



*Women Involvement in Leadership Responsibilities: A Study of Women in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Amuke Ohafia, Abia State, Nigeria*

## **Women Involvement in Leadership Responsibilities: A Study of Women in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Amuke Ohafia, Abia State, Nigeria**

By

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### **Abstract**

*The involvement of women in the life and mission of the church has remained a topic of theological, cultural, and socio-political discourse across Christian denominations globally. In the Nigerian context, particularly within the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria (PCN), the contributions of women have been significant in nurturing spirituality, community development, education, and evangelism. The research was carried out to determine women's involvement in leadership responsibilities: A study of women in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Amuke Ohafia, Abia State, Nigeria. The Presbyterian Church of Nigeria was selected due to its long-standing presence and active participation of both men and women in church affairs. This study therefore was carried out to determine women's involvement in leadership responsibilities with emphasis on women in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria. Specifically, the study identified leadership strategies adopted by women for increasing church membership, the roles expected of women in promoting sanitation in the Church, and the welfare support services of women in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Amuke Ohafia Parish. Four purposes of study and four research questions guided the study. The study adopted survey research design. The population of the study was 100. Questionnaire was the instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was validated by three experts in Christian Religion and tested for reliability using Cronbach Alpha method. The test yielded a coefficient of 0.84. The study found leadership strategies adopted by women in evangelism for increasing church membership, among others. It was recommended that the findings be adopted by church leaders to encourage other arms of the church in serving God and the church.*

**Keywords:** Case study, Church, Ecclesiastical Leadership, Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Women

### **Introduction**

The involvement of women in the Christian Church has been both historically significant and deeply contested. Across different cultures and theological traditions, the position and participation of women in ecclesiastical life have evolved in responses to doctrinal interpretations, socio-cultural transformations, and the global push for gender equality (Dike, 2021). The Christian faith, with its roots in the teachings of Jesus Christ and the early apostolic church, portrays various instances of women as active participants in religious life. Figures like Mary Magdalene, Priscilla, Phoebe, and Lydia played pivotal roles in the establishment and propagation of the faith (Romans 16:1-2; Acts 16:14-15). However, the transition from the biblical era to institutional Christianity saw a gradual marginalisation of women in leadership and decision-making roles. This historical backdrop is mirrored in various denominations



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worldwide, including the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria (PCN), which is the focus of this study.

The Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, (PCN), an offshoot of the 19th-century missionary enterprise by the Church of Scotland, has grown into a denomination with a strong presence in Nigeria's religious and educational landscape. Its foundational doctrines, polity, and governance structure are rooted in Reformed theology and Presbyterian polity, emphasising shared leadership and collective decision-making. While the church's constitution affirms the priesthood of all believers and allows for the ordination of women, practical implementation often falls short of these ideals (The Presbyterian Church of Nigeria Constitution, 2021). The PCN recognises the pivotal role of women in the Church in this study. Women are the adult female members of society, while study is an experimental work or observations made with a view to finding a solution to a problem. In this study women are the adult female members of the PCN, Amuke Ohafia, most of whom are conversant with the PCN order of worship and policies. Through the Women's Guild, the women mobilise thousands of women for spiritual, social, and developmental work. The women adopt various leadership strategies to increase church membership through evangelism, promote sanitation in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, and support welfare services in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Amuke and beyond. Nevertheless, women's involvement at higher levels of leadership—such as presbytery and synodical roles are dominated by men (Okonkwo, 2022).

The question of women's involvement in church life cannot be treated in isolation from the broader societal context. Nigeria, like many African societies, operates within a deeply patriarchal framework, where cultural norms often dictate gender roles and expectations. These cultural undercurrents frequently influence ecclesiastical attitudes, practices, and policies, leading to the subtle exclusion or marginalisation of women in decision-making (Olojede, 2023). Despite theological reforms and increasing advocacy for gender equity, deeply rooted patriarchal ideologies continue to influence the structures and practices within the PCN. Consequently, many congregations remain resistant to women assuming leadership or pastoral roles, even when such appointments are constitutionally and theologically valid (Amodu, 2020).

In recent years, feminist theologians and scholars of religion have called for a re-examination of traditional interpretations that limit women's roles in the church. According to Phiri and Nadar (2020), African women theologians are increasingly challenging both cultural and biblical interpretations that reinforce female subordination, advocating instead for an inclusive hermeneutic that upholds equality and justice. In this vein, the study of women's involvement in the PCN becomes a critical examination of the interplay between doctrine, tradition, culture, and contemporary gender discourse. Understanding how women participate, how they are perceived, and the extent of their influence in the PCN is not merely an ecclesiastical concern but a reflection of broader societal dynamics and struggles for equality.

The limited presence of women in strategic church leadership in the PCN is not due to a lack of capable or willing women but stems from structural, theological, and cultural impediments. Although the PCN Constitution (2021 edition) permits women's ordination and leadership, such permissions are often hindered by unwritten cultural practices and resistance from local congregations. For instance, certain presbyteries have never ordained a female minister or elder, despite having numerous active women in various church departments. Furthermore, the training and mentoring of women for leadership are not systematised, and theological



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institutions in Nigeria report fewer female candidates compared to their male counterparts (Eze & Alamu, 2023).

Efforts to integrate women into the broader life of the church have seen some improvements in the last two decades. Notably, women now serve as commissioned church agents, lead fellowships, and in a few progressive congregations, serve as ruling elders. However, the pace of change is uneven across regions, with more conservative congregations maintaining a status quo that limits women to auxiliary roles. As noted by Nwaokoro (2021), without intentional reforms, training opportunities, and ecclesiastical reorientation, the church risks perpetuating gender inequality and alienating half of its membership from meaningful participation in its governance and ministry.

In terms of theological justification, scholars like Njoroge and Musa (2022) emphasise the importance of contextual Bible reading that reflects the liberating message of Christ. Jesus's interaction with women in the Gospels shows a radical inclusivity for his time, as he engaged with women as disciples, witnesses, and leaders (Luke 8:1-3; John 4:7-29). The early church followed this example, with women like Junia (Romans 16:7) identified as apostles. Therefore, the marginalisation of women in church leadership cannot be justified theologically without misreading or selectively interpreting scripture (Dike, 2025). It becomes imperative for the PCN to align its practices not only with its constitution but with a Christ-centred understanding of ministry, inclusion, and justice.

The ongoing global discourse on gender equality, including within religious spaces, further underscores the urgency of addressing this issue (Dike & Agbo, 2025). As the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 5 advocates for gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

Religious institutions like the PCN have a moral and spiritual responsibility to lead by example. Inclusive church leadership is not only a matter of justice but also a strategic necessity. Studies have shown that gender-inclusive institutions—both religious and secular—are more effective, representative, and resilient (UN Women, 2022). Thus, this study seeks to interrogate the current level of women's involvement in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, examining the historical, theological, cultural, and structural factors that shape their participation. It explored the gaps between policy and practice, the challenges faced by women who seek leadership roles, and the implications for the church's witness and mission in contemporary Nigeria. Through this study, it is hoped that practical recommendations will emerge that can guide the PCN toward a more inclusive, equitable, and Christ-centred model of ministry.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study is to determine women's involvement in leadership responsibilities: A study of women in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Amuke Ohafia. Specifically, the study sought to achieve the following objectives;

1. Identify women's leadership strategies for increasing church membership through evangelism in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Amuke Parish. Replaced: Identify women leadership strategies for increasing church membership through evangelism in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Amuke Parish.
2. Examine leadership roles expected of women in promoting sanitation in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Amuke Ohafia Parish,



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3. Find out the welfare support services of women in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Amuke Ohafia Parish.
4. Examine women modalities for promoting the ministry of songs and hymns in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Amuke Ohafia Parish.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The following research questions were answered by this study:

1. What are women's leadership strategies for increasing church membership through evangelism in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Amuke Parish?
2. What are the leadership roles expected of women in promoting sanitation in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Amuke Ohafia Parish?
3. What are the welfare support services of women in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Amuke Ohafia Parish?
4. What are women modalities for promoting the ministry of songs and hymns in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Amuke Ohafia Parish.

### **Methodology**

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. According to Fieldman (2013), descriptive survey design is a methodology designed to elicit the opinions of people (data) from a given population and typically utilises a questionnaire as a survey instrument. The design is appropriate for this study since it used questionnaire to elicit the opinions of women regarding their critical roles in the Presbyterian church of Nigeria, Amuke Ohafia Parish. The study was carried out in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Amuke Ohafia, Abia State, Nigeria. The area is located at the South-Eastern part of Nigeria. The choice of the area by the researcher was because of the presence of the PCN in the state and the contributions of the church in the area. The state shares boundaries with Rivers, Imo, Enugu, Anambra and Ebonyi States. The population of the study was 100. It comprised of all the women Guild members who are 21 years and above in the area of study.

The total population of 100 was used for the study because the number is not too large and the researcher could handle it. This discussion is in line with the submission of Uzoagulu (2011), who stated that when a group of respondents to which a study is carried out is too small, no sampling is required. Therefore, there was no sampling.

The instrument for data collection was a researcher-designed questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed based on a literature review and interviews with the clergy and women leaders. The instrument consists of Part A and B. Part A was used to obtain background information from the respondents. Part B was further divided into four clusters (1-4). Cluster 1, focused on evangelism strategies for increasing church membership, cluster 2 was on roles expected of women in promoting sanitation in the church, cluster 3: women's welfare support services to members and society, while cluster 4 was on women's modalities for promoting songs and hymns in the church. Each questionnaire item has two response scale and they are Agree (A) and Disagree (D). The respondents were required to rank the response options to an item by checking either Agree or Disagree. The instrument was validated by three experts: one a pastor, the other a woman leader and one women's guild president. Their choice is based on their knowledge of the roles of women in the Presbyterian church of Nigeria. They were requested to check the appropriateness of the questionnaire items. Based on their comments and recommendations, necessary modifications were made to arrive at the final draft of the questionnaire.



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The researcher, with the help of research assistants administered the 100 copies of the questionnaires to respondents and retrieved them on completion. Before the exercise, the research assistants were instructed on what to do when administering and retrieving copies of the questionnaire from the respondents. The research assistants read and interpreted the questionnaire items to illiterate respondents. They also helped them to fill them. The duration of the research exercise was about two months.

The percentage score was used in analysing the data based on the research questions stated in chapter one. Each item in the questionnaire was assigned a two-point response scale and the response options were Agree (A) Disagree (D)

The respondents were required to rank the response options to an item based on the level of agreement or disagreement with the item. To make decision on the respondent's degree of agreement or disagreement with the item in the questionnaire, any item with 25% or above of the responses of respondents was considered agreed, while those with less than that were considered disagreed (Uzoagulu, 2011).

## RESULTS

In this chapter, the data collected were analysed to provide answers to the research questions. The findings were also presented based on the research questions answered. Brief discussions of the findings are also incorporated into the presentations.

### Research Question I

1. What women's leadership strategies for increasing church membership through evangelism in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Amuke Parish?

Table 1: Percentage responses of respondents on women leadership strategies for increasing church membership through evangelism in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Amuke Ohafia Parish (100).

S/N	Item Statements	% of Resp. to Agree	% of Resp. to Disagree	Decision
1.	Open - air preaching	83	17	Agree
2.	Door- to- door preaching	71	29	Agree
3.	Preaching through sermons	62	38	Agree
4.	Follow- up of new converts	94	06	Agree
5.	Giving tracts	61	39	Agree
6.	Inviting people to church	64	36	Agree
7.	Open local outreaches to share the gospel	79	21	Agree

Key: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

The data in Table 1 indicate that all seven items were above the cut-off point of 25%. This means that the respondents agree that there were women leadership strategies for increasing church membership in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Amuke Ohafia Parish.



## Research Questions 2

What are the leadership roles expected of women in promoting sanitation in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria Amuke Ohafia Parish?

**Table 2:** Percentage responses of respondents on leadership roles expected of women in Promoting sanitation in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Amuke Ohafia Parish. (N = 100)

S/N	Item Statements: the roles are to	% of Resp. to Agree	% of Resp. to Disagree	Decision
8	Cut the grass around the church.	82	18	Agree
9	Dust and clean the walls of the church building.	68	32	Agree
10	Clean and dust the windows.	67	23	Agree
11	Mop the floor and carpets.	73	27	Agree
12	Place dust bins at strategic places in the church.	68	32	Agree
13	Wipe out pews and railings.	74	26	Agree
14	Place foot mats at the entrance of the church building.	82	18	Agree
15	Provide toilets and urinals in the church.	72	18	Agree
16	Provide pipe-borne water.	62	38	Agree
17	Ensure that toilets are flushed after use.	58	42	Agree

Key: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

Data presented in Table 2 reveal that the ten items were above the cut-off points of 25%. This implies that the respondent agreed that they were leadership roles expected of women in Promoting sanitation in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Amuke Ohafia Parish.

## Research Question 3:

What are the welfare support services of women in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Amuke Ohafia Parish?

**Table 3:** Percentage responses of respondents on welfare support services of women in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Amuke Ohafia Parish (N =100)

S/N	Item Statements: The support services are	% of Resp. to Agree	% of Resp. to Disagree	Decision
18	Share their resources (money, clothes, food, etc.) with the less privileged.	58	42	Agree
19	Provide correct information on diseases e.g. Covid-19 to members and non-members of the church.	91	09	Agree
20	They pay hospital bills for the sick people.	92	08	Agree
21	They provide micro-credit loans to members.	89	11	Agree
22	They provide counseling services to girls and young mothers.	91	09	Agree
23	Sometimes they build houses for the less privileged people.	74	26	Agree



Key: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree.

Data presented in Table 3 disclosed that all the six items scored above the 25% cut-off point. This implies that the respondents agreed that they were welfare support services of women in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Amuke Ohafia Parish.

#### Research Questions 4:

What are women’s modalities for promoting the ministry of songs and hymns in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Amuke Ohafia Parish.

**Table 4:** Responses of respondents on modalities for promoting the ministry of songs and hymns in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Amuke Ohafia Parish (N = 100).

S/N	Item Statements: The modalities are	% of Resp. to Agree	% of Resp. to Disagree	Decision
24	Women sing songs and hymns in the church.	88	12	Agree
25	The songs and hymns could help member of the church to focus their minds on God.	66	34	Agree
26	Women organise singing competition in the church.	69	31	Agree
27	Women provide hymn books and choir robes to the church.	39	09	Agree
28	Women provide musical equipment.	63	37	Agree
29	Women could provide musical experts e.g. organists to play or train interested members of the church on the use of organ, piano, drum etc.	61	39	Agree

Key: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

The data in Table 4 presents the opinions of respondents on women’s modalities for promoting the ministry of singing of songs and hymns in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Amuke Ohafia Parish. The data revealed that all the six items scored above the 25%, indicating that the respondents agreed that they are strategies adopted by women for promoting the singing of songs and hymns in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Amuke Ohafia Parish.

#### Discussion of the Findings

The major findings of this study are discussed as follows:

The result of the data in Table 1 revealed that respondents agree that women lead in the PCN through open-air preaching, door-to-door preaching, preaching through sermons, follow-up with new believers, giving tracts and two others for increasing Church membership. These findings are in line with the opinions of Seed (2019) that the evangelist can evangelise by inviting the community to Church, though follow up with new believers and by having a plan for helping new believers grow spiritually.

The result of the data presented in Table 2 showed that respondents agree that women of the PCN lead in promoting sanitation in the Church by: cutting down grasses around the church



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premises, dust and clean the walls of the Church building, clean and dust the window, mop and clean the floor and carpets, place dust bins at strategic places in the Church and five others. Also, these views are in consonance with those of Warsh (2006), and Eveleigh (2002) who outlined regulations or guidelines for cleaning the church including that women should clean bushes around the Church and environs, wash the kitchen, bathrooms and halls and that they should build public toilets and urinals in the church.

The result of the data in Table 3 disclosed what respondents agreed women should do to offer welfare services to members and society. The items include that women should share their resources with the less privileged, provide correct information on diseases e.g.COVID-19 and provide counseling services to girls and young mothers on family issues. These finding agrees with Awoniyi, (2020) who stated that women should give micro credit loan to members and non-members alike to empower them. Based on the foregoing discussions the findings are thereby sustained by the information obtained from the literature.

The result of the data presented in Table 4 shows the roles women play in songs and hymns in the church. They are women who sing songs and hymns in the church, the songs and hymns could help members of the Church to focus their minds on God, women organises singing competitions in the church, and women provide hymn books and choir robes to enhance worship among others. The findings of the study are in consonance with PCN (2004) which named singing of songs and hymns as roles expected to help members to focus their hearts and minds on God's goodness.

### **Conclusion**

This study examined the involvement of women in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria (PCN), focusing on Amuke Parish in Ohafia Local Government Area. The research revealed that women are deeply committed and significantly involved in the life and growth of the church, contributing through various ministries such as worship, teaching, evangelism, fundraising, and nurturing of children and youth.

Findings from both quantitative and qualitative data confirmed that while the church thrives on the backbone of women's activities, their voices are often excluded from critical decisions that shape the church's mission and policies. Deep-seated patriarchal beliefs, doctrinal conservatism, and inadequate representation in church governance continue to suppress their leadership potential.

The implication is clear: for the PCN to fulfill its vision of holistic ministry and inclusive community, it must reassess its approach to women's involvement and leadership. The church cannot afford to marginalize the very people who are instrumental in sustaining its existence and expansion.

### **Recommendations**

Considering the findings and conclusions drawn from this research, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. The Presbyterian Church of Nigeria should revisit its evangelism strategies to upscale church membership and ensure that women are equally represented in leadership positions at all levels from parish to presbytery to synod.
2. Church institutions and theological seminaries affiliated with PCN should initiate training programmes for women to equip them for greater ecclesiastical responsibility,



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including the cleanliness of the church. These may include short courses, mentorship, and scholarship opportunities.

3. Organisations like the Women's Guild should be structurally empowered to engage in not only welfare or social work, but also theological reflection, mission planning, and doctrinal dialogue.
4. The Presbyterian Church of Nigeria should procure modern musical equipment to promote the ministry of songs and hymns in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Amuke Ohafia Parish

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