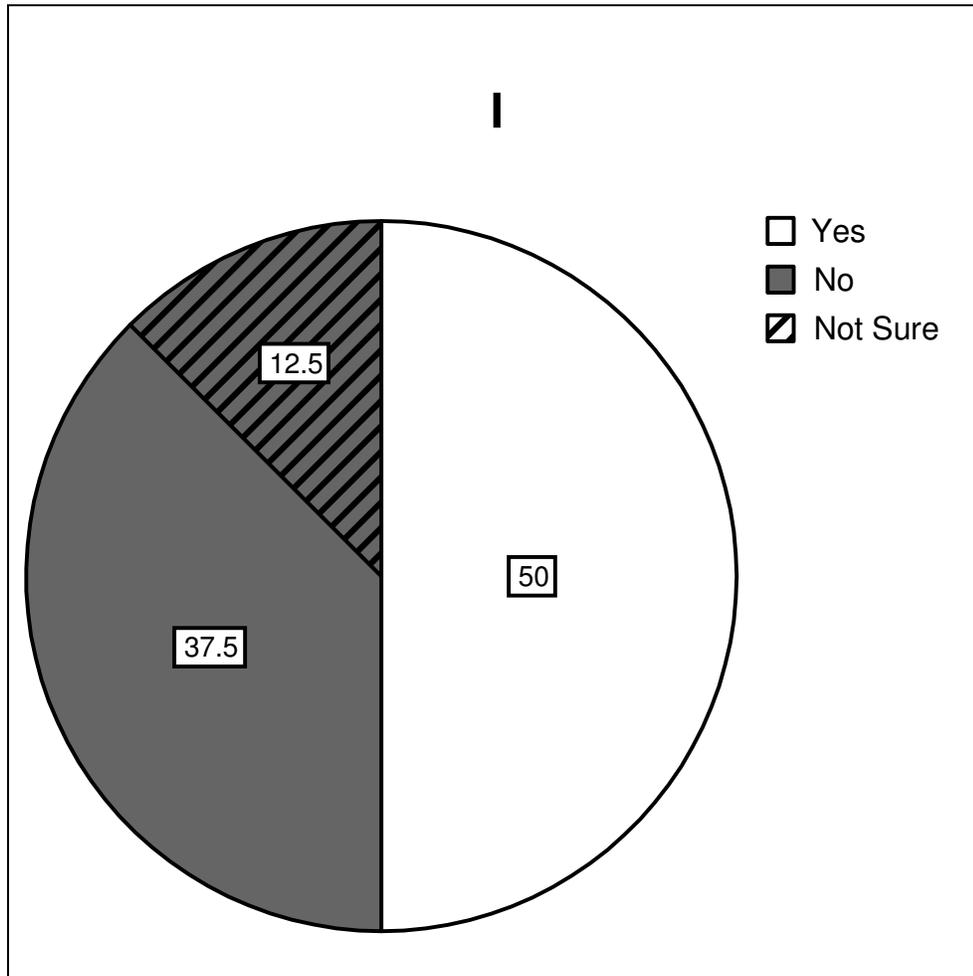


Figure 5-31: Is women's participation in politics a priority for the Nation?

When asked whether the political activities of women were seen as a priority for the Nigerian Government, 50% of respondents answered is in the affirmative; No answers amounted to 37.5% and 12.5% of respondents were unsure (cf. Figure 5-31; Table 5-31). One wonders why few women have joined in contesting elective positions in the local government or the state, if their participation was a priority for the nation. Could there be other influencing factors?

5.4.7 Women leadership will improve the economy (QQ8)

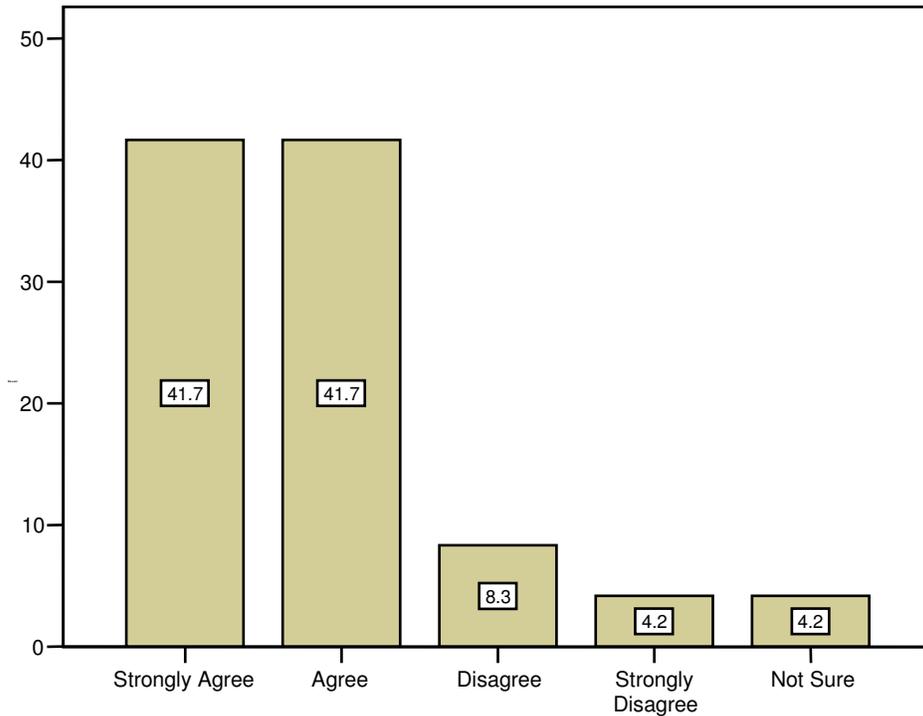


Figure 5-32: Election of women as President/State Governors will improve sanity and the economy of the Nation.

From the responses of the respondents to this question it is assumed that majority of the citizens of the nation of Nigeria would be happy to have a female president, suggesting that the election of a female president would improve sanity and the national economy (cf. Figure 5-32; Table 5-32). It is important to know which obstacles hinder the participation of women in politics. The following questions were aimed at probing the situation further.

5.4.8 Obstacles to women's participation in politics: poor education (QQ9)

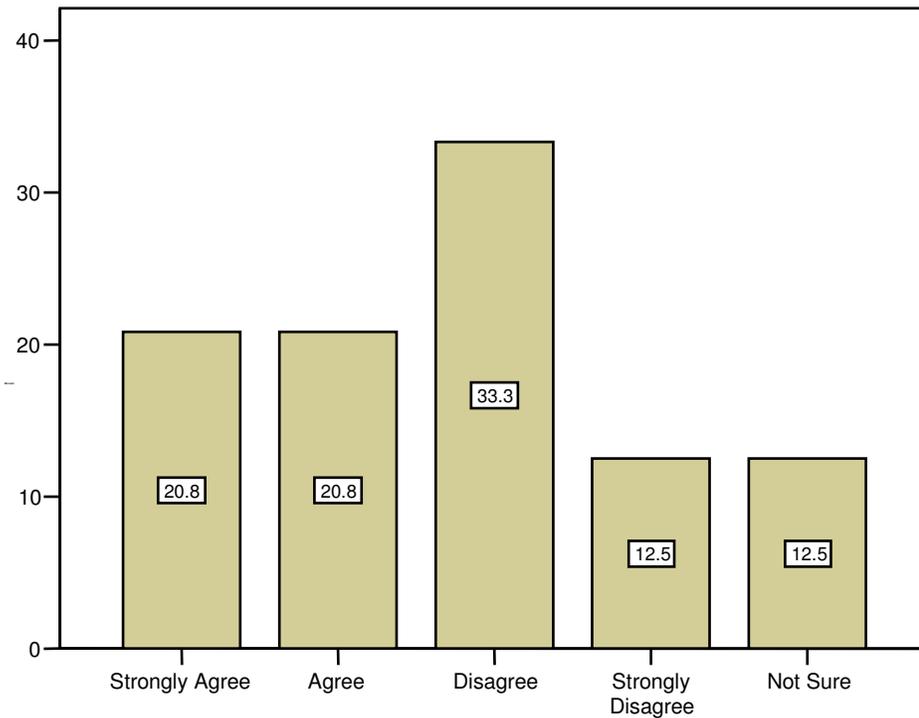


Figure 5-33: There are many obstacles that hinder women's active participation in Politics: Lack of adequate education

This question was highly contested. A cumulative 40.8% of respondents indicated that lack of adequate education was obstructing women from active participation in politics; while a cumulative 45.8% of respondents disagreed; and 12.5% were not sure (cf. Figure 5-33; Table 5-33).

5.4.9 Obstacles to women's participation in politics: Lack of funds (QQ10)

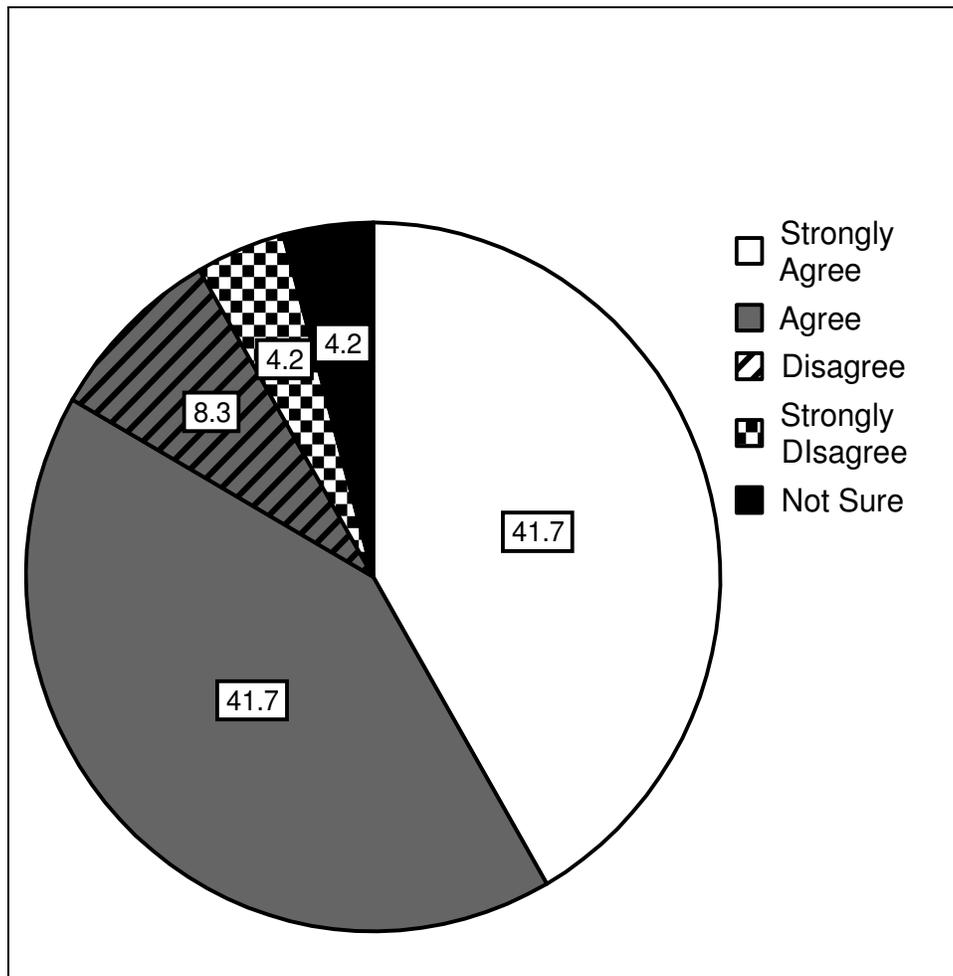


Figure 5-34: There are many obstacles that hinder women's active participation in Politics: Lack of funds.

Figure 5-34 (cf. Table 5-34) shows that a cumulative 83.4% of respondents believed that lack of funds constitute a great obstacle for women in the political race, while a cumulative 12.5% and 4.2% respectively disagreed or were not sure.

5.4.10 Obstacles to women's participation in politics: fear of violence (QQ11)

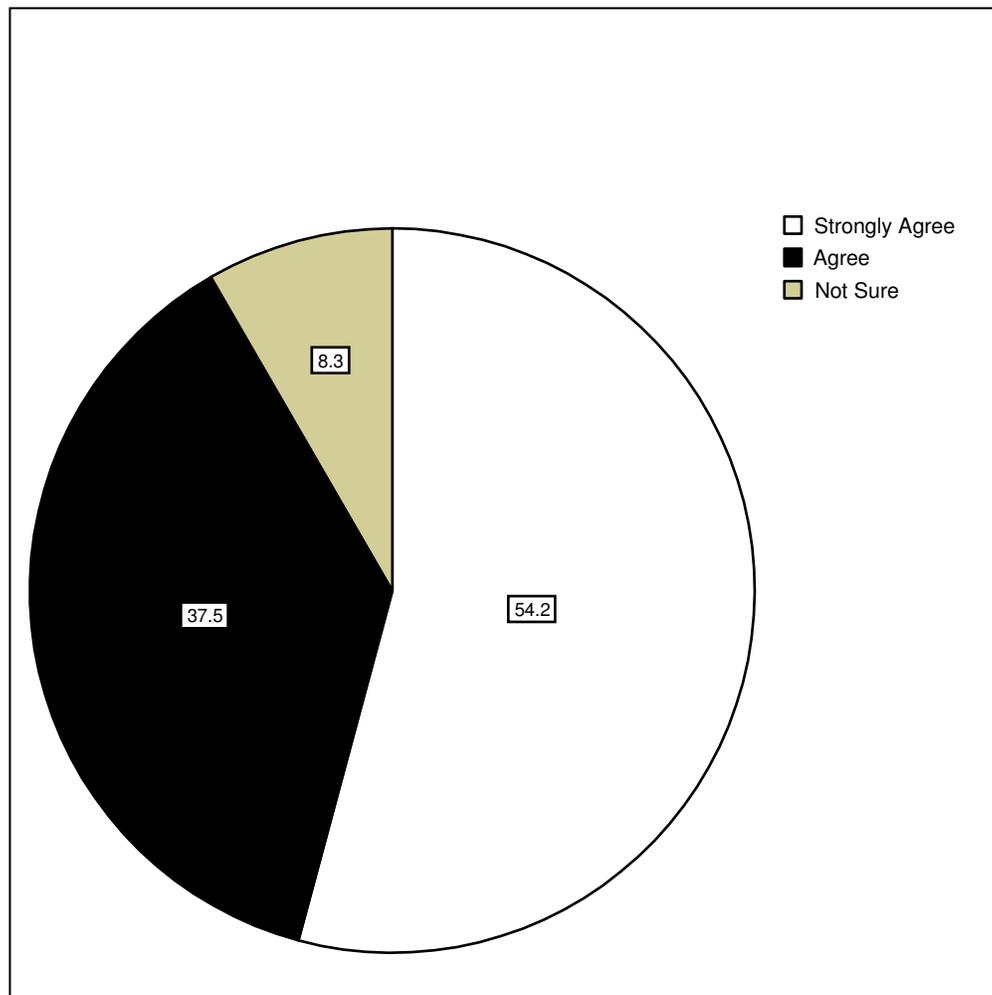


Figure 5-35: There are many obstacles that hinder women's active participation in politics: Fear of violence/night meetings involved.

Most political meetings are held at night and are rowdy. The question tested whether it was fear of violence or night meetings that was hindering women from active participation in politics. A cumulative 91.7% of respondents agreed that fear of violence and night meetings were hindering women from participating actively in politics; while 8.3% of respondents were not sure (cf. Figure 5-35; Table 5-35).

5.4.11 Obstacles to women's participation in politics: culture (QQ12)

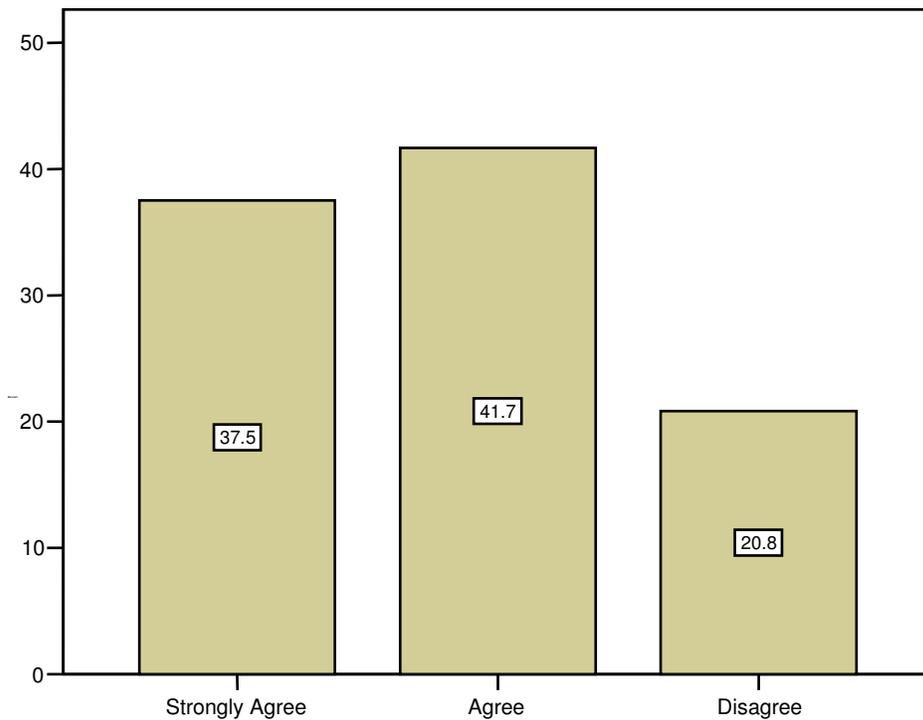


Figure 5-36: There are many obstacles that hinder women's active participation in politics: Negative cultural influences on women

It is also believed that culture plays a negative role in the participation of women in politics. A cumulative 79.2% of respondents agreed that a negative cultural influence on women was one of the obstacles hindering women's active participation in politics; while 20.8% correspondents disagreed (cf. Figure 5-36; Table 5-36).

5.4.12 Obstacles to women's participation in politics: corruption (QQ13)

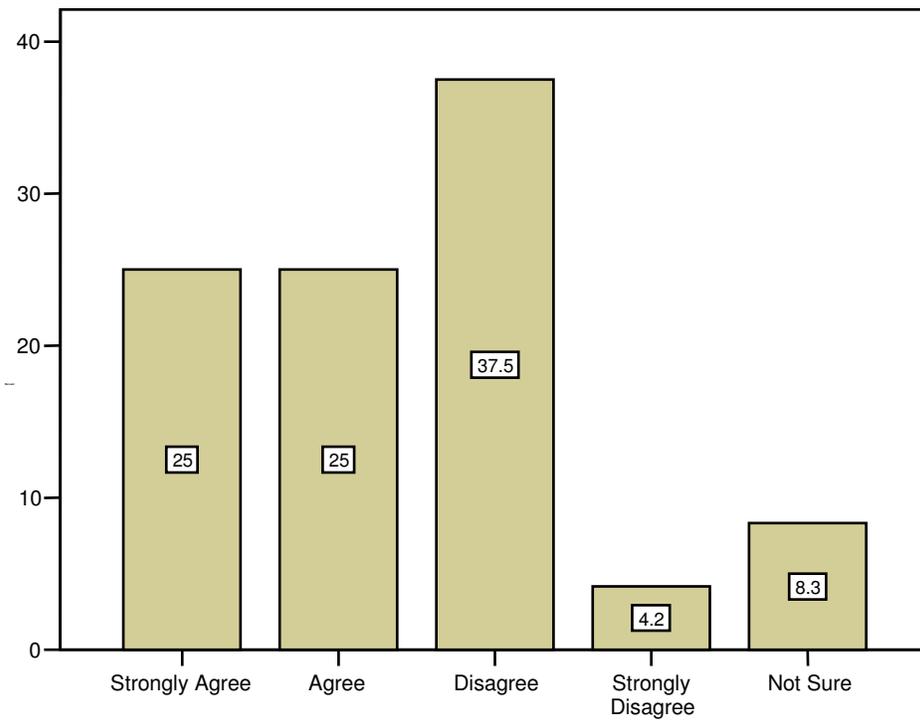


Figure 5-37: There are many obstacles that hinder women's active participation in politics: High level of corruption in the system

A cumulative 50% of the respondents agreed that corruption in the system is a major obstacle that hinders women from participating in political activities; while a cumulative 41.7% disagreed that high levels of corruption hindered women's participation in politics (cf. Figure 5-37; Table 5-37).

5.4.13 Obstacles to women’s participation in politics: lack of political interest on the part of women (QQ14)

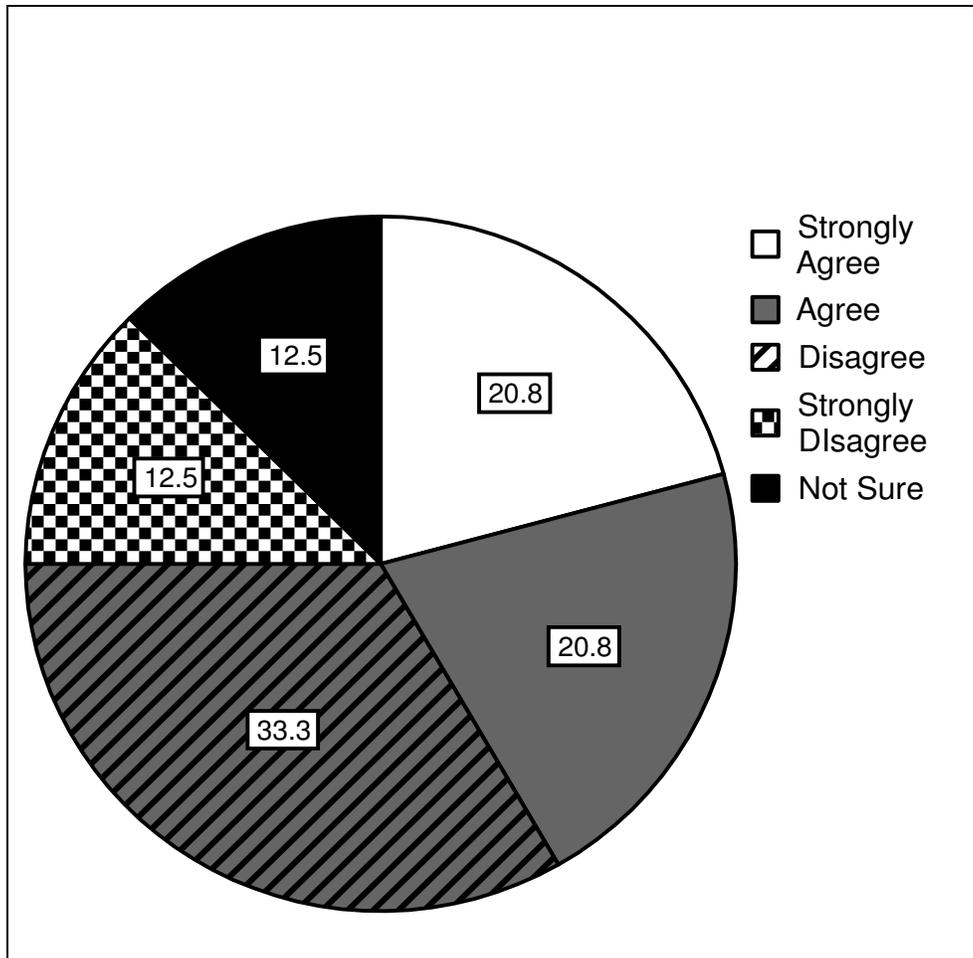


Figure 5-38: Obstacles to women’s participation in politics: lack of political interest on the part of women

A cumulative 41.6% of respondents strongly agreed that lack of interest on the part of women themselves was a major hindrance towards their participation in politics; while a cumulative 45.8% disagreed and 12.5% were not sure (cf. Figure 5-38; Table 5-38).

5.4.14 The best way to encourage women: educate them (QQ15)

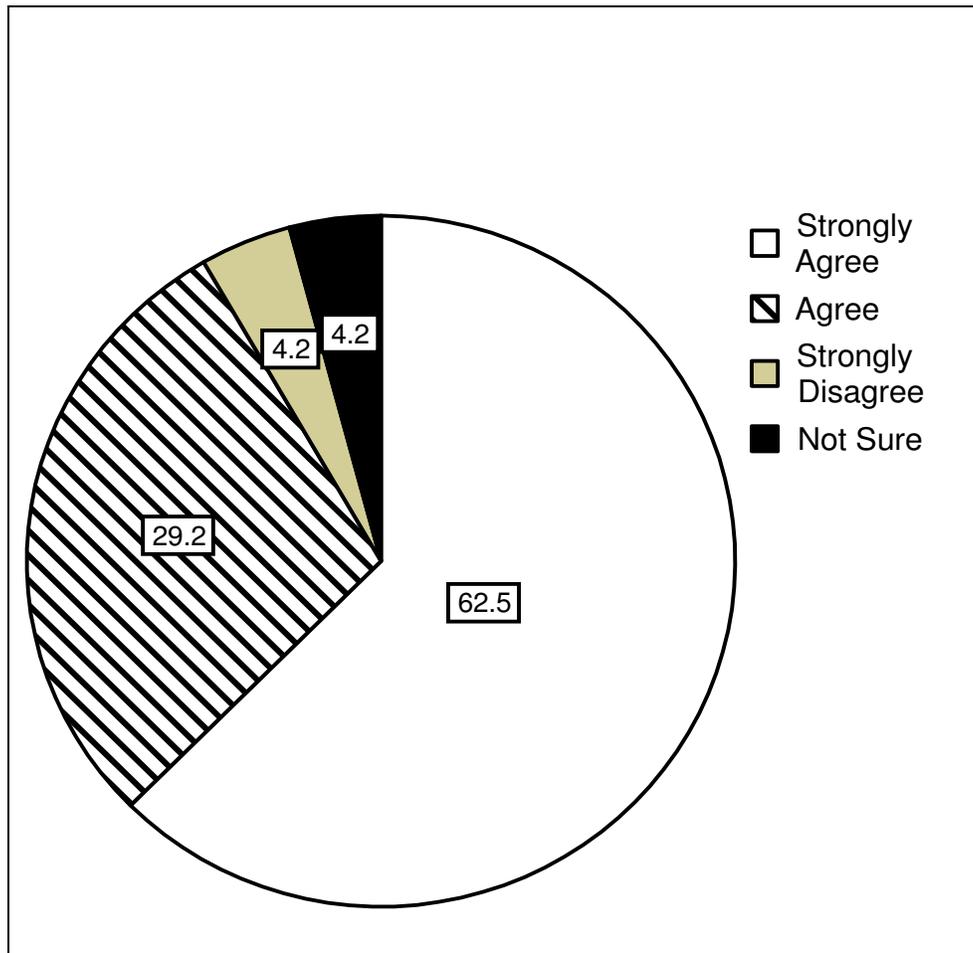


Figure 5-39: What do you think is the best way to encourage women to become more involved in politics? Encourage the education of women.

Figure 5-39 (cf. Table 5:39) indicates that the respondents who agreed that the education of women was a way to encourage their involvement in politics returned a valid 91.7% (62.5% + 29.2%) affirmative answer. Even though the majority of the respondents believed that lack of education was not a major hindrance to women's participation in politics, a cumulative 8.4% of respondents disagreed that the education of women would encourage them to participate in politics.

5.4.15 The best way to encourage women: Remove violence (QQ16)

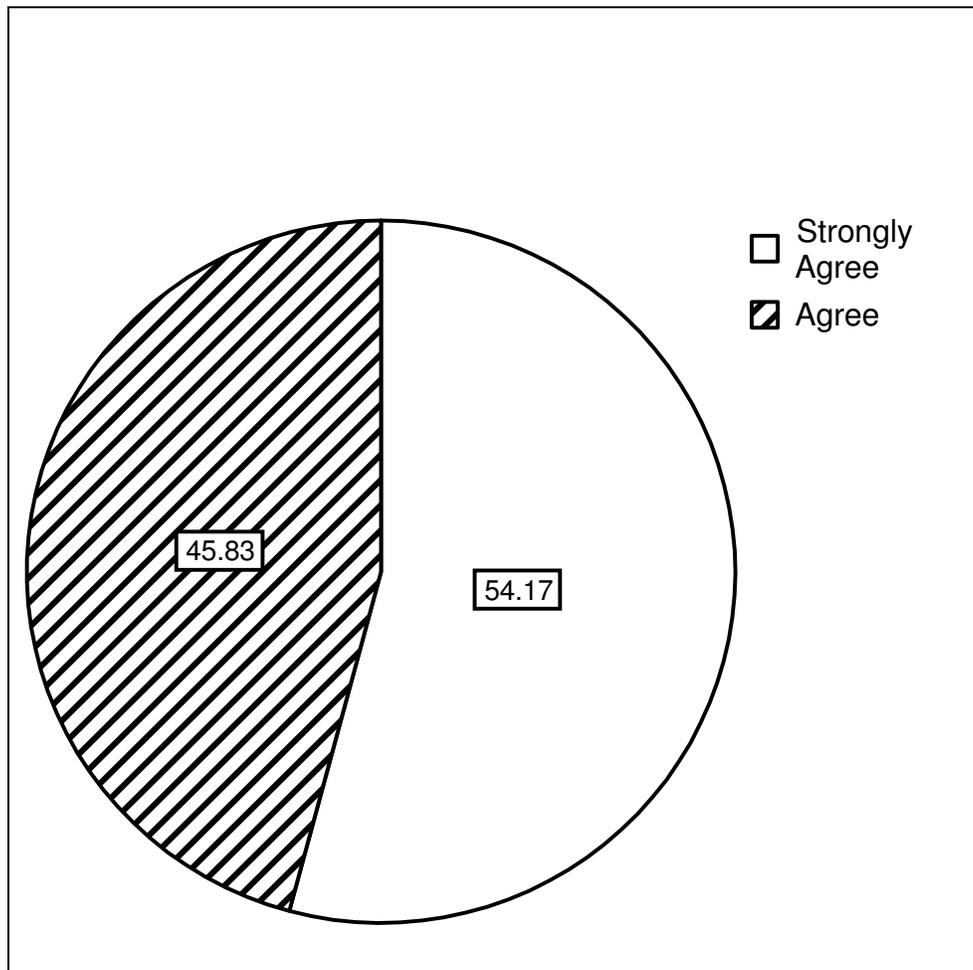


Figure 5-40: What do you think is the best way to encourage women to become more involved in politics? Remove violence/night meetings

A cumulative 100% of respondents agreed that the removal of violence/night meetings would encourage women's participation in the political activities of our nation. There was no respondent who disagreed (cf. Figure 5-40; Table 5-40). The nation should consider this very point if they really want to encourage women in the political life of Nigeria.

5.4.16 The best way to encourage women: encourage partnership (QQ17)

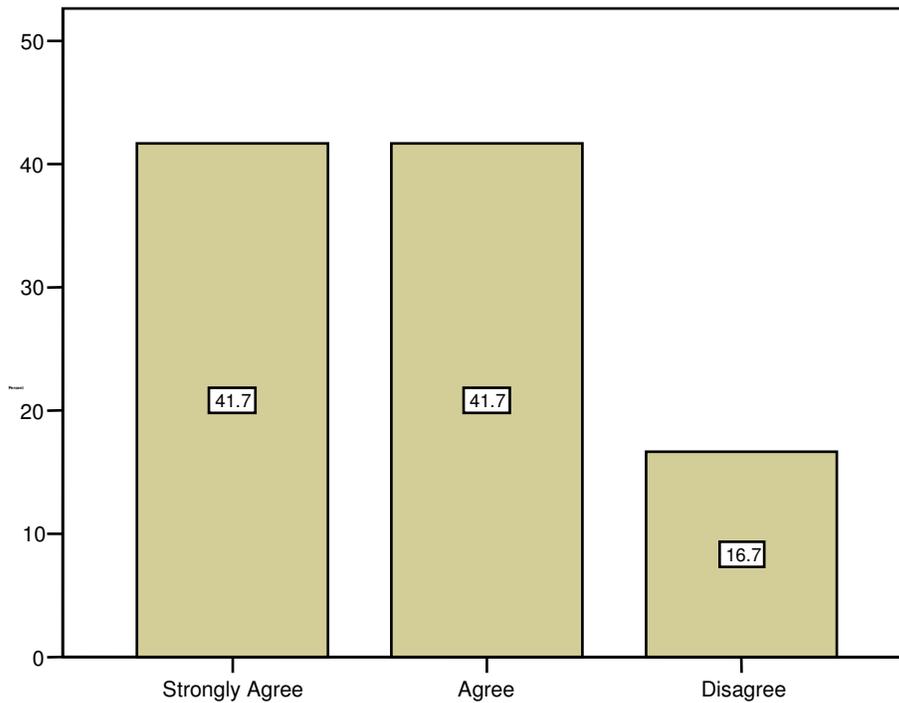


Figure 5-41: What do you think is the best way to encourage women to become more involved in politics? Encourage partnership between men and women

From the Figure 5-41 (cf. Table 5-41) it is clear that a cumulative 83.4% of respondents think that partnership between men and women should be encouraged if the nation really wants the involvement of women in politics. Only 16.7% of respondents disagreed.

5.4.17 The best way to encourage women: Punish cultural perpetrators (QQ18)

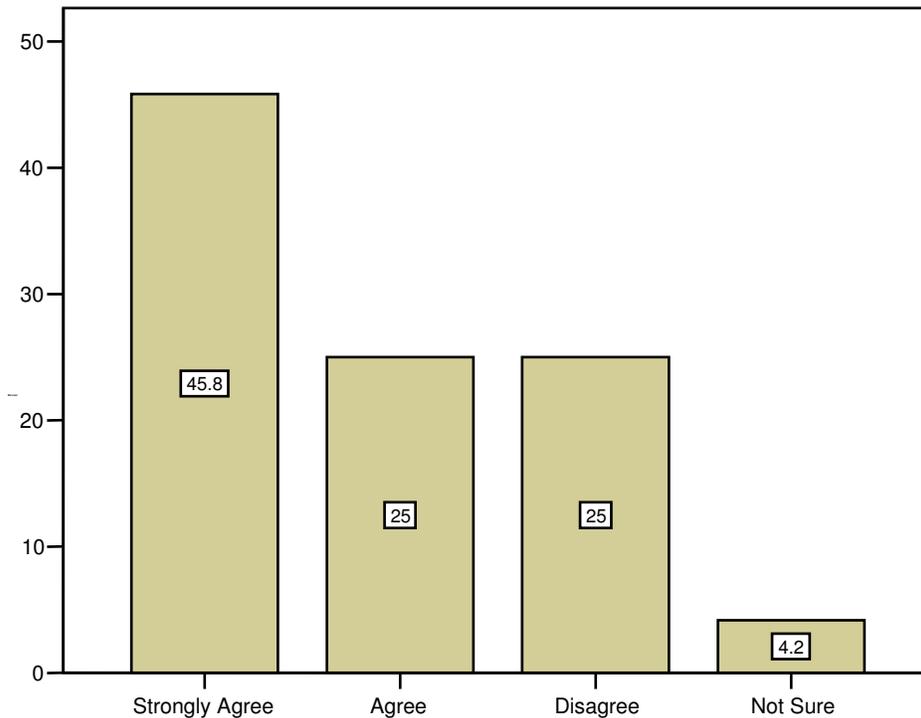


Figure 5-42: What do you think is the best way to encourage women to become more involved in politics? Punish perpetrators of cultural oppression against women

The respondents strongly agreed that perpetrators of cultural oppression against women should be punished in order to allow women free participation in the political activities of the Nation and of States. Figure 5-42 (cf. Table 5-42) shows that a cumulative 70.8% of respondents agreed that the perpetrators of cultural oppression against women should be punished; while 25% and 4.2% respondents either objected or were not sure of what to answer. Apparently, most of the respondents affirmed that there are perpetrators of cultural oppression against women in our society.

5.4.18 The best way to encourage women: Provide funds (QQ19)

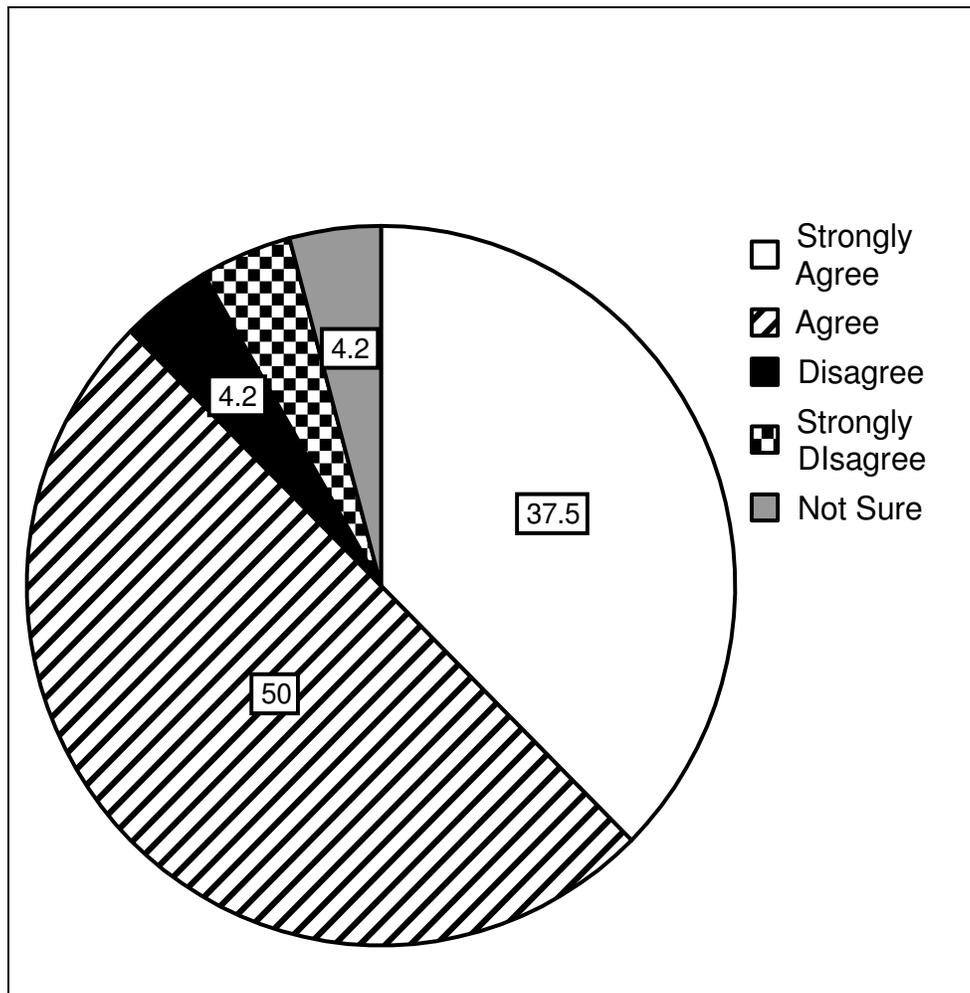


Figure 5-43: What do you think is the best way to encourage women to become more involved in politics? Provide funds for political activities.

In Nigeria today, the wealth of the nation is mostly in the hands of men, and those women who indicated interest in political positions have not had any means of funding their interest. The aim of the question was to draw the attention of the government to the need for funding political activities and not leaving it in the hands of the few who are controlling the wealth. A cumulative 85.7% of respondents agreed that funds should be provided for women to be involved in political activities; apparently this would boost their confidence for further participation in politics (cf. Figure 5-43; Table 5-43).

5.4.19 Is a Gender Commission necessary? (QQ20)

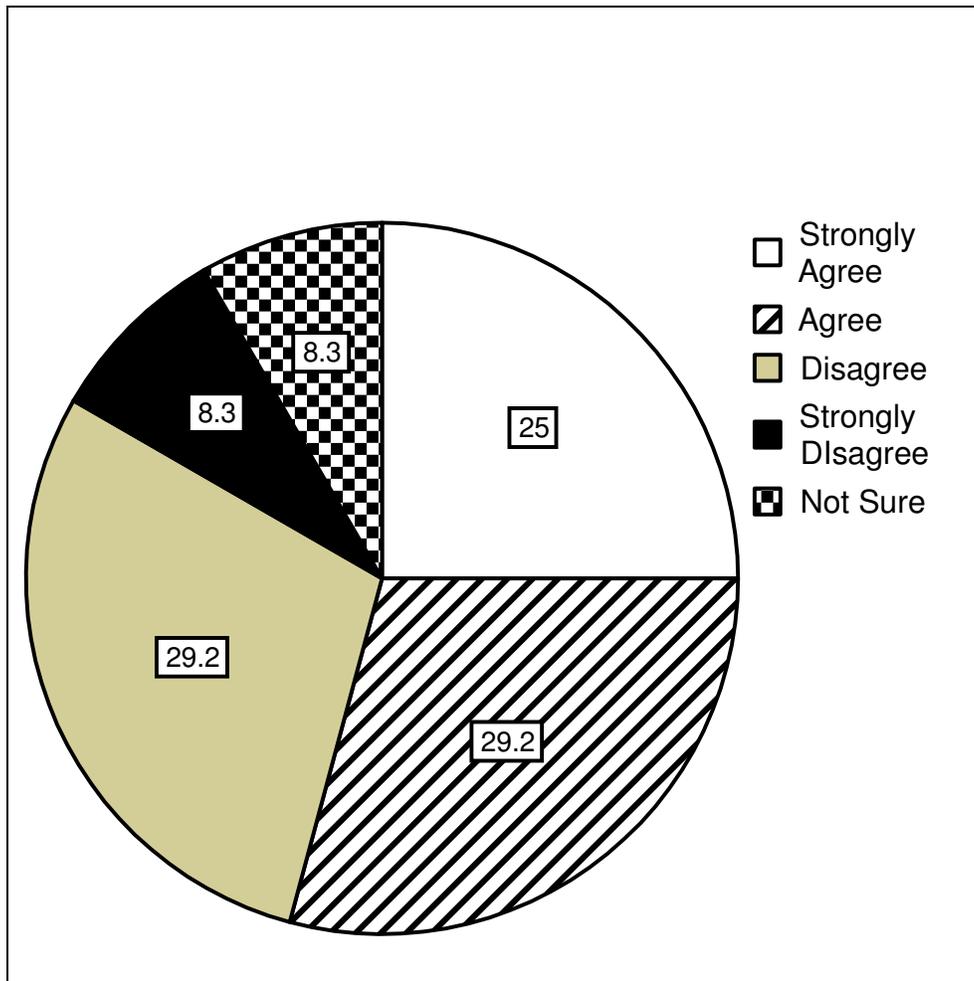


Figure 5-44: Do you think Government should institute a Gender Commission as a way of encouraging equal male/female participation in politics?

A greater percentage of respondents agreed that a Gender Commission would work but pointed out that there is an existing Department for Women's Affairs. A cumulative 54.2% of the respondents agreed that the establishment of a gender commission by the government would encourage equal male/female participation in politics; while a cumulative 45.8% do not think it necessary (cf. Figure 5-44; Table 5-55). From the responses, it appeared that what is required is not a new body or organ in the government because that may mean a duplication of efforts. The need is for the strengthening of the existing structure to achieve the desired goal. The question is whether there is a political will to move in this direction.

5.4.20 SUMMARY OF THE RESPONSES

In summing up the frequency distribution of responses from both Church and society, it is shown that the percentage of women in the Churches and in different public corporations and government ministries exceeds 60% of the membership in each area. This means that more women than men participate in church programmes in the PCN and more women are involved in jobs in the public sector than men. But the same could not be said of their representation in different leadership positions of church and society.

The survey also revealed that a number of issues worked against the participation of women in leadership positions in both church and society. These included lack of adequate education; lack of funds; fear of violence as far as night meetings were concerned; negative cultural influences on women; high levels of corruption in the system; lack of interest in leadership by women; and domestic pressures; etc. Even though these issues were strongly contested, the greater percentage of respondents accepted them as some of the obstructions to women's active participation in the leadership functions of church and society.

Suggestions were made about how to promote women's participation in leadership roles in church and society. Most respondents agreed that this might be possible through the following: encouraging the education of women; allowing more women into leadership positions; encouraging partnership between men and women; punishing perpetrators of cultural oppression against women; and instituting a deliberate policy for equal participation of male/female members in leadership positions; etc. Meanwhile, the frequency distribution of responses has shown that the level of perceived acceptance of women's participation in leadership was higher than the levels of perceived rejection or indecision. The question is: Is this only on paper or in practice? Some doubts were raised on whether the answers that were offered reflected ideal or actual situations. The bivariate analysis below will explain some of the factors that influenced the different responses that were received.

5.5 CROSS-TABULATED BIVARIATE ANALYSIS

The bivariate analysis of this report will test the dependent variables against the background of the independent variables detected in the empirical survey. The dependent variables in this report refer to those questions that we posed to respondents from the church and society, namely Q2-Q24, and QQ2-QQ20 respectively. The independent variables in this report refer to the particulars of participants in our survey. A cross-tabular analysis enabled the detection of those variables in which responses or values were influenced by independent variable factors. The effective independent variable factors in the church survey were location, gender and education; in the survey at government parastatals, there was no glaring influence, which means that the values of both variable factors were constant. The following presents the bivariate analysis of the responses from the church for Q8, Q9, and Q10.

Questions 8, 9 and 10 which discuss issues of fundraising, theological education and leadership at the apex of the church have been chosen for the bivariate analysis because of their crucial importance to the church.

5.5.1 WOMEN PARTICIPATE MORE THAN MEN IN THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES: FUNDRAISING (Q8)

Why the issue of fundraising is important, is that, in some cases, women participate in fundraising but are not given the opportunity to be part of the decision on how funds are spent. The patriarchal mindset has it that men are bread-winners in their homes and for that reason, be in control of all the finances in their homes and by extension, in the church. But in the rural areas where it is believed that women participate more than men in fund raising, are women allowed to manage the funds? The church should seriously look into this area and draw up a policy that will allow women be part of the fund management committees in their churches.

(a) Location and Gender versus Q8:

Figure 5-45: Location * Women participate more than men in the following activities: Fundraising* Gender Cross-tabulation

				Women participate more than men in the following activities: Fund Raising					Total
				Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not sure	
Male	Location Urban	Count		0	0	5		5	
		% within Location		.0%	.0%	100.0%		100.0%	
	Suburban	Count		0	2	1		3	
		% within Location		.0%	66.7%	33.3%		100.0%	
	Rural	Count		3	2	0		5	
		% within Location		60.0%	40.0%	.0%		100.0%	
Total	Count		3	4	6		13		
	% within Location		23.1%	30.8%	46.2%		100.0%		
Female	Location Urban	Count	1	1	4	4	0	10	
		% within Location	10.0%	10.0%	40.0%	40.0%	.0%	100.0%	
	Suburban	Count	3	4	2	2	1	12	
		% within Location	25.0%	33.3%	16.7%	16.7%	8.3%	100.0%	
	Rural	Count	1	6	3	0	0	10	
		% within Location	10.0%	60.0%	30.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%	
Total	Count	5	11	9	6	1	32		
	% within Location	15.6%	34.4%	28.1%	18.8%	3.1%	100.0%		

When we tested Q8 against the background of location and gender, we discovered the following (see Figure 5-45 above):

- (i) In the Urban location, 100% of men strongly disagreed that women participate more than men in fundraising; a cumulative 80% of women disagreed that women participate more than men in fund raising; only a cumulative 20% of women agreed that women participate more than men in fundraising.
- (ii) In the Suburban location, a cumulative 100% of men disagreed; a cumulative 33.4% of women disagreed, and 58.3% of women agreed.
- (iii) In the Rural location, 60% of men agreed, while 40% of men disagreed; a cumulative 70% of women agreed, while 30% of women disagreed.

The analysis shows that more men and women in the urban area think women do not participate more than men in fund raising; while the reverse is the case in the rural area; in the suburban, more men think men contribute more, while more women disagreed. Location and gender were influencing factors in the type of responses we received to Q8.

(b) Location and Education versus Q8:

Figure 5-46: Location * Women participate more than men in the following activities: Fundraising * Education Cross-tabulation

Education				Women participate more than men in the following activities:					Total
				Fund Raising					
				Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not sure	
Primary	Location	Suburban	Count	1	1	0			2
			% within Location	50.0%	50.0%	.0%			100.0%
	Rural	Count	1	8	5			14	
		% within Location	7.1%	57.1%	35.7%			100.0%	
	Total		Count	2	9	5			16
			% within Location	12.5%	56.3%	31.3%			100.0%
Secondary	Location	Urban	Count	1	0	2	5		8
			% within Location	12.5%	.0%	25.0%	62.5%		100.0%
	Suburban	Count	1	2	1	0		4	
		% within Location	25.0%	50.0%	25.0%	.0%		100.0%	
	Rural	Count	0	1	0	0		1	
		% within Location	.0%	100.0%	.0%	.0%		100.0%	
Total		Count	2	3	3	5		13	
		% within Location	15.4%	23.1%	23.1%	38.5%		100.0%	
Tertiary/University	Location	Urban	Count	0	1	2	4	0	7
			% within Location	.0%	14.3%	28.6%	57.1%	.0%	100.0%
	Suburban	Count	1	1	3	3	1	9	
		% within Location	11.1%	11.1%	33.3%	33.3%	11.1%	100.0%	
	Total		Count	1	2	5	7	1	16
			% within Location	6.3%	12.5%	31.3%	43.8%	6.3%	100.0%

Figure 5-46 above is the result of testing Q8 against the background of location and education.

We discovered the following:

- (i) Respondents who achieved a primary level of education in the suburban location returned a cumulative 100% agreement that women participated more than men in fundraising; a cumulative 64.2% in the rural location agreed that women participated more than men in fund raising; while 35.7% disagreed.
- (ii) Respondents in the urban location who achieved a secondary level of education returned a cumulative 87.5% disagreement that women participated more than men in fundraising; suburban respondents returned a cumulative 75% agreement and 25% disagreement that women participated more than men in fundraising, while there was 100% agreement in the rural location that women contributed more than men.
- (iii) Respondents in the urban location who had Tertiary/University training returned a cumulative 85.7% disagreement that women give more than men; those in the suburban location returned a cumulative 66.6% disagreement that women participate more than men in fundraising.

This analysis suggests that location and education were influencing factors in the way participants responded to Q8. Those with lower educational qualifications who lived in the rural or suburban locations tended to agree that women participate more than men in fundraising; while those with higher educational qualifications disagreed. Another observation is that those with lower qualifications who live either in rural or suburban locations are mainly women. Therefore, location, gender and education influenced respondents in their submissions.

5.5.2 FEMALE THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IS SEEN AS A PRIORITY IN THE PCN (Q9)

(a) Location and Gender versus Q9:

Figure 5-47: Location *Female Theological education is a priority in the PCN*. Gender Cross-tabulation

				Female Theological education is a priority in the PCN.					
				Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure	Total
Male	Location	Urban	Count		0	3	1	1	5
			% within Location		.0%	60.0%	20.0%	20.0%	100.0%
		Suburban	Count		1	2	0	0	3
			% within Location		33.3%	66.7%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
		Rural	Count		5	0	0	0	5
		% within Location		100.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%	
	Total	Count		6	5	1	1	13	
		% within Location		46.2%	38.5%	7.7%	7.7%	100.0%	
female	Location	Urban	Count	1	3	4	1	1	10
			% within Location	10.0%	30.0%	40.0%	10.0%	10.0%	100.0%
		Suburban	Count	3	3	2	1	3	12
			% within Location	25.0%	25.0%	16.7%	8.3%	25.0%	100.0%
		Rural	Count	0	9	1	0	0	10
		% within Location	.0%	90.0%	10.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%	
	Total	Count	4	15	7	2	4	32	
		% within Location	12.5%	46.9%	21.9%	6.3%	12.5%	100.0%	

Location and Gender of respondents had a direct effect on how they responded to Q9. Figure 5-47 above shows that:

- (i) Men in the urban location returned a cumulative 80% disagreement that female theological education is a priority in the PCN; while women in the same location returned a cumulative 40% agreement and 50% disagreement.
- (ii) In the suburban location. A cumulative 100% of men agreed that female theological education is a priority in the PCN; a cumulative 50% of women agreed and a cumulative 25% disagreed.

- (iii) The rural location had 100% of male respondents and a cumulative 100% of women respondents agreeing that female theological education is a priority in the PCN.

Location and gender were influencing factors in how respondents dealt with the survey.

The issue of the importance of female theological education is viewed differently. While some see this as a priority, others do not see the need for female theological education. Knowing the importance of women’s education, especially theological education, the church should encourage women who are convincingly called into the ordained ministry.

(b) Location and Education versus Q9:

Figure 5-48: Location *Female Theological education is a priority in the PCN* Education Cross-tabulation

Education				Female Theological education is a priority in the PC					Total
				Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure	
Primary	Location	Suburban	Count	1	0	0		1	2
			% within Location	50.0%	.0%	.0%		50.0%	100.0%
	Rural	Count	0	13	1		0	14	
		% within Location	.0%	92.9%	7.1%		.0%	100.0%	
	Total	Count	1	13	1		1	16	
		% within Location	6.3%	81.3%	6.3%		6.3%	100.0%	
Secondary	Location	Urban	Count	0	3	3	1	1	8
			% within Location	.0%	37.5%	37.5%	12.5%	12.5%	100.0%
	Suburban	Count	2	1	0	0	1	4	
		% within Location	50.0%	25.0%	.0%	.0%	25.0%	100.0%	
	Rural	Count	0	1	0	0	0	1	
		% within Location	.0%	100.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%	
Total	Count	2	5	3	1	2	13		
	% within Location	15.4%	38.5%	23.1%	7.7%	15.4%	100.0%		
Tertiary/University	Location	Urban	Count	1	0	4	1	1	7
			% within Location	14.3%	.0%	57.1%	14.3%	14.3%	100.0%
	Suburban	Count	0	3	4	1	1	9	
		% within Location	.0%	33.3%	44.4%	11.1%	11.1%	100.0%	
	Total	Count	1	3	8	2	2	16	
		% within Location	6.3%	18.8%	50.0%	12.5%	12.5%	100.0%	

Figure 5-48 above demonstrates the influence of education and location on Q9.

- (i) Suburban respondents with Primary level education returned a 50% agreement response and rural respondents a 92.9% agreement that female education is a priority in the PCN.
- (ii) In the urban location, respondents with Secondary level education returned a cumulative 50% disagreement, those in the suburban location, a cumulative 75%

agreement; and a 100% agreement was obtained in the rural location that female education is a priority in the PCN.

- (iii) Respondents with Tertiary/University education returned a cumulative 71.4% disagreement in the urban location; there was 55.5% disagreement and 33.3% agreement in the suburban.

The analysis above shows that location and educational qualifications of members determined how they responded to the question (Q9).

5.5.3 THE CHURCH WILL BE COMFORTABLE WITH THE ELECTION OF A WOMAN AS THE MODERATOR OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY (Q10)

(a) Location and Gender versus Q10:

Figure 5:49: Location * The church will be comfortable with the election of a woman as the Moderator of the General Assembly? * Gender Cross tabulation

Gender				The church will be comfortable with the election of a woman as the Moderator of the General Assembly?					Total
				Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure	
Male	Location Urban	Count	2		1	1	1	5	
		% within Location	40.0%		20.0%	20.0%	20.0%	100.0%	
	Suburban	Count	1		2	0	0	3	
		% within Location	33.3%		66.7%	.0%	.0%	100.0%	
	Rural	Count	0		3	2	0	5	
		% within Location	.0%		60.0%	40.0%	.0%	100.0%	
Total	Count	3		6	3	1	13		
% within Location		23.1%		46.2%	23.1%	7.7%	100.0%		
Female	Location Urban	Count	2	2	4	2	0	10	
		% within Location	20.0%	20.0%	40.0%	20.0%	.0%	100.0%	
	Suburban	Count	1	4	4	2	1	12	
		% within Location	8.3%	33.3%	33.3%	16.7%	8.3%	100.0%	
	Rural	Count	2	4	3	1	0	10	
		% within Location	20.0%	40.0%	30.0%	10.0%	.0%	100.0%	
Total	Count	5	10	11	5	1	32		
% within Location		15.6%	31.3%	34.4%	15.6%	3.1%	100.0%		

From Figure 5-49 above:

- (i) A cumulative 40% of urban males disagreed, 40% agreed and 20% were not sure that the church would be comfortable with the election of a woman as the Moderator of the General Assembly. A cumulative 60% of females in the same location disagreed, cumulative 40% agreed to Q10.
- (ii) In the suburban location, 66.7% of men disagreed and 33.3% of them agreed that the church would be comfortable with the election of a woman as the Moderator of the

General Assembly. In the same location, a cumulative 50% of females disagreed and a cumulative 41.6% agreed about Q10.

- (iii) Respondents from the rural location returned a cumulative 100% male and 40% female disagreement; while 60% of females agreed that the church would be comfortable with the election of a woman as the Moderator of the General Assembly.

The analysis shows that more males in all locations and females in urban and suburban locations disagreed that the church would be comfortable with the election of a woman as the Moderator of the General Assembly, while more women agreed in the rural location. Gender and location were therefore indicated as influencing factors in the responses received for Q10.

(b) Location and Education versus Q10:

Figure 5-50: Location *The church will be comfortable with the election of a woman as the Moderator of the General Assembly?*
Education Cross-tabulation

Education				The church will be comfortable with the election of a woman as the Moderator of the General Assembly?					Total
				Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure	
Primary	Location	Suburban	Count	0	1	0	1		2
			% within Location	.0%	50.0%	.0%	50.0%		100.0%
	Rural	Count	2	4	6	2		14	
		% within Location	14.3%	28.6%	42.9%	14.3%		100.0%	
	Total		Count	2	5	6	3		16
			% within Location	12.5%	31.3%	37.5%	18.8%		100.0%
Secondary	Location	Urban	Count	1	1	3	2	1	8
			% within Location	12.5%	12.5%	37.5%	25.0%	12.5%	100.0%
	Suburban	Count	1	2	1	0	0	4	
		% within Location	25.0%	50.0%	25.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%	
	Rural	Count	0	0	0	1	0	1	
		% within Location	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%	.0%	100.0%	
Total		Count	2	3	4	3	1	13	
		% within Location	15.4%	23.1%	30.8%	23.1%	7.7%	100.0%	
Tertiary/University	Location	Urban	Count	3	1	2	1	0	7
			% within Location	42.9%	14.3%	28.6%	14.3%	.0%	100.0%
	Suburban	Count	1	1	5	1	1	9	
		% within Location	11.1%	11.1%	55.6%	11.1%	11.1%	100.0%	
	Total		Count	4	2	7	2	1	16
			% within Location	25.0%	12.5%	43.8%	12.5%	6.3%	100.0%

Figure 5-50 shows that:

- (i) Respondents with a Primary level of education returned a 50/50 response in the suburban location; in the rural location a cumulative 42.9% agreed and a cumulative 57.2% disagreed that the church would be comfortable with the election of a woman as the Moderator of the General Assembly.

- (ii) Respondents with a Secondary level of education in the urban location returned a cumulative 25% agreement and a cumulative 62.5% disagreement that the church would be comfortable with the election of a woman as the Moderator of the General Assembly; in the suburban location, a cumulative 75% agreed and 25% disagreed, while respondents with a secondary level of education in the rural location returned a 100% disagreement concerning Q10.

- (iii) At the Tertiary/University level of education, respondents from the urban location returned a cumulative 57.2% agreement and a cumulative 42.9% disagreement with regard to Q10; those from the suburban location returned a cumulative 22.2% agreement and a cumulative 66.7% disagreement that the church would be comfortable with the election of a woman as the Moderator of the General Assembly.

The above analysis shows that more respondents in the rural areas, regardless of educational qualification, disagreed that the church would be comfortable with the election of a woman as the Moderator of the General Assembly; while more respondents with a higher level of education in the urban location agreed to Q10. It appears those with more enlightenment both in education and location tended to agree that the church would be comfortable with the election of a woman as the Moderator of the General Assembly, and those with a lower level of education and rural dwellers did not think Q10 to be realistic. This is to show how patriarchy is still very pervasive in the rural areas. For the rural dwellers, it is unimaginable for a woman to be the head over a man. So, the education and geographical location of respondents were influencing factors with regard to their responses.

5.5.4 PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN ON STAFF ROLL VERSUS EXECUTIVE BODIES

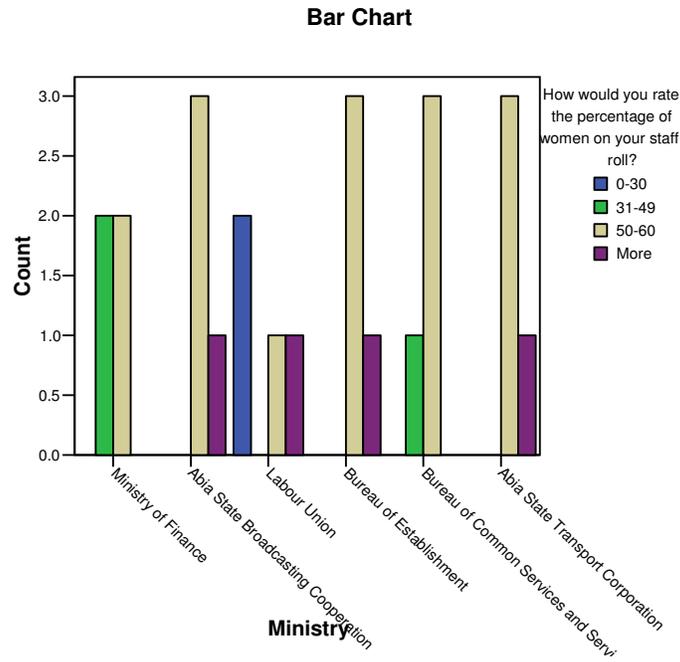


Figure 5-53: How would you rate the percentage of women on your staff roll?

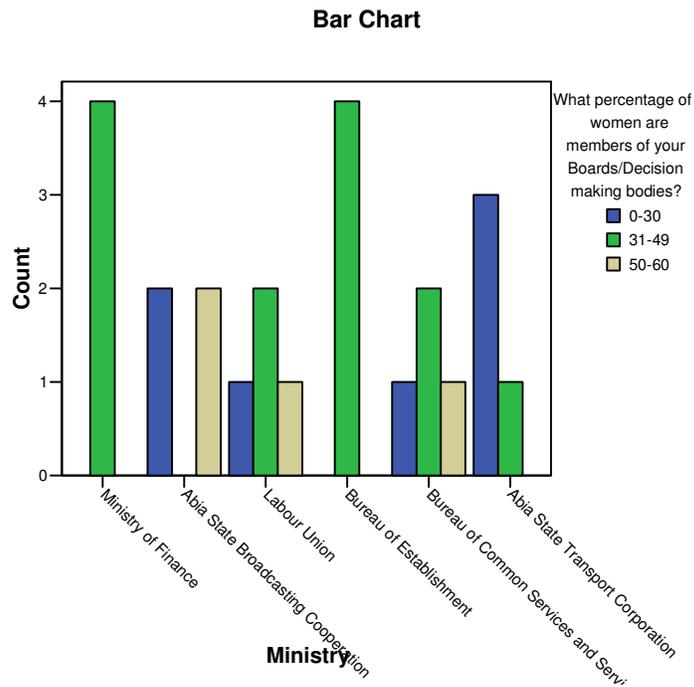


Figure 5-54: What percentage of women are members of your Boards/Decision-making bodies?

Figure 5-53 and Figure 5-54 show that the percentage of women on the staff roll of public service corporations and their percentage on the Boards/Decision-making bodies differed proportionately. Figure 5-53 shows that more than 50% of the staff of all the ministries and corporations is women; while Figure 5-54 shows that women constitute less than 50% of staff in decision-making bodies of the same corporations. This analysis implies that women do not hold leadership positions proportionately to their numbers because of certain factors working against them, e.g. level of education.

5.6 SUMMARY

The results of the empirical survey on the participation of women in leadership positions that was undertaken in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria and in different public corporations and government ministries of the Abia state has brought to light a number of issues which will be enumerated here. The frequency distribution of responses revealed that more females are involved in church programmes than males, and there are more females on staff rolls of different

public corporations males. The survey investigated different issues that work against the active participation of women in leadership positions in both church and society, and also noted the suggestions made on how to overcome the problems that work against women in order to promote their active participation in the leadership of church and society. Furthermore, the bivariate analysis has presented some of the independent variables that influenced the various responses received from participants in the survey. The findings have led to the following conclusions:

- (i) Women are actively involved in various activities of the church and society, but not in the leadership positions of such activities.
- (ii) The number of women on church boards and public service executive bodies is proportionately lower than their number in the overall constitution of the church and public service.
- (iii) The domestic pressures that work against women's participation in leadership, which most respondents consented to, are the negative effects of culture that consign women to the kitchen.
- (iv) There is overwhelming support for the education of women in both church and society, but the same could not be said of their partnership with men in leadership positions.
- (v) Apparently, women would be accepted in the leadership of certain offices of church and society, but not in the very high positions, like Moderator of General Assembly, the highest position in the Presbyterian Church and Governor of the State or President of the Federation.
- (vi) Rural dwellers, women and those with lower education qualifications are of the opinion that women participate more than men in fundraising; but the opinion of urban and suburban men is different.
- (vii) The acceptance of women's partnership with men in leadership is influenced by the location, gender and education of the respondents from both church and society.
- (viii) The attitude of respondents towards the theological education of women is influenced by their level of education, location and gender.
- (ix) Lack of access to funds is a major set-back for women who are interested in politics.

A strong opinion may have been formed in favour of the creation of more space for women to participate in leadership positions in church and society, but a great deal of enlightenment is needed to overcome the obvious cultural hurdles. This study neither advocates the dethronement of men from leadership positions nor the enthronement of a matriarchy. It argues for gender justice which allowa equal space for women to employ their talents in matters of leadership. This is a way towards promoting the spirit of partnership among men and women in church and society.

The next chapter will focus on moving from stereotyping to partnership which will lead to transformation in Nigerian church and society.

6.1 Introduction

The study of gender stereotyping and its reflection on the Church of Nigeria and society has been done. It was also observed that even in the ancient world gender stereotyping was prevalent. This chapter stresses the need to move away from gender stereotyping and the necessity of embracing partnership both in the church and the larger society. The conclusions we have drawn from the research gives us insight on the importance of partnership in both church and the Nigerian society.

6.1 The need to move from Gender stereotyping to partnership

The purpose of this section is to highlight some of the findings in connection with the concept of gender stereotyping in the church and society in Nigeria. The factors that have entrenched gender stereotyping in human society were made clear. They included: educational, economic, religio-cultural and political/leadership factors.

6.1.1 Educational need

In the discussions in the forgoing chapters, a lot has been said about education and human development (see chapter three page 56-65). There is no doubt that education is a vital part of human development. The process starts right from a child's birth in the home. In this home, the woman who is the mother takes a responsibility that is unique in the training and the up-bringing of the child. Equally important in this training is the role of the father. Thus, the responsibility of educating a child is not primarily that of an individual but of the entire community of which the individual father or mother is a part. Hence, it is said that 'it takes a whole village to raise a child'. Underlying this saying is the philosophy of partnership in educating the child.

Partnership in education engenders wholeness in the sense that various inputs from different people contribute in developing a balanced personality. Thus, this need for wholeness makes

partnership an imperative for the education of men and women in human society. The fact remains that for a woman to contribute meaningfully to a child's education, she must first be educated. Thus the importance of women's education cannot be overemphasised.

6.1.2 Economic need

Economics has to do with resource ownership and stewardship within a given context (see chapter three, page 80-94). Moving from gender stereotyping to partnership has some economic implications both for the church and the larger society. Thus, differentiation of economic activities according to sex would have to be replaced with a more inclusive undifferentiated and holistic economic arrangement for human and societal development.

As hinted in chapter two, space was genderized in stereotyped society. While men worked in open space women were restricted to closed space. Even when women were allowed to engage in activities like farming, there was strict specialization and division of labour according to sex especially among the Igbos of Nigeria. Nwala (1985:178) makes the observation thus:

Men plant yam⁴², climb palm trees and tap wine: they also clear and prepare the land, cut stakes, train the yam vines, build barns and tie the harvest. Women plant their own varieties of crops (cocoyam, maize, groundnut, okro, pepper, etc), weed and carry in the yams from the farm. They also press the palm fruits to produce oil and kernel.

These divisions did not take into account peoples abilities. Furthermore, making of mounds requires spreading of legs. But in the Igbo culture a woman is not to spread her legs in the public (Ezeaku 1985:89) hence in the traditional Igbo society a woman is not expected to engage in the making of big mounds required for the cultivation of big yams. She can only engage in the making of small mounds needed in the planting of small yams, cassava and cocoyam. This is a clear case of cultural value influencing or even undermining women's economic capabilities.

That cassava is fast replacing yam as king of crops and many men are now cultivating cassava farms in Igbo land is an indication that the old belief and practice were mere myths. Of course,

⁴² Men plant yam because it was believed that yam is the king of all crops and men needed to maintain their supremacy over women even in farming.

the old differentiation has to give way to partnership in farming activities taking into account individual abilities. And there is no doubt that if partnership is encouraged in farming and people are allowed to cultivate what they are best at, this will bring greater yield and help us to avert the looming food crisis that is threatening every part of the globe today.

6.1.3 *Religio-cultural need*

Just as people have created religious systems and cultural beliefs, human beings and their behaviours have equally been shaped by religion and culture. One of the by-products of religion and culture is patriarchy. Patriarchy and its related discrimination against women is a major obstacle to partnership between men and women. The patriarchal system refers to power relations in society where men act in collusion in order to keep their dominant positions. The patriarchal structure in family relations has been mirrored in the structures of the church and society. Women are expected to submit to patriarchal authority which denies them access to positions of authority. Thus, the system and its operation has oppressed women socially, politically, economically and even in the church (Mwaura, 1999: 56). Patriarchal structures exclude women from the decision-making processes, as shown through the empirical research discussed earlier in chapter five. As Kang (2004: 7) points out, this exclusion of women can also be because:

The patriarchal socialization of women has conditioned them to think, act, and re-act as second class members of the church and women are socialized to believe that they are good by accepting the dominant male view of how women ought to act. Women have internalized the patriarchal message that behaviour accepted by society, the institutional church, and its leaders is what constitutes a “good woman” or a “good Christian” and that any other conduct is displeasing to God. In this manner, women are not even aware that they are absorbing patriarchy into their systems.

Thus, in the church and society, both culture and scriptural hermeneutics have conspired to consign women to the uncomfortable positions in which they find themselves today.

But men and women need each other. We need to work in partnership in order to face our common human challenges. For, as Winston Jackson (2001: 3) has reminded us, “Coming

together is a blessing, keeping together is progress, but it is working together that brings success.” Indeed, it is not enough to keep together in the same society or church. It is not even a matter of one group handing over to or taking over from the other. Men and women must work together in a sense of mutual respect and dignity. In this way we can learn to use our varied characteristics appropriately, and also blend our different energies into the best mix for the most creative response to gender stereotyping. This is the way to build a community of wholeness which is embedded in the religions of Africa.

As studies have shown, religions in Africa are not primarily for the individual but for the community of which the individual is a part. Enekwe (1987:49) draws attention to the fact that:

Wholeness is an important aspect of African religion, and this is particularly relevant to Igbo as well as other religions where the sacred is manifested not so much by separation as by unity. Thus a person finds fulfilment not as a separate individual but as a participant in a family or community ... the whole of life is sacred for it is saturated with being.

This wholeness of being underscores the need for life to be lived in partnership. This partnership derives from the fact that the name of God, who is real cohesive factor of religion and cultural values in Africa, implies and stresses the maleness and femaleness of God. It is for this reason that Rose Teteki Abbey, a Ghanaian theologian has suggested that African theologians need to examine African traditional metaphors for God, which is inclusive. She has therefore come up with an example from the Ga people of Southern Ghana. Abbey (2001:141) argues that:

God is traditionally known as Ataa Naa Nyonmo. This name does not only mean Father Mother God, it also implies and stresses the maleness and femaleness of God. Seeing God as Father and Mother emphasizes the creative power of God as opposed to the macho image, which gives the idea of controlling power. Although Ga Christians have adopted and used this name, its etymology has little impact on their image of God.

When we understand the inclusive nature of God and the idea of partnership it espouses, our whole religio-cultural lives will become more inclusive than they have hitherto been.

6.1.4 Leadership/political need

Leadership is about direction and influence while politics is about control (see chapter three, pages 95-101). It was highlighted in the research finding that while women constituted a critical mass of membership in the church and the workforce of the government, most leadership and political positions that provide policy directions are occupied by men (see chapter five pages 137 and 151). This scenario robs both the church and the state the immeasurable leadership qualities and political acumen that women could have brought to bear on the ecclesiastical and State machineries. Thus, the multifaceted nature of the leadership and political challenges in the church and society are so overpowering that the need for partnership of men and women cannot be overemphasized.

6.2 The challenge of Partnership to church and society in Nigeria

Having outlined the needs above and considering the yearning for partnership in the contemporary society, we can appreciate the arduous task before scholars and practitioners of practical theology in Africa. How do we define people in their relationship with God and one another? How are we to understand and apply culture, theology and world views that have formed and shaped our perception of God and people? The discussions in the ensuing section will be as follows: A call for re-conceptualization; reasons for re-conceptualization; and the point at issue.

6.2.1 A call for re-conceptualisation

In a society such as Nigeria where gender stereotype has existed for centuries, a call for re-conceptualization of the old ideas especially about women and men might be a great task. However, there are many reasons why the church and society should re-think and re-conceptualise those traditions, cultures and beliefs that have hitherto denied women their God-given positions as people created in God's image and likeness. Here, I identify with the vision

and mission of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians⁴³ in empowering African women to contribute their critical thinking and analysis to advance current knowledge on theology, religion and culture.

In this regard, Phiri (2004:22-23) tells us that it is important to underscore that African women theologians accept the fact that African culture is important because it gives us our identity as Africans. However, “African women theologians warn African theologians that African culture should not be treated as if it is static but dynamic (Phiri 2004:22-23). We need to acknowledge that African culture, like all cultures of the world, is a construction of our communities. We learn our culture from the community where we are brought up. We also need to acknowledge that every culture assigns roles to women and men based on how those cultures understand the identities of women and men” (Phiri 2004:22-23). Unfortunately, all African cultures have viewed women as less important than men, thereby making it difficult for women to have right relationships with self, others (both men and women), creation and God. This is why African women are calling men and women in the church and society to examine again their cultures from a gender point of view (Phiri 2004:22-23).

In this connection, Kanyoro (2002: 17) has added her voice by calling for a gender analysis of African culture and the practices of the church in Africa. This is a critical hermeneutic which requires that we listen to women and also determine to work in the spirit of partnership. As Powers (2003: viii), has warned,

Unless we listen, any action we may take in this area, no matter how well intentioned, is likely to bypass the real concerns of women and to confirm female condescension and reinforce male dominance. Listening, in a spirit of partnership and equality, is the most practical response we can make and is the foundation for our mutual partnership to reform unjust structures.

This therefore implies a cultural revolution and a radical overhauling of the entire hermeneutical enterprise we now know. What this also means is that both tradition and the Bible will remain

⁴³ For a detailed discussion of the Circle, see Musimbi R. Kanyaro “Beads and Strands: Threading Beads to Her Story in The Circle” in Phiri, A. I., Govinden, D. B & Nadar, S. (eds) *Her-Stories: Hidden Stories of Women of Faith in Africa*. Cluster Publications, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, 2002.

sites of the struggle as well as resources in that struggle. It is a task that must be faced with all the energies that we can muster so that true partnership can thrive in our communities.

This should form the basis for our re-conceptualisation.

6.2.2 Reasons for re-conceptualisation

These negative beliefs explained above have denied women their right and also denied the church and society the benefits that would have accrued from women's contributions on matters of importance. Holding tenaciously to those beliefs that have not benefited anyone is challenging God's wisdom in creation. In what follows, we have to look at some of the reasons that necessitate partnership as a proposal for practical theological approach to development.

6.2.2.1 Partnership is God's purpose from creation

Partnership and not *partner-sheep*⁴⁴ is God's purpose from creation. At creation, God created male and female in God's own image and likeness. (Genesis 1:26-27). God gave them a joint responsibility to take care of all the other creatures. It has been God's purpose from creation that men and women should work in partnership which means that our spirituality breeds mutuality. There is no woman or man that is self sufficient. This is why I agree with Ramodibe (1989: 18) when she points out that "men and women need to cooperate on the basis of mutuality. God's plan of differentiation of God's creatures was not meant to be a disadvantage to others, but was meant to enrich one another". Mutuality is relevant only where partners recognize and respect each other; mutuality does not recognize paternalism. Once women are seriously acknowledged as partners in the body of Christ, then we can build a new church where the reign of Christ is real. This is because the whole of creation is immersed in community and interdependence. It is therefore time we realized that since both men and women are baptized in Christ and are gifted by the spirit of mission and ministry, "partnership of women and men, ordained or not, is the true image of the church of Christ" (Oduyoye, 2001: 86). The gifts of women and men are both necessary if the church is to be whole and is to be the light of Christ to the world. As Rakoczy (2004: 224) puts it:

⁴⁴ Partner-sheep is extensively discussed on page 32 of chapter two.

Partnership means working together, sharing responsibility, calling forth each other's gifts, caring for the life of the community. It does not mean excluding men in order to affirm women's gifts.

If men and woman would partner in mission and ministry, building an inclusive and liberative human society will be much easier.

6.2.2 Partnership fosters community change

The Church community as well as the larger society need the partnership of men and women. People who work in partnership can have an increased sense of power and determination to initiate change based on the knowledge they gain from the vastly different experiences and perspectives of their own members. Partnership can also put groups in a unique, powerful position to solve community problems in fighting crime and building developmental projects. I remember how, as Secretary of the local church Women's Guild we created awareness of the acute housing problem for the junior church workers and mobilised the men and women in the church to embark on a housing project which saved the community of believers from shame and unnecessary financial spending on rent. Partnership through collaboration with men can enable women do much for the church and community.

However, we cannot build relationships without the understanding of our potential partners, and in building relationships, we must also accept that others have something to offer, for no one has the monopoly of knowledge. Working with this understanding engenders reciprocity which is an essential tenet of a democratic society we all desire to build.

6.2.3 Partnership strengthens democracy

Politics and democracy are somehow interwoven, especially in the way we practise democracy in Nigeria. From our empirical survey in chapter five of this work, we found that a greater percentage of the respondents are of the opinion that gender commission is necessary for

women's more active participation in politics which gives them the freedom to be truly democratic. For now, engendered democracy is lacking as has been pointed out by Kabeberi-Macharia (2004: 96),

Despite the increasing popularity of the concept and practice of democracy, engendered democratic governance is yet to be achieved. One reason being that democracy as we know it, still falls almost exclusively within the domain of politics which comes within the traditional definition of politics which is characterized as male dominated, specific to the "public sphere" and therefore not necessarily women friendly. Again inequities between men and women are glaringly obvious in governance institutions with the balance heavily tilted towards participation of men more than women in key decision making positions.

Gender equality in governance is necessary to ensure that women have equal economic, social and political opportunities. Kabeberi-Macharia (2004: 97) stresses that "The opinions and perception of women and men must be taken into account in formulating any decision or carrying forward any strategy". The views we are advocating here have implications for not only the women but also for men in Nigeria. Stressing the need to cultivate and deepen democracy and tolerance through dialogue and partnership among all citizens, both female and male, Eyo (1995: 11) further asserts:

It is only in such a culture that leaders are tested and retained or thrown out according to the will of the people. It is only in such a culture that mistakes are made and corrected without social upheaval. It is only in such a culture that people are groomed to be tolerant of people of another language, colour, sex, ethnic group or clan, and to be able to give and take in periods of triumphs and failure. It is only in such a culture that Nigeria can evolve to become a viable polity that inspires loyalty and patriotism.

Men are most times afraid that if space is allowed women they will be overthrown. This brings us to the point that the fear that women want to take over "men's world" is uncalled for. If we take seriously, the Old Testament concept of Shalom as the all inclusive condition for harmony and wellbeing for the whole creation and the whole human community (Van Schalkwyk 1999:9),

Then we learn to live in church and society where gender justice reigns and partnership of equals exists among women and men. There will be no need to be afraid of taking over or handing over power because power will no longer be viewed with patriarchal lenses but with the lenses of God who is the creator. However, for real partnership of equals to take place in Nigeria, men and women themselves must have a change in mind set. The benefits of diversity should also encourage us to allow space for others to make their contributions. Diversity means more than one voice, one opinion, one ideology and even more than one understanding about something. This is one of the reasons why women's voices and opinions should be taken seriously in order that our world will be enriched. Ndungane (2004: 162-163) writes:

What is at issue in our world today is whether one world view, one political stand point, one theological stance, one cultural perspective, overrules, is right, can assert dominance, and renders all other views inferior and illegitimate. Can we instead learn to comprehend that none of us has the monopoly on knowledge and understanding? More than that, our lives are enriched and our horizon expanded when we encounter other, authentic, expressions of human life, culture and spirituality.

As brothers and sisters, we must face the call to develop an ethic of together-in-difference. Our differences in gender should no longer be a barrier. We have to develop strategies for engendering partnership.

6.3 Strategies for engendering Partnership in church and community

There must be a holistic approach in engendering partnership in Nigerian Church and society. For the church, God's mind and not what the church thinks about women should be taught and preached. God's love for all must be emphasised. In John (3:16), the Bible tell us that God so loved the world and demonstrated same by giving us Jesus. Jesus did not come for men alone for the whole world, women inclusive.

That women are also created in the image and likeness of God. Genesis (1:26-27) should take prominent part of our bible studies and other teachings in the church as ways of engendering

partnership. Sheerattan-Bisnauth (2004: 3) is also calling on the church to have intentional studies and teachings on moving from hierarchy to partnership.

Women on their own part should read and interpret the scriptures themselves. According to Kanyoro (1990: 52-53)

... For women to find justice and peace through the texts of the Bible, they have to try and recover the women participants as well as their possible participation in the life of the text. Secondly, women will need to read the scriptures side by side with the study of cultures and learn to recognize their boundaries between the two. Such recognition will help women to interpret biblical passages with the proper hermeneutical understanding of ourselves and our contexts as Christian women.

Furthermore, to engender partnership, women should also develop question culture where they are bold to ask questions on their oppressive positions. For too long women have accepted “everything” without being courageous enough to question the oppressive patriarchal situations they find themselves in. In asking questions, women should also demand answers to their questions. Church and society on the other hand should create space for women to not only ask questions, but also answer questions for themselves. At this point the issue of agitation is encouraged

6.3.1 Agitation

Agitation is one of the strategies women could use to pass the message that they are no longer comfortable with their negatively stereotyped positions. I agree with Jacobsen, (2001: 66; cf. August, 2005: 301b) that agitation finally also seeks to summon forth life. It cannot do so without struggle, tension, and risk. In the same way, we cannot work for partnership without a struggle and without taking risks. The process may be painful for both the agitator and the person being agitated, but pain is the worthwhile cost of giving birth to new life – life of gender partnership

6.3.2 Power sharing

There is every need for attitude change in Nigeria. Patriarchy does not allow men to share power with women in Nigeria because for centuries men have been made to believe that power is their birth-right. Furthermore, why many women find themselves in oppressed positions is that men dominate in power and feel threatened when asked to partner with women. It must also be admitted that it is seldom easy to relinquish or share power. Dube (2000: 197) explains this in the following statement:

The planting and uprooting of power and powerlessness is not at all a smooth, sequential plot. Decolonisation and liberation are therefore, not given. To be in the struggle for justice and liberation is, therefore, to be in a *luta continua*, the struggle that always continues.

This means that the need for power sharing should be preached from the pulpit, discussed at bible study, prayed about at prayer meetings, and is also given attention at all government programmes. It is by partnership of men and women that we can build powerful churches and societies where women's voices are heard and respected. It is the biblical view of power that summons us to engage and to use power in ways that are creative, liberating and life giving in the power of the Holy Spirit. In power sharing justice is important because as Kang (2004: 22-26) has observed: Justice is a dimension of God's character and rooted directly in the fact that Yahweh was a God of justice (Psalm 72:1-4, Psalm 99:4) We also need a relational power that comes from collective interaction and is genuinely democratic in process (Jacobsen, 2001: 38-49). Edet and Ekeya (1989: 5) observed that concern for peace and justice, for equality and liberation for all human beings characterise the endeavours of all persons and groups who see the church as a positive factor in Africa. Paris, in Hessel (1993: 61) has also argued that:

Power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anaemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love.

The Nigerian church and society need to encourage power sharing among men and women in order to reject those institutionalised structures that have for ages acted against women and also

denied them partnership with men. Many women die as a result of domestic pressure which if shared, lightens the burden on the shoulders of women. The communal journey of men and women is critical for the development of the entire human society. The oppression, exploitation and dehumanisation of women are part of the evil that Christ has called the church and the society to fight against. The quest for justice is the responsibility of all. According to Martin Luther King Jr. (Washington, 1986: 290),

“... injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality,
tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly
affects all indirectly.

Therefore, injustice against women anywhere, and especially in Nigeria, is a threat to justice everywhere. The task of dealing with unjust institutionalised structures that have hitherto fanned gender injustice is for everyone and the time to act is now.

A strong opinion may have been formed in favour of the creation of more space for women to participate in leadership positions in church and society, but a great deal of enlightenment is needed to overcome the obvious cultural hurdles. This study neither advocates the dethronement of men from leadership positions nor the enthronement of a matriarchy. It argues in favour of equal space for women to employ their talents in matters of leadership. This is a way towards promoting the spirit of partnership among men and women in church and society. This calls for justice in partnership in all areas of human endeavours.

6.4 Summary

The following may be regarded as the summative points arising from this chapter:

- Partnership is imperative for progress in church and community as partnership is necessary not only for the church as *koinonia* “but also to enable the Church to provide a

model for society, which is grappling with the same issues of shared responsibility and accountability.

- Genuine partnership thrives when reciprocity is upheld and diversity not compromised in educational, economic, religio-cultural and leadership/political spheres of human society.
- The task before the scholars and practitioners of practical theology and development is to seriously note and creatively engage the theologies, cultures and worldviews that have hitherto formed and shaped the perceptions of God and people especially women. This means calling into work, a new critical hermeneutical process and re-conceptualisation.
- However, the point at issue is not the creation of “men’s world” or “Women’s world” but a change in mindset which is the prerequisite for our search for freedom and a better human community where partnership flourishes.
- Strategies for engendering partnership should be taken seriously.

What conclusions do we then draw in view of the arguments we have stated in Chapters 2 to 6? And what are the recommendations to the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, the government and other bodies? These will be the focus of Chapter 7, which will also bring us to the conclusion of this dissertation.

CHAPTER 7 SUMMARY OF ARGUMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a summary of the arguments of this dissertation and also makes recommendations to the Church, government, NGOs and women themselves.

Chapter one served as an introduction to the study and examined the motivation for the choice of the topic, which is: Gender Stereotyping in Church and Community: A Nigerian Woman's Perspective. The hypothesis that gender stereotyping has to give way for gender partnership was clearly stated, and our main aim, which was to lift out some vital points concerning issues that cause gender stereotyping, as well as help people think of partnership between women and men as a way forward in church and society, were addressed.

7.2 CHAPTER TWO

In this chapter we looked at some concepts. We also saw that women are more negatively stereotyped than men. It was discovered that, both in the ancient world and in the New Testament, gender stereotyping to a large extent defined women's roles for centuries.

We also discovered that the negative impact of culture affects women more than men. Proverbs and myths that portray women negatively have added to the problems of women's self-worth. We also saw the need for women to re-create and rewrite the negative stereotypes especially those existing in proverbs and myths. There is need for a new mind-set in both men and women in order to bring about the needed transformation and gender partnership in Nigerian church and society.

7.3 CHAPTER THREE

In this chapter, we looked briefly at the profile of Nigeria. When we surveyed the landscape by looking at some issues, we saw how women are affected with regard to key societal issues like education, health, economics and labour. It is common knowledge that every human being's dignity deserves respect under the law and from social institutions. The idea of human dignity is usually accompanied by the idea of the equal human worth of rich and poor, rural and urban, female and male; of all being equally deserving of respect by virtue of being human, and that this respect should not be abridged on account of gender differences. Women should fashion their lives in accordance with their own views of what is deepest and most important to them. Gender justice should be the watch-word, both in church and society, especially in leadership and political participation.

In Nigeria, one of the factors that affect women's political will is lack of finance coupled with the patriarchal mind-set that women's place is in the home and not in the public sphere. The marginalisation of women in leadership positions has robbed our communities of much of the potential that is hidden in women. Women do make an enormous contribution to the development of their communities but, due to the fact that they are sidelined as a result of patriarchy, the needed goal has not been reached both in the larger society and in the church.

Another important point that formed part of our discussion in this chapter was the family. The family was seen as a centre of love and care, but also as the starting point of patriarchal government in human society, due to the different family structures that contribute to the dehumanisation of women. Being the first school children attend, being the centre for character formation, and having a tremendous influence on the larger society, gender justice should be taught and inculcated in the family. Girls should no longer be perceived as slaves or servants to their brothers – the boys. Boys should no longer be barred from the kitchen. It is the family which is the nucleus of the larger society that helps to create in us the pictures we have in our heads about ourselves and others. This is how the process of stereotyping begins. The Nigerian church and society are encouraged to build healthy families where partnership between girls and boys is cherished and where the negative stereotyping of women is recreated and transformed into something positive.

7.4 Chapter FOUR

Our discussion in this chapter, among other things, focussed on the church. The patriarchal perception of women in the largest society is also found in the church. Institutionalised structures and culturally created lenses have resulted in men being viewed differently to how women are perceived. These perceptions determine the roles assigned to both sexes, whether in the church or the larger society. The underlying assumption investigated in this chapter therefore is that, based on cultural, theological or historical biases, women have been subjugated and relegated to the background in crucial issues of life in the church and society.

The chapter also examined the role of *the church as ekklesia* in en-gendering partnership among the various members of the body of Christ. In addition it argued that the church should encourage partnership between men and women in spreading the gospel with love and compassion, as the enfleshment or embodiment of the values of the kingdom of God which are manifest in love, justice, peace and care. As an agent of change and social transformation, the ecclesia should be a community of God's people within the larger human community. In this regard, gender balancing must be a priority in the mission of the church in the world. The incarnation of God in the person of Jesus Christ remains the clearest example and challenge for the church's active engagement and participation in community development.

We observed however, that Paul's ambivalence in some of his epistles, especially 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy, forms part of the reason for the denial of women's leadership in contemporary churches. While the covering of hair is seen as a blessing in some churches, it is a source of discomfort in others because of the competition among women and their headgear. Although Paul had condemned the leadership of women in Corinth, there were notable women like Phoebe, Priscilla and Junia who worked with him. It was also noted that the Church Fathers did not help matters due to their misogyny.

Concerning the issue of women's ordination, although the PCN has been applauded for being the pace setter, the journey was not an easy one for the first female minister of the PCN. The

Presbyterian church of Nigeria should not stop at the ordination of women but must also accord women all the rights and privileges that go with it. Many debates still go on about women's ordination and many other (mainline and Reformed) Churches in Nigeria have not yet seen the need to accept women in that position of leadership.

The contribution of the female AIC Church Founders, has, however, led us to conclude that women have all it takes to be leaders. We have found that, if women are allowed more space, they will undertake more, as they already are also doing in the family.

The core argument and conclusion drawn from this chapter hinges on the fact that human beings live in context and every study, including theology and development, is contextual. Therefore, it is important that we, in our study of theology and development in our different environments, reflect on the conditions of women who form a large percentage of the population in both the church and society in Nigeria. The empirical survey will give us more insight on how women have fared in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria and the government of Abia State

7.5 CHAPTER FIVE

The empirical survey involving the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria and different public corporations and government ministries of Abia State, regarding the participation of women in leadership positions brought to light a number of issues which were enumerated in Chapter five. The frequency distribution of responses revealed that more females are involved in church programmes than males, and there are more females on the staff rolls of different public corporations than their male counterparts. The survey cited the different issues that work against the active participation of women in leadership positions of both church and society, and also noted the suggestions made on how to overcome these problems in order to promote women's active participation in the leadership of church and society. In addition, a bivariate analysis presented some of the independent variables that influenced the various responses received from participants in survey. Our findings led us to conclude as follows:

- (i) Women are actively involved in various activities of the church and society, but not in the leadership positions of such activities.
- (ii) The number of women on church boards and in public service executive bodies is proportionately lower than their number in the overall constitution of the church and public service.
- (iii) Domestic pressure that works against women's participation in leadership, which most respondents consented to, is the result of the negative effects of culture, which consigns women to the kitchen.
- (iv) There is overwhelming support for the education of women in both church and society, but the same cannot be said in favour of partnership with men in leadership positions.
- (v) Women might apparently be accepted in the leadership positions of certain offices of church and society, but not in the very high positions of Moderator of the General Assembly, which is the highest position in the Presbyterian Church, and Governor of the State or President of the Federation.
- (vi) Rural dwellers, women and those with lower educational qualifications, think women participate more than men in fundraising; but the opinion of urban and suburban men differs from this.
- (vii) The acceptance of women's partnership with men in leadership is influenced by the location, gender and education of respondents from church and society.
- (viii) The attitude of respondents towards the theological education of women was influenced by their level of education, location and gender.
- (ix) Lack of access to funds is a major set-back for women who are interested in politics.

A strong opinion may have been formed in favour of the creation of more space for women to be admitted to leadership positions in church and society; but a great deal of enlightenment needs to occur to overcome the obvious cultural hurdles. It must be noted, however, that this study neither advocates the 'dethronement' of men from leadership positions, nor the 'enthronement' of matriarchy. It argues for equal space for women so that they can unfetter their talents in matters of leadership. This is a way to promote the spirit of partnership among men and women in church and society.

7.6 CHAPTER SIX

In this chapter, we proposed moving from gender stereotyping to gender partnership. This is partly because, according to Joy Kennedy (1995: 118), “The world of humanity has two wings – one is women and the other is men. Not until both are equally developed can the bird fly”. The way forward is by means of a new community of men and women in participation, not women taking over or men handing over but both working in partnership. In the proposed partnership, the church has to play a major role by creating more room for diversity which will in turn build an atmosphere of partnership. Knowing that development involves the totality of the human life, the church should be an agent of change through the encouragement of partnership in all its activities of human life..

Thus the following are regarded as the summative points arising from this chapter:

- Partnership is imperative for progress in church and community as partnership is necessary not only for the church as *koinonia* “but also to enable the Church to provide a model for society, which is grappling with the same issues of shared responsibility and accountability.
- Genuine partnership thrives when reciprocity is upheld and diversity not compromised in educational, economic, religio-cultural and leadership/political spheres of human society.
- The task before the scholars and practitioners of practical theology and development is to seriously note and creatively engage the theologies, cultures and worldviews that have hitherto formed and shaped the perceptions of God and people. This means calling into work, a new critical hermeneutical process and re-conceptualisation.
- Some strategies for engendering partnership were discussed. Among them are agitation, power sharing and a change in attitude and mind-set.

- However, the point at issue is not the creation of “men’s world” or “Women’s world” but a change in mindset which is the prerequisite for our search for freedom and a better human community where partnership flourishes.

Some recommendations to the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria as well as government and other bodies are outlined below.

7.7 CONCLUDING RECOMMENDATIONS

We would like to recommend that:

- The Presbyterian church of Nigeria should not only continue to encourage the ordination of women, but should give them their rightful positions by not compromising seniority because of gender. In addition, the PCN should design policies that will give women space at the apex of the church’s leadership.
- The education of women, especially theological education, has to be taken seriously. From the result of our empirical survey, it is evident that women need to be empowered through education so that they can do their own interpretation of tradition and of scripture against the background of their experiences of joy, pain, struggles or strides in life. The Nigerian society and the church should invest in women’s education. This could be achieved through free education or even by rich families adopting and sponsoring the poor. The church, in particular, should encourage and sponsor women to aggressively embark on theological education. Partnership between women and men should form part of the curricular in all institutions of learning. Furthermore, the Presbyterian church of Nigeria should develop gender sensitive policies in its theological institutions to take seriously gender inclusive languages.
- The Presbyterian Church of Nigeria should, as a matter of urgency design policy that allows 50% women representation on matters involving finance management in the church. This is because women should not only raise funds but they should also be part of managing the funds they raise.

- The church should design policies to protect the widows and their properties and disciplinary action should be taken against any of its members engaged in the unjust act of dehumanising widows. All unjust structures should give way for transformation and a change of mind-set
- The Presbyterian Churches should join groups that call for mainstreaming women and should start democratising structures and opening up leadership positions for women within the churches, in the spirit of the Gospel.
- The Church should comply with gender directives issued by global ecumenical bodies such as World Council of Churches and the World Alliance of Reformed churches. These bodies have stressed the need for partnership between men and women, as well as the need to allow women use their God-given potential effectively in leadership. Among other duties of World Council of Churches is a call for the churches to strive towards the promotion of justice and peace. Promotion of gender justice should be a priority to the church.

The Nigerian Government should

- Draw policies that will monitor and ensure that at least 40% representation of women from the local to the national levels of government is more vigorously implemented. This will make it possible for women to have more space to join in contest within the political arena. In addition, special funds could be provided for women to access so that money will not be a stumbling block to their political aspirations.
- In Nigeria, Political leadership needs to be given a positive image so that women can participate effectively, for Nigerian politics is currently associated with thuggery and violence and we therefore assume that women are supposed to avoid it.
- In the Nigerian institutions, just as in church owned institutions, Gender training should be part of the curricula for all institutions, from primary to tertiary, with emphasis on the need for partnership between boys and girls early in life. Families should be encouraged to see the girl child and boy child as equal and also to treat them as such.

- The government should set up Widows' Welfare Committees and husbands should be encouraged to write wills⁴⁵ recognising the girl child and wife as part of the beneficiaries.

The Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) working with women in Nigeria among other things should

- Allow women to speak for themselves. They should not work on assumption that they know all the experiences and needs of the women but, should seek to know the realities on ground as they affect women's experiences of life.
- Be transparent. Funds received from donors on behalf of women should be used to transform women's economic situations.

Women and Women's Groups

- Women need to form solidarity vanguard teams to protect women, especially in rural areas.
- Women should develop question culture where they are bold to ask questions on their oppressive positions and also demand answers.
- Women should develop a new mind-set. They should rewrite and recreate the negative stereotypes that have hitherto been a hindrance to harnessing their potentials. In addition, women should raise their male and female children in the spirit of partnership, not preferring the boys to the girls and also not spending all they have on the boys at the expense of the girls
- Women must be clear on what they want to do, and have an honest mind. They must be exposed to civic education from grassroots to national levels and should be involved in writing political party manifestos in order to ensure that their agenda is taken on board.
- Women have great potential which they could harness to make a difference for themselves and the entire society. All they need is the courage to take the initiative in organising themselves. They should no longer allow themselves to be used to dehumanise

⁴⁵ I know that the writing of a will is not part of our culture but, with the dehumanisation of women, especially widows after the death of their husbands, I suggest it as something worth doing. Husbands should write their wills and wives should do the same. People should no longer be proud of 'reaping from where they did not sow'.

their fellow women or sit and watch themselves and other women being dehumanised in an unjust manner.

- Women and men should indicate their rejection of patriarchal structures, philosophies and ideologies and therefore aim at transforming the same structures for the good of all.

6.5 CONCLUSION

The hypothesis of this research holds that gender stereotyping that portrays women negatively has to give way to gender partnership for us to have holistic human development. Furthermore, that the long unutilised potentials in women and approach of partnership among other things, can enhance the process of transformation in church and society and reflect the values of God's kingdom that are inherent in this approach.

While not claiming to be exhaustive, we could say that the main focus of this research was to lift out some vital points concerning issues that cause gender stereotyping, as well as to help people think of partnership between women and men as a way forward in church and society. Now the church, society, NGOs, and women themselves are challenged to work with a new mind-set in order to challenge the unjust structural patriarchal inequalities which, among others, breed cultural dehumanization, political manipulation, economic exploitation, and the social intimidation of women. A call is directed to all humans to engage in this process of ensuring equal dignity and human worth. The time to act is now.

APPENDIX 1 QUESTIONNAIRE (CHURCH)

QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE PARTICIPATION OF MEN AND WOMEN IN THE MINISTRY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF NIGERIA

Aim: The aim of this questionnaire is to do a survey and know how much space women occupy in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria and the level of partnership in ministry that exists between women and men in this denomination.

QUESTIONS: (Please mark X where necessary to indicate your answer).

1	Personal Information: a. Parish: _____ b. Gender: <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female c. Age: <input type="checkbox"/> 18-25 <input type="checkbox"/> 26-39 <input type="checkbox"/> 40-59 <input type="checkbox"/> 60+ d. Level of education: <input type="checkbox"/> Primary <input type="checkbox"/> Secondary <input type="checkbox"/> University/Tertiary e. How long have you been a member of PCN? <input type="checkbox"/> 0-5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6-10 <input type="checkbox"/> 11-20 <input type="checkbox"/> more																														
2	What is the percentage of women in your parish? <input type="checkbox"/> 0-39 <input type="checkbox"/> 40-49 <input type="checkbox"/> 50-60 <input type="checkbox"/> More																														
3	Do you think women have enough space to express their talents in the Church? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure																														
Women participate more than men in the following activities: (From the options below indicate whether you Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD), or Not Sure (NS)).																															
4	Preaching																														
5	Praying.....																														
6	Church cleaning.....																														
7	Cooking for meanings.....																														
8	Fund raising.....																														
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9	Female Theological education is a priority in the PCN. <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure																														
10	The church will be comfortable with the election of a woman as the Moderator of the General Assembly?																														

	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure																														
11	Are you happy with the ordination/leadership of women in the Church? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure																														
Here are some of the issues that negatively influence women's leadership positions in churches: <i>(In nos. 12-16 indicate whether you Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD), or Not Sure (NS)).</i>																															
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15 Women are not naturally pure (menstruation/pregnancy).....	1	2	3	4	5																										
16	What percentage of women are Board members in your Parish? <input type="checkbox"/> 0-39% <input type="checkbox"/> 40-49% <input type="checkbox"/> 50-60% <input type="checkbox"/> More																														
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What do you think is the best way to encourage women to become more involved in the church's leadership?																															
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21 Educate them	1	2	3	4	5																										
22 Allow more women into leadership positions	1	2	3	4	5																										

23	Punish perpetrators of cultural oppression against women	1	2	3	4	5
24	Deliberate policy for equal participation of male/female members in all Boards/Committee meetings.....	1	2	3	4	5

Any other comments? _____

Thanks for your sincere answers

The questionnaire in the first set of questions sought to know the location, gender, age, educational qualification of the respondents. This was in the bid to know whether or not they were influenced by any of these.

TABLES

The tables below show the location, gender, age and educational qualifications of the respondents. In addition, our survey questions and findings were put more clearly.

Table 5-1a: Location

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Urban	15	33.3	33.3	33.3
Suburban	15	33.3	33.3	66.7
Rural	15	33.3	33.3	100.0
Total	45	100.0	100.0	

Table 5-1b: Gender

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Male	13	28.9	28.9	28.9
female	32	71.1	71.1	100.0
Total	45	100.0	100.0	

Table 5-1c: Age

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 18-25	4	8.9	8.9	8.9
26-39	10	22.2	22.2	31.1
40-59	26	57.8	57.8	88.9
60+	5	11.1	11.1	100.0
Total	45	100.0	100.0	

Table 5-1d: Education

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Primary	16	35.6	35.6	35.6
	Secondary	13	28.9	28.9	64.4
	Tertiary/University	16	35.6	35.6	100.0
	Total	45	100.0	100.0	

After the first set of questions which dealt with personal data of respondents, the questions on the following tables were asked and the responses are found as recorded on tables 5.2-5.24.

Table 5-2: What is the percentage of women in your parish?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	40-49	1	2.2	2.2	2.2
	50-60	16	35.6	35.6	37.8
	More	28	62.2	62.2	100.0
	Total	45	100.0	100.0	

Table 5-3: Do you think women have enough space to express their talents in the Church?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	35	77.8	77.8	77.8
	No	6	13.3	13.3	91.1
	Not Sure	4	8.9	8.9	100.0
	Total	45	100.0	100.0	

Table 5-4: Women participate more than men in the following activities: Preaching

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	3	6.7	6.7	6.7
	Agree	13	28.9	28.9	35.6
	Disagree	24	53.3	53.3	88.9
	Strongly Disagree	5	11.1	11.1	100.0
	Total	45	100.0	100.0	

**Table 5-5: Women participate more than men in the following activities:
Praying**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly	25	55.6	55.6	55.6
	Agree	17	37.8	37.8	93.3
	Disagree	3	6.7	6.7	100.0
	Total	45	100.0	100.0	

Table 5-6: Women participate more than men in the following activities: Church Cleaning

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	39	86.7	86.7	86.7
	Agree	5	11.1	11.1	97.8
	Strongly Disagree	1	2.2	2.2	100.0
	Total	45	100.0	100.0	

**Table 5-7: Women participate more than men in the following activities:
Cooking for meetings**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly	41	91.1	91.1	91.1
	Agree	3	6.7	6.7	97.8
	Not sure	1	2.2	2.2	100.0
	Total	45	100.0	100.0	

Table 5-8: Women participate more than men in the following activities: Fund Raising

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	5	11.1	11.1	11.1
	Agree	14	31.1	31.1	42.2
	Disagree	13	28.9	28.9	71.1
	Strongly Disagree	12	26.7	26.7	97.8
	Not sure	1	2.2	2.2	100.0
	Total	45	100.0	100.0	

Table 5-9: Female Theological education is a priority in the PCN.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	4	8.9	8.9	8.9
	Agree	21	46.7	46.7	55.6
	Disagree	12	26.7	26.7	82.2
	Strongly disagree	3	6.7	6.7	88.9
	Not sure	5	11.1	11.1	100.0
	Total	45	100.0	100.0	

Table 5-10: The church will be comfortable with the election of a woman as the Moderator of the General Assembly?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	8	17.8	17.8	17.8
	Agree	10	22.2	22.2	40.0
	Disagree	17	37.8	37.8	77.8
	Strongly disagree	8	17.8	17.8	95.6
	Not sure	2	4.4	4.4	100.0
	Total	45	100.0	100.0	

Table 5-11: Are you happy with the ordination/leadership of women in the Church?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	42	93.3	93.3	93.3
	No	2	4.4	4.4	97.8
	Not Sure	1	2.2	2.2	100.0
	Total	45	100.0	100.0	

Table 5-12: Here are some of the issues that negatively influence women's leadership positions in churches: Paul's Epistle in 1Corinthians 14:34 prohibits female ordination

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	2	4.4	4.4	4.4
	Agree	4	8.9	8.9	13.3
	Disagree	13	28.9	28.9	42.2
	Strongly disagree	19	42.2	42.2	84.4
	Not sure	7	15.6	15.6	100.0
	Total	45	100.0	100.0	

Table 5-13: Here are some of the issues that negatively influence women's leadership positions in churches: Our culture is against female ordination/Leadership

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Agree	7	15.6	15.6	15.6
Disagree	24	53.3	53.3	68.9
Strongly disagree	12	26.7	26.7	95.6
Not sure	2	4.4	4.4	100.0
Total	45	100.0	100.0	

Table 5-14: Here are some of the issues that negatively influence women's leadership positions in churches: Women's place is in the home

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly agree	1	2.2	2.2	2.2
Agree	9	20.0	20.0	22.2
Disagree	20	44.4	44.4	66.7
Stongely disagree	14	31.1	31.1	97.8
Not sure	1	2.2	2.2	100.0
Total	45	100.0	100.0	

Table 5-15: Here are some of the issues that negatively influence women's leadership positions in churches: Women are not naturally pure (because of menstruation/pregnancy)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly agree	2	4.4	4.4	4.4
Agree	3	6.7	6.7	11.1
Disagree	18	40.0	40.0	51.1
Stongely disagree	20	44.4	44.4	95.6
Not sure	2	4.4	4.4	100.0
Total	45	100.0	100.0	

Table 5-16: What percentage of women are Board members in your Parish?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 0-39	14	31.1	31.1	31.1
40-49	11	24.4	24.4	55.6
50-60	15	33.3	33.3	88.9
More	5	11.1	11.1	100.0
Total	45	100.0	100.0	

**Table 5-17: The greatest challenges faced by women in church leadership are:
Lack of adequate education**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly agree	17	37.8	37.8	37.8
Agree	12	26.7	26.7	64.4
Disagree	8	17.8	17.8	82.2
Strongly disagree	8	17.8	17.8	100.0
Total	45	100.0	100.0	

**Table 5-18: The greatest challenges faced by women in church leadership are:
Negative cultural influence (especially on widows)**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly agree	7	15.6	15.6	15.6
Agree	17	37.8	37.8	53.3
Disagree	13	28.9	28.9	82.2
Strongly disagree	4	8.9	8.9	91.1
Not sure	4	8.9	8.9	100.0
Total	45	100.0	100.0	

**Table 5-19: The greatest challenges faced by women in church leadership are:
Domestic pressure**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly agree	7	15.6	15.6	15.6
Agree	23	51.1	51.1	66.7
Disagree	11	24.4	24.4	91.1
Strongly disagree	3	6.7	6.7	97.8
Not sure	1	2.2	2.2	100.0
Total	45	100.0	100.0	

**Table 5-20: The greatest challenges faced by women in church leadership are:
Lack of interest on the part of women**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly agree	3	6.7	6.7	6.7
Agree	12	26.7	26.7	33.3
Disagree	17	37.8	37.8	71.1
Strongly disagree	12	26.7	26.7	97.8
Not sure	1	2.2	2.2	100.0
Total	45	100.0	100.0	

Table 5-21: What do you think is the best way to encourage women to become more involved in the church's leadership? Educate them

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly agree	29	64.4	64.4	64.4
Agree	15	33.3	33.3	97.8
Disagree	1	2.2	2.2	100.0
Total	45	100.0	100.0	

Table 5-22: What do you think is the best way to encourage women to become more involved in the church's leadership? Allow more women into leadership positions

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly agree	15	33.3	33.3	33.3
Agree	25	55.6	55.6	88.9
Disagree	3	6.7	6.7	95.6
Not sure	2	4.4	4.4	100.0
Total	45	100.0	100.0	

Table 5-23: What do you think is the best way to encourage women to become more involved in the church's leadership? Punish perpetrators of cultural oppression against women

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly agree	15	33.3	33.3	33.3
Agree	20	44.4	44.4	77.8
Disagree	4	8.9	8.9	86.7
Strongly disagree	2	4.4	4.4	91.1
Not sure	4	8.9	8.9	100.0
Total	45	100.0	100.0	

Table 5-24: What do you think is the best way to encourage women to become more involved in the church's leadership? Deliberate policy for equal participation of male/female members in all Boards/Committee meetings

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly agree	12	26.7	26.7	26.7
Agree	14	31.1	31.1	57.8
Disagree	12	26.7	26.7	84.4
Strongly disagree	7	15.6	15.6	100.0
Total	45	100.0	100.0	

After the 24 questions on the church's questionnaire, the next set of questionnaire were distributed among some government workers. The aim of the questionnaire was to ascertain the women's participation in society.

**APPENDIX 2 QUESTIONNAIRE (SOCIETY)
QUESTIONNAIRE
ON WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN SOCIETY**

Aim: The aim of this questionnaire is to do a survey and know how much space women occupy in government using some government establishments in Abia State as our focal point.

QUESTIONS: (Please mark X where necessary to indicate your answer)

1	<p>Personal Information:</p> <p>a. Place of work: _____</p> <p>b. Gender: <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female</p> <p>c. Age: <input type="checkbox"/> 18-25 <input type="checkbox"/> 26-35 <input type="checkbox"/> 36-59 <input type="checkbox"/> 60+</p> <p>d. Level of education: <input type="checkbox"/> Primary <input type="checkbox"/> Secondary <input type="checkbox"/> University/Tertiary</p> <p>e. Do you hold a position in your establishment? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>f. How long have you been a worker? <input type="checkbox"/> 0-5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6-10 <input type="checkbox"/> 11-20 <input type="checkbox"/> 21+</p>
2	<p>How would you rate the percentage of women on your staff roll?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 0-30% <input type="checkbox"/> 35-49% <input type="checkbox"/> 50-60% <input type="checkbox"/> More</p>
3	<p>Do you think women have enough space to use their potentials in your establishment?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure</p>
4	<p>Are you/will you be comfortable with the leadership of women in your establishment?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure</p>
5	<p>What percentage of women are members of your Boards/Decision making bodies?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 0-30% <input type="checkbox"/> 35-49% <input type="checkbox"/> 50-60% <input type="checkbox"/> more</p>
6	<p>Are women active in politics in your state and/or local government?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure</p>
7	<p>Is women's participation in politics a priority to the Nation?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure</p>

8	Election of women as President/State Governors will improve sanity and the economy of the Nation.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure
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There are many obstacles that hinder women’s active participation in politics. (From the options below select whether you Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD), or Not Sure (NS).

		<u>SA</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>NS</u>
9	Lack of adequate education.....	1	2	3	4	5
10	Lack of funds.....	1	2	3	4	5
11	Fear of violence/night meetings involved.....	1	2	3	4	5
12	Negative cultural influence on women.....	1	2	3	4	5
13	High level of corruption in the system.....	1	2	3	4	5
14	Lack of political interest by women.....	1	2	3	4	5

What do you think is the best way to encourage women to become more involved in politics?

		<u>SA</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>NS</u>
15	Encourage the education of women.....	1	2	3	4	5
16	Remove violence/night meetings involved	1	2	3	4	5
17	Encourage partnership between men and women	1	2	3	4	5
18	Punish perpetrators of cultural oppression against women	1	2	3	4	5
19	Provide Funds for political activities.....	1	2	3	4	5

20	Do you think there should be Gender Commission by the Government as a way of encouraging equal male/female participation in politics?	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure
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Any other comments? _____

Thanks for your sincere answers.

Table 5-25a: Ministry

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Ministry of Finance	4	16.7	16.7	16.7
	Abia State Broadcasting Cooperation	4	16.7	16.7	33.3
	Labour Union	4	16.7	16.7	50.0
	Bureau of Establishment	4	16.7	16.7	66.7
	Bureau of Common Services and Service Monitoring	4	16.7	16.7	83.3
	Administration - Head of Service	4	16.7	16.7	100.0
	Total	24	100.0	100.0	

Table 5-25b: Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	12	50.0	50.0	50.0
	Female	12	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	24	100.0	100.0	

Table 5-25c: Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	26-35	6	25.0	25.0	25.0
	36-59	18	75.0	75.0	100.0
	Total	24	100.0	100.0	

Table 5-25d: Education

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Secondary	1	4.2	4.2	4.2
	Tertiary/University	23	95.8	95.8	100.0
	Total	24	100.0	100.0	

Table 5-25e: Duration

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0-5	1	4.2	4.2	4.2
	6-10	2	8.3	8.3	12.5
	11-20	13	54.2	54.2	66.7
	21+	8	33.3	33.3	100.0
	Total	24	100.0	100.0	

Table 5-26: How would you rate the percentage of women on your staff roll?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0-30	2	8.3	8.3	8.3
	31-49	3	12.5	12.5	20.8
	50-60	15	62.5	62.5	83.3
	More	4	16.7	16.7	100.0
	Total	24	100.0	100.0	

Table 5-27: Do you think women have enough space to use their potential in your establishment?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	22	91.7	91.7	91.7
	No	1	4.2	4.2	95.8
	Not Sure	1	4.2	4.2	100.0
	Total	24	100.0	100.0	

Table 5-28: Are you/will you be comfortable with the leadership of women in your establishment?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	21	87.5	87.5	87.5
	No	2	8.3	8.3	95.8
	Not Sure	1	4.2	4.2	100.0
	Total	24	100.0	100.0	

Table 5-29: What percentage of women are members of your Boards/Decision making bodies?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0-30	7	29.2	29.2	29.2
	31-49	13	54.2	54.2	83.3
	50-60	4	16.7	16.7	100.0
	Total	24	100.0	100.0	

Table 5-30: Are women active in politics in your state and/or local government?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	16	66.7	66.7	66.7
	No	7	29.2	29.2	95.8
	Not Sure	1	4.2	4.2	100.0
	Total	24	100.0	100.0	

Table 5-31: Is women's participation in politics a priority to the Nation?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	12	50.0	50.0	50.0
	No	9	37.5	37.5	87.5
	Not Sure	3	12.5	12.5	100.0
	Total	24	100.0	100.0	

Table 5-32: Election of women as President/State Governors will improve sanity and the economy of the Nation.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	10	41.7	41.7	41.7
	Agree	10	41.7	41.7	83.3
	Disagree	2	8.3	8.3	91.7
	Strongly Disagree	1	4.2	4.2	95.8
	Not Sure	1	4.2	4.2	100.0
	Total	24	100.0	100.0	

Table 5-33: There are many obstacles that hinder women's active participation in Politics: Lack of adequate education

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	5	20.8	20.8	20.8
	Agree	5	20.8	20.8	41.7
	Disagree	8	33.3	33.3	75.0
	Strongly Disagree	3	12.5	12.5	87.5
	Not Sure	3	12.5	12.5	100.0
	Total	24	100.0	100.0	

Table 5-34: There are many obstacles that hinder women's active participation in politics: Lack of funds

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	10	41.7	41.7	41.7
	Agree	11	45.8	45.8	87.5
	Disagree	1	4.2	4.2	91.7
	Strongly Disagree	1	4.2	4.2	95.8
	Not Sure	1	4.2	4.2	100.0
	Total	24	100.0	100.0	

Table 5-35: There are many obstacles that hinder women's active participation in politics: Fear of violence/night meetings involved

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Agree	13	54.2	54.2	54.2
Agree	9	37.5	37.5	91.7
Not Sure	2	8.3	8.3	100.0
Total	24	100.0	100.0	

Table 5-36: There are many obstacles that hinder women's active participation in politics: Negative cultural influence on women

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Agree	9	37.5	37.5	37.5
Agree	10	41.7	41.7	79.2
Disagree	5	20.8	20.8	100.0
Total	24	100.0	100.0	

Table 5-37: There are many obstacles that hinder women's active participation in politics: High level of corruption in the system

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Agree	6	25.0	25.0	25.0
Agree	6	25.0	25.0	50.0
Disagree	9	37.5	37.5	87.5
Strongly Disagree	1	4.2	4.2	91.7
Not Sure	2	8.3	8.3	100.0
Total	24	100.0	100.0	

Table 5-38: There are many obstacles that hinder women's active participation in politics: Lack of political interest by women

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Agree	7	29.2	29.2	29.2
Agree	5	20.8	20.8	50.0
Disagree	5	20.8	20.8	70.8
Strongly Disagree	4	16.7	16.7	87.5
Not Sure	3	12.5	12.5	100.0
Total	24	100.0	100.0	

Table 5-39: What do you think is the best way to encourage women to become more involved in politics? Encourage the education of women

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Agree	15	62.5	62.5	62.5
Agree	7	29.2	29.2	91.7
Strongly Disagree	1	4.2	4.2	95.8
Not Sure	1	4.2	4.2	100.0
Total	24	100.0	100.0	

Table 5-40: What do you think is the best way to encourage women to become more involved in politics? Remove violence/night meetings involved

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Agree	13	54.2	54.2	54.2
Agree	11	45.8	45.8	100.0
Total	24	100.0	100.0	

Table 5-41: What do you think is the best way to encourage women to become more involved in politics? Encourage partnership between men and women

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Agree	10	41.7	41.7	41.7
Agree	10	41.7	41.7	83.3
Disagree	4	16.7	16.7	100.0
Total	24	100.0	100.0	

Table 5-42: What do you think is the best way to encourage women to become more involved in politics? Punish perpetrators of cultural oppression against women

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Agree	11	45.8	45.8	45.8
Agree	6	25.0	25.0	70.8
Disagree	6	25.0	25.0	95.8
Not Sure	1	4.2	4.2	100.0
Total	24	100.0	100.0	

Table 5-43: What do you think is the best way to encourage women to become more involved in politics? Provide Funds for political activities

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	9	37.5	37.5	37.5
	Agree	12	50.0	50.0	87.5
	Disagree	1	4.2	4.2	91.7
	Strongly Disagree	1	4.2	4.2	95.8
	Not Sure	1	4.2	4.2	100.0
	Total	24	100.0	100.0	

Table 5-44: Do you think there should be Gender Commission by the Government as a way of encouraging equal male/female participation in politics?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	6	25.0	25.0	25.0
	Agree	7	29.2	29.2	54.2
	Disagree	7	29.2		83.3
	Strongly Disagree	2	8.3	8.3	91.7
	Not Sure	2	8.3	8.3	100.0
	Total	24	100.0	100.0	

Table 5-45: Ministry * How would you rate the percentage of women on your staff roll? Cross tabulation

			How would you rate the percentage of women on your staff roll?				Total
			0-30	31-49	50-60	More	
Ministry	Ministry of Finance	Count	0	2	2	0	4
		% within Ministry	.0%	50.0%	50.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Abia State Broadcasting Cooperation	Count	0	0	3	1	4
		% within Ministry	.0%	.0%	75.0%	25.0%	100.0%
	Labour Union	Count	2	0	1	1	4
		% within Ministry	50.0%	.0%	25.0%	25.0%	100.0%
	Bureau of Establishment	Count	0	0	3	1	4
		% within Ministry	.0%	.0%	75.0%	25.0%	100.0%
	Bureau of Common Services and Service	Count	0	1	3	0	4
		% within Ministry	.0%	25.0%	75.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Abia State Transport Corporation	Count	0	0	3	1	4
		% within Ministry	.0%	.0%	75.0%	25.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	2	3	15	4	24
		% within Ministry	8.3%	12.5%	62.5%	16.7%	100.0%

**Table 5-46: Ministry * What percentage of women are members of your Boards/Decision making bodies:
Cross tabulation**

			What percentage of women are members of your Boards/Decision making bodies?			Total
			0-30	31-49	50-60	
Ministry	Ministry of Finance	Count	0	4	0	4
		% within Ministry	.0%	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Abia State Broadcasting Cooperation	Count	2	0	2	4
		% within Ministry	50.0%	.0%	50.0%	100.0%
	Labour Union	Count	1	2	1	4
		% within Ministry	25.0%	50.0%	25.0%	100.0%
	Bureau of Establishment	Count	0	4	0	4
		% within Ministry	.0%	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Bureau of Common Services and Service	Count	1	2	1	4
		% within Ministry	25.0%	50.0%	25.0%	100.0%
	Abia State Transport Corporation	Count	3	1	0	4
		% within Ministry	75.0%	25.0%	.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	7	13	4	24
		% within Ministry	29.2%	54.2%	16.7%	100.0%



ABIA STATE GOVERNMENT OF NIGERIA

Office of the Head of Service, Library Avenue, Umuhia

Our Ref: HSA/S.00102/1/70

September 6, 2006

The Academic Supervisor
Faculty of Theology
University of Stellenbosch
South Africa.

Sir,

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT LETTER

I wish to most sincerely acknowledge receipt of your letter dated **August 14, 2006** introducing **Rev. (Mrs) Ijeoma Onwunta**, a doctorate degree student of your University, who is undertaking a research project on **Gender Stereotyping in Church and Society**; with Nigeria as a case study.

I confirm that Rev. Ijeoma received the required responses, assistance and co-operation of both the Abia State Public Service and the Church Community while conducting her research programme.

Accept, the considerations of **my goodwill** and that of the entire **Abia State Public Service**.

Yours faithfully,

Uchenna Emezue
Head of Service

APPENDIX 4

**LETTER FROM THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OFFICE OF THE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF NIGERIA**



**THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF NIGERIA
GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

Office of the Principal Clerk

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September 9, 2006

The Academic Supervisor
Faculty of Theology
University of Stellenbosch
South Africa

Sir/Madam,

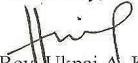
LETTER OF ATTESTATION: IJEOMA ESTHER ONWUNTA

I attest that Rev. Mrs. Ijeoma Esther Onwunta, a doctoral degree student of your University conducted her research work in some parishes of The Presbyterian Church of Nigeria.

Within this period of research, Rev. Mrs. Onwunta received the desired co-operation and responses from our revered church members. It was exciting. I wish to put it on record that we enjoyed her cooperation as well and look forward for such opportunity in future.

God bless.

Yours truly,


Rev. Ukpai A. Kalu
Deputy Clerk

REV. DR. B. F. FUBARA-MANUEL (Principal Clerk), REV. U. A. KALU (Deputy Clerk)

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