

THE LEGAL PERCEPTION TO GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN LEADERSHIP IN RELIGION

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Abstract

Gender right is a human right; right of equality upon men and their women counterparts in sourcing for opportunities all over the world. It also involved the right to equal opportunity in religious practices. Gender disparity in religion has continued to generate controversies across many denominations. Misconceptions over these subjects abounds. Many religious set believed that women are of inferior gender, therefore should be secluded from leadership position in religion. This same set believed that leadership in spiritual realm must be male dominated, while others took an opposite position and align with the provision of the United Nations Charter of Human Rights (UNCHR), that the dignity and worth of every human being should be viewed as equal, that is; men and women should be seen as equal to each other in worth and dignity, that every human being are born free and equal and without distinction of any kind, and that gender equality should be viewed as allowing women to take the position due to them, this will also extends to economic participation and decision making in the society at large. The United Nation International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) viewed gender equality to men, women, boys and girls enjoying the same rights, resources, opportunities and protections. International Labour Organization (ILO) points out also that gender equality is prima facie for equal rights and opportunities. This right must be extended to religion. This paper took a survey at some religious organization such as, Islam, Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism and a conclusion was drawn to the effect that, elimination of gender discrimination in religious houses would go a long way in illuminating viable ideas for human growth and development. This paper also critically frown at discrimination at all facets of life to conclude that inequality in gender is tantamount to a state of opprobrium to women's right.

Keywords: Legal Perception, Gender Equality, Women Leadership, Religion, UNCHR, ILO.

INTRODUCTION

I. MEANING OF GENDER

There is a general misconception in the definition of 'Gender'. It is believed in some arena that 'Gender' simply means 'a man or woman'. It is hereby stated that gender goes beyond this definition. **What is gender?** Gender means sex referring to the human person of any ramification, this covers both males and females (Garner, 2004). The word 'gender' is an extraction of the old Anglo-Norman and middle frenchgendre, which originated from Latin word 'genus'.

Gender refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being female and male and to the relationships between women and men and girls and boys (<https://www.coe.int/web/sex>). The World Health Organization (WHO) refers the definition of sex and gender to the following:

While sex refers to the different biological and physiological characteristics of males and females such as reproductive organs chromosomes, hormones, etc. Gender refers to the socially constructed characteristics of women and men such as norms, roles and relationships of and between groups of women and men (WHO, 1948).

The council of Europe convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence defined gender as “socially constructed role behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considered appropriate for women and men (WHO, 1948).

Gender is more than an identity or role but in something that is institutionalized through social relational contexts (Cecilia et. al, 2011).

II THE CONCEPT OF GENDER EQUALITY

Gender equality entails that men, women boys and girls are to be seen as having equal rights and responsibilities in all aspects of life including religion and it also entails equal opportunities in any competition as well as before the law (Zhu & Chang, 2019). Each person is entitled to equal rights and opportunities to develop their abilities and potentials in order to ensure equal participation in National, Political, Economic, Religion Cultural, and Social Developments (UN, 2016). The needs and priority of all human beings are to be taken into recognition despites all diversity associated with the individual person. All human beings are free to make choice without limitations or barriers which is a right in international law.

There has to be gender balance in terms of approximation in decision making within any given organization either in the committee level or staff structuringso also in religion. Gender sensitivity is an important component in this concept; it takes into consideration the diversity of various groups: Women and men and their specific activities and challenges (UN, 2016).

The Tata Consultancy Service (TCS) and Gender-Equality Index (GEI), (<http://ww.tcs.com/whoiveare/diversityequityinclusion>) evaluated the concept of gender equality into five major pillars. They are:

- i. Female leadership
- ii. Talent pipeline
- iii. Equal pay
- iv. Gender pay priority, inclusive culture and anti-sexual harassment policies.
- v. Pro-women brand

The Tata Consultancy Service (TCS) particularly laid emphasis on equal opportunity in Employment, Diversity in race, Nationality, Ethnicity, Gender, age physical ability, Neurodiversity and Sexual orientation, and Religion etc.

As an organization, we believe in creating a resilient culture by embracing human values. Our focus now is on building capacity for emotional intelligence embodying self awareness,

compassion and sensitivity and demonstrating awareness of personal impact and accountability through actions that are good for self, others and the organization. We are very proud of our inclusive in the Bloomberg GEI as it reinforces our continued commitment to promote gender equity and equality. At TCS, our endeavour is to provide an ecosystem that empowers across levels and enable them to realize their true potential.

<http://www.tcs.com/whoiveare/diversityequityinclusion>

The concept of equality in gender also placed emphasis particularly to the exercise of women's right to accessing equal opportunities as their male counterpart in every sphere of life in judging religion void of any sort of discrimination. To women, equality means being able to exercise their rights without any cultural, systematic discrimination or any discriminatory behavior or attitudes in achieving any height in leadership and conversely to the male, equality means being able to enjoy the protection and attention given to their female counterparts.

At this note, it is essential to evaluate some misunderstanding of the concept; Gender equality. In the famous article Misunderstanding of gender equality, it is noted:

'Times have changed, therefore women and men are the same' therefore, for a very long time, equality was always taken as the same..." It is true that the transformation from the old society to the new society provides women with equal social and political status as men, but it does not deny gender differences. Gender equality, in fact refers to the equality in their personalities, dignity, value, rights and opportunities. Due to the different physiological mechanism. Absolute equality in each field will certainly lead to unfair competition between women and men, what is worse, these uncovered, unfair clashes can make women suffer or fail in many male-dominated fields. Dialectically, women advantages still lie on gender differences. Only if these differences are to be put to good use can women get the real gender equality in male dominated competitions' (Zhu & Chang, 2019).

The argument above is that both sexes should be seen as equal before the law, and to enjoy equal right and privileges under the law, however, where there exist natural inequality between a man and a woman in tasks involving the use of physical strength, the principle of equality should not apply, there is a natural disparity existing between a man and a woman in that direction, the principle of equity and equality must be carefully interpreted to suit the doctrine of equality in gender affairs, equity does not mean equality of gender, though equality to some fork is that women must fit into all areas and positions in the field of employment, guarded by the popular slogan "whatever a man can do, a woman can do better".

Zhu and Chang (2019) opined that there could be equality without opposition, he observed that radical feminists put women and men in an opposite direction, that they are against male domination of the entire system, he believed that this opposition can only drive women out of the male dominated world, which would be detriment to the world social and psychological system of women.

The principle of True Equality Network (TEN) also captured the meaning of gender equality. The principle states as follows:

- (a) Equal does not mean same; Men and Women are different but equally entitled to constitutional rights and human rights.
- (b) Equality of opportunity does not mean equality of outcome; Men and Women must maintain their self-esteem and earn respect and rewards by providing their true individual worth.
- (c) Equality under the law is essential, irrespective of genders. Men and Women should be given equal protection from and equal punishment for any crime.
- (d) Equal rights beget equal responsibilities, men and women must not only enjoy equal rights, but they must also shoulder equal opportunities (Attfield & Kale, 2019).

2.0 PROTECTION OF GENDER RIGHTS IN INTERNATIONAL LAW

Every aspect of human lives need protection, gender rights have tremendously received international attention in various human rights instruments in the international fora as well as in the local domain. Within the preamble of the United Nations Declaration of Human rights (UNDHR, 1948). It provides for equality of men and women and prohibits discrimination on ground of sex (ICESCR, 1966). Again, the European convention, through, regional human rights instruments provides for freedom from discrimination on any ground.

Within the first chapters the African Charter on Human and People's Right, particularly in recalled that women rights have been recognized and guaranteed in all international human right instruments, notably the UDHR, the ICCPR and convenient on the elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women CEDAW and in Article 1 (F) the instrument described discrimination against women in terms of gender as any distinction, exclusion or restriction or any differential treatment based on sex and whose objectives or effects compromised or destroy the recognition, enjoyment or the exercise by women, regardless of their marital status, human rights and fundamental freedoms in all spheres of life, including leadership in religious bodies.

2.1 THE INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION OF WOMEN'S RIGHT

The incessant discrimination of women in the scheme of life in the day to day social activities which include leadership in religious society leads to the creation of instruments for women's rights and protection which is now crucial to the stability of gender's rights and arguments in polity. It is obvious that women's right are precarious where majority of activities, such as decision making and public policy analysis are dominated by men (<https://www.quora.com/why-do-men-dominate-women-at-most-competitive-activities>). Women fell among other vulnerable groups, which needed a state of freedom.

The following are legislation aimed at protecting the interest of women gender.

- (a) Convention on the elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women CEDAW 1979.
- (b) European charter of equality of women and men in local life.
- (c) Convention on the political rights of women.
- (d) Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (DEVAW) 1993.
- (e) African protocol on women's rights.
- (f) Beijing Declaration and platform for Action, 1995.
- (g) Declaration on the protection of women and children in emergency and armed conflicts.
- (h) Declaration on the elimination of all forms of intolerance and of discrimination based on religion or belief.

2.2. PROTECTION OF GENDER'S RIGHT IN RELIGION

Women are generally vulnerable than men in some aspects of life. Women are seen to be equal in rights to men but this is only in theory, the practice often denies this. Traditional law and constitutional law has not helped the issue. Often, discrimination against women structures and institutions are evidence in practice. The scourges are so notorious that religious organizations are also caught in the web (<https://developmenteducation.ie>).

The discrimination against women in religious settings is rampant in the society, women are usually denied leadership position in many denominations, they are regarded as inferior in Administration, Spiritual and Ecumenical affairs, hence, their incessant denial into the rank of priesthood or shepherd hood. This is a cultural and traditional value where female genders are regarded as mere human lower in nature and form. Women were to play the 'second fiddle' in religion; they must not head the spiritual body of any organization. The spiritual bodies that assign some leadership roles to men are the conservative Roman Catholic Church, Anglican Church, Pentecostal or Protestants, some Islamic sects, Jewish religion and Buddhism. Women are never given the position of leadership or ordained into leadership. Women are gender bias in religion. In the case of Judaism, it is a common starting point of all sects that the sexes were created differently. They believed that Men are seen to be endowed with the intellectual capacity to come closer to his creator through study and prayers, whereas women though imbued with natural modesty and intuitive understanding, is assigned the task of imitating God's work by procreating, which placed a woman's valuation not higher than the domestic sphere.

Discrimination against women in many religious teachings and practices has placed the women in a state of disequilibrium with their men counterpart in the society in many parts of the world, and this has adversely affected women's reproductive health care, birth control, contraception and politics on religious grounds. Some conservatism have the belief that a woman was the cause of Adam's failing at the garden of Eden. And woe to man if women are to be head in any religious organisation where there are men whether qualify or not, citing the Biblical version of 1 Corinthians 14: 33-34, which put an injunction against women in the church that they should always keep quiet, some even believed that the real meaning of women is 'Woe to Men'.

Against this backdrop, what are the positions of women in the sight of God?

(a) Equality in God's sight

The view of God towards man creation is non-discriminatory. Gender bias is man-made, through doctrines. Men and women are equal in God's eyes because both were created in the image of God. The first creations were Adam and Eve, Adam had always emphasized that Eve was the bone of his bones and the flesh of his flesh. In marriage a man and a woman are seen as one, in God's sight, they are equal in worth though physically different with different role in marriage.

In God's eyes men and women are equal in the spiritual sense, because both are sinners and salvations are equally available to both and both of them receive the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts to serve others. God created mankind in his own image and it is the will of God that man (men and women) must be equal in his sight. In the beginning God did not create a woman, rather he created them male and female, it was Adam that named the female a woman. God created Adam as male and female, therefore, Eve was not created rather she was made from Adam, which qualifies her as a man like Adam, she was taken out of a man, then she is a man by nature and possesses the right to be called and known as a man, and it was Adam to called her a woman in his own preference.

(b) Gender Equality in the Bible

Both genders are equal before God and could accessed God's spiritual gifts as they are not inferior to each other, both are co-heirs of the Grace of life, both creature are not independent to the other in the Lord, women are not independent to the men so also men are not independent to the women, they play complimentary role to each other. They possesses the right to live together as pair, this was demonstrated in the Garden of Eden where they played complimentary role to each other (by keeping each other warm).

(c) Church and Leadership

There is a popular saying that women should hold their peace in the church and that a woman should not superintend over a man as canvassed by Paul in the New Testament. Critical assessments of these statements can be seen to be guided by ethnicity and social status that the early church was plagued with, at a time when the early church was a extraction of people multinationals from axis like the Middle East, Africa and Europe where enslavement of people and women were very rampant. A good example was demonstrated in the woman caught in the act of adultery she was summoned alone before Jesus while the man was exonerated by her accusers. In the early church women were seen as noise makers or as mere property to the men, a condition that Jesus could not change when he was physically earth. It must be emphasized here that leadership does not have a particular gender specific rather Paul statements on male leadership only in the church was borne from personal will and experience in the circumstances that the early church found themselves. God does not see gender as a condition to leadership in any spiritual organization, Biblical antecedents abounds.

Leadership qualities were demonstrated in the following Biblical female characters who assumed an exemplary role in leadership:

- i. Deborah, she was a judge, prophetess and a leader; she assisted Barak into a battle ground where Sisera was defeated and killed.
- ii. Mariam, she was a prophetess and a leader, she led all and sundry to exalt the name of God when Pharaoh Army were defeated at the red sea.
- iii. Priscilla, she was a great leader in the expansion of the kingdom of God through evangelism.
- iv. Naomi, she was a good leader. She took up the mantle of leadership after the death of her husband; her leadership qualities endeared her to her daughter-in-laws that she became indispensable to them.
- v. Hannah, she was a woman with leadership qualities, she prayed and drew the hand of God, and God remembered her with a son Samuel.
- vi. Esther, she was a bold leader sacrificial in life, she was ready to sacrifice her life for her people, and she took the risk of her life to present her petitions before king Ahasuerus to save her people.
- vii. Rahab, she was a leader who saved her people through wisdom and sacrifice.
- viii. Tabitha, she was a great disciple at Joppa, renowned for her philanthropy and other charitable activities which manifested in God's grace towards her in her miraculous return to life after death. She was a leader per excellence.
- ix. Lydia, she was a leader and entrepreneur, a creator of business ventures. She excelled in purple trade of many colours and she used her wealth towards the service of God and mankind.

Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother James, Mary of Cleopas, Salome and Joanna, these women were leaders in evangelism and good evangelists, they were bold to go to the tomb of Jesus when the disciples (who were all men), went into hiding:

The leadership qualities of these women in the face of dangers were extremely commendable and worthy of emulation to this present day. From the above, women have the right to leadership in the church as they have always played the role of salvaging the excesses of men in most religious organizations and also in religious settings.

3.0. The Bible and Inequality

There is no partiality in God. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female for you are all one in Christ. This verse removed gender inequality that all people who have accepted Jesus Christ to be saviour, are all heirs and united in him. The rich and the poor have a common bond; the Lord is the maker of them all. It is

hereby noted that God was never the authored of gender inequality, nor disallowing women to play their role as leaders in any religious organization in Christendom or any other religion as seen hereunder.

4.0 Gender Equality and Hinduism

Hinduism is another religion that recognizes the equality of male and female gender. Hinduism believes in equality, that equality in Hinduism has both the worldly and the spiritual perspectives. (It is both spiritual and philosophical,) that the distinction between the Male and Female gender are the separate roles dictated by the tradition and law books for the preservation of Dharma and the continuation of family and society (<https://www.hinduwebsite.com/hinduismconcepts.asp>).

Gender, in Hinduism is not confined to sexual organs or reproductive functions only. The distinction is not purely sexual or biological in nature. It is only functional and arises due to the power of Shakti. In lower planes, they arise mainly due to the presence of sexual organs and reproductive function which Shakti manifest. In the higher planes it is determined by the powers which Shakti chooses to materialized in either male and female entities or divinities. The soul does not participate in creating these distinctions. The soul has no gender because it is asexual. It does not take part in the creation or manifestation of anything, but its presence is necessary for Shakti to manifest in forms of functions. All the diversity and duality arise in the field of Prakriti only due to her force and her power of Maya. Just as it is the mothers of women in the physical planes who give birth to children, and in the spiritual plane it is Shakti or the Divine mother who produce the dualities and diversity, including the duality of male and female, therefore gender plays no role in assessing the suitability in ascension to leadership position in Hinduism.

4.1 Gender Are Meant to be Equal in Hinduism

Every human being whether male or female are a combination of Shiva and Shakti (<https://www.hinduwebsite.com/hinduismconcepts.asp>). They exist in everyone as an inseparable reality, the masculinity or femininity arises from Shakti only, the female energy of creation. Both men and women possess souls and their bodies are made by Shakti only. The gender distinction are illusory, a play of Maya, meant to ensure the continuity of life and the bondage of beings, further, the gender of a person is an aspect of his or her name or form. It does not extend to the soul for convenience, we may say that the self or the soul is pursuha (male) but in reality, it is neither male nor female. Spiritually, all beings are equal and they perform equal role in the continuation of life.

The following are accredited to Hindu teachings.

‘No one is superior, nor inferior. All are brothers marching forward to prosperity.

‘Thou, O God, art woman, thou art man thou the young man and maiden, too. Thou are old man tottering with his cane. It is thou alone who art born in all these infinitely diverse born.

‘He who sees in all beings, feels no hatred by virtue of that wisdom’.

Hinduism believed that, a woman is not inferior because she is a woman nor is a man superior because he is a man. Both are equal because they are the embodiment of purusha and prakriti. In a man, Shakti or Prakriti becomes object field into a male body and in a woman into a female body. Both have masculine and feminine aspects and both have the potential to transform into the opposite gender through rebirth, thus, any gender distinction is but a play of Shakti.

5.0. Gender Equality in Islam

The Quran is not an exception in the gospel of gender equality. Islam believed in the sanction and equity of equality in the day to day practice of the religion. According to the Quran, men and women have the same spiritual human nature.

O mankind; Reverence your Guardian lord who created you from a single person created of like nature his male and from them twains scattered (like seeds) countless men and women reverence Allah through whom you demand your mutual (rights and reverence) the wombs (that bore you) for Alla ever watches over you.'

The Quran does not make reference to gender.

It does not make any distinction on the basis of sex and believes in human equality. In Islam, both genders are entitled to equality before the law and court of law. Justice is genderless, and there is equal testimony of male and female. The Holy Quran, decrees that all human beings whether male or female are descendants of Adam and Eve.

The perspective of Islam, viewed men and women as equal by means of human beings, all human beings whether male or female were created into nations and tribes to live together in harmony without discrimination.

Islam believed that Allah has no gender i.e., God is neither a man nor a woman, Allah is neither a 'He or a She'. Therefore Allah does not discriminate between the sexes which has been created equally, according to Hazrat Mirza Tahor Ahmade:

And they the women have rights similar and equal to those of men over them in equity, - there is thus total equality and there is no difference whatever between the fundamental human rights of women and men, however both have a degree of advantage over them. Allah is mighty and wise.

The advantage they have over each other are the functions they perform, the Quran placed "Men as guardians over women because Allah has made some of them excel others, because the men are to spend their wealth, however, this teaching does not give any special privileges or rights to men as their responsibilities are greater, therefore a woman in Islam could lead prayers and could even become an Imam where necessary.

There were cases where women lead prayers in the Quran, for instance, Prophet Mohammed asked Waraqaah to turn her house to a mosque, this therefore legitimized leadership practice of women as Imam. Women prayer leadership is absolutely permissible in Islam (https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_Islam). Though Islam gave an opportunity to men to guide the

women it does not make them of more superiority to the women, hence they are to be seen as equal in both sex and responsibility towards Allah.

6.0. Gender Equality in Buddhism

The Buddhist religion is very gender friendly, it admits gender equality. The religion expresses unlimited kindness to all creatures, even those who made harm, when it comes to enlightenment, there is no man or woman, but only truth. Buddhism accepts gender equality in achieving freeing and nirvana. Buddhism proclaims 'awakening from ignorance' that is freeing oneself, and its main aim is freeing suffering, there are rules that protects Nuns from harassments caused by gender factors, in communicating with monk and laymen.

It is the belief of Buddhism that all human beings are equal in their rights and should be treated the same, no matter who they are or the opinions surrounding them. The religion believed that women are capable of reaching the highest levels of spiritual enlightenment as men.

Though, initially it was not so, due to the restrictions handed over to women in the Buddhist religion, in that, Buddha himself was initially reluctant in accepting women as Nun for fear of consequences. It was only on the request of his step brother and an assistant Ananda, that Buddha agreed to take female followers to Sangha, making Mahaprajapati Gotami, maternal aunt of Buddha, the first woman to allowed to enter Sangha (Paulel, A., Dong, 2017), ever since women has played principal roles in the development of the Buddhist religion.

Buddhist generally believe that the nature of existence is a cycle of life, death and re-incantation, that life, inevitably involves suffering and that the only way to break out of this cycle is to achieve enlightenment with the principle of avoiding causing harm to others and to seek to develop greater kindness of equal right and justice which would developed into a clearer awareness for the betterment of each gender who has found themselves in the cycle: the cycle of confusion, delusion and intoxication. Therefore men and women are equal in the face of the earth as both are exposed to sufferings and dangers that both males and females could attain the stage of enlightenments which is leadership. The stage of enlightenment in the Buddhist religion is leadership in all ramifications through endurance of whatever sufferings he or she could be subjected to in the course of life stress or challenges. Though Buddhism recognizes that women are weaker vessels who need men protection and providence, it also recognized that in many facets of life women has out shines the men, therefore admitting them into Sangha is not a misplacements in modern Buddhist societies.

7.0 Powerful Women in Religion

The following women have shown themselves as exemplary in leadership roles:

- (a) Oyedepo, she has been very inspiring to other women in the church, the Living Faith Church, A.k.a the Winner's Chapel. She has preached in numerous nations in the world for the past three decades of the foundation of the church, and has impacted the lives of both men and women.
- (b) Pastor Folu Adeboye popularly called Mummy G.O., she has been a leader and a support to her husband Pastor Enoch Adeboye, her exemplary character has added tremendous growth to the church, and his also served as role model to both men and women.

- (c) The Archbishop of the Church of God Mission Rev. Margaret Idahosa has been very fervent in the development and growth of the church since the death of her husband, Archbishop Benson Idahosa in 1998. She has head the Christian religion in an encouraging manner globally
- (d) Pastor Evelyn Joshua is currently the leader of the Synagogue Church of all Nations with millions of viewers on Television and physical attendance. She took up leadership position upon the death of her husband, Rev. T.B. Joshua.
- (e) Sameera Ahmed has been a driving force in leadership position, she has provided mentorship in Islam for years through the organization of workshops for youth development marriage and parenting, she has also served as an associate editor for the Journal of Muslim mental health, and has impacted on many lives globally.
- (f) Hoda Katebi, she is an Iranian American political fashion writer with a popular blog called Joojoo Azad, well known in the Muslim world as a leader and an activist.
- (g) Amma Mirza; she is the Chief Executive of Zakat Foundation of America, she is a Pakistani-Canadian born, she is a leader and proudly representing an organization that is known for charity.
- (h) Dena Takruri, she is a Palestinian-American Journalist, her leadership trait could be seen on political, cultural and social issues pertaining to the Islamic world etc.

8.0 The Nigerian Legislation

Section 42(2) of the Nigerian 1999 constitution (as amended)has explicitly directs that on no ground should one be subject to any deprivation or disability merely by reasons of the circumstances of his or her birth.This is a right to freedom from discrimination.

The doctrine of non-discriminatory in policies against gender disparity can be found in Nigerian Legislations. Section 17(3) Itdirects its policy towards ensuring that:

- (a) All citizens, without discrimination on any group whatsoever, have the opportunity for securing adequate means of livelihood as well as adequate opportunity to secure suitable employment, and in religious leadership position, no Nigerian should be deprived
- (b) Conditions of work should be just and humane, and that, there should be adequate facilities for leisure and for social, religious and cultural life.
- (c) There shall be equal pay for equal work without discrimination on account of sex or on any other ground whatsoever.

Section 15(2) and sec. 42(1) prohibits sex based discriminatory practices in any form, whether in religion or another sector. Every Nigerian (women inclusive) shall have the right to freedom from discrimination based on ethnic group place of origin, sex, religion or political opinion. The constitution has clarified itself by the provision that, on no account should promotion to exalted position in whatever ramification bedenied on ground of sex, the promotion could be in whatever capacity, which include religion.A woman could occupy the position of Bishop or Archbishop or even Chief Imametcor any other position in any field just as their male counterparts.

CONCLUSION

Women should be given a chance to explore their God's given potentials: Physical configuration has nothing to do with mental capacity or intelligent quotient (IQ) Article 2, 16 and 26 of CEDAW states that all humans are to be treated equally and non-discriminatory.

Article 2, 3, 4 and 15 also frown at any discrimination against women, in any field of endeavour, whether in religious politics or secular politics, it is a breach of Human Rights if women are continuously secluded and degraded, simply because they possess the female genitals.

The reference to women being inferior which is notorious in religious organization who would preferred women to always play the second fiddle while their male counterparts somewhat considered superior to continue to play the major roles should abates because in religious analysis, both sexes are from God. The Islamic and Hinduism religions refer to God as neither a man nor a woman, while others believed that God is neither a male nor a female, but a spirit. The Holy Bible says.

God chooses the most foolish things in the world to confound the wise, God could also use the weak things in the world to confound the things which are mighty and base things of the world and things which are despised had God chosen.....”

The assertion of Apostle was of the human point of view but God indeed respect human faith and dedication in respective of sex or physical agility. It was never God’s thought to devalued women. God could make use of any gender in respective of age and experience. The Hindus religion is of a leading role in women leadership and emancipation in religion in the belief that God could manifest in any gender.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It is tantamount to abuse of Human right if women are continued to be denied of their right for the mere reason of being a woman, therefore I recommend women are to be encouraged to climb the ladder of leadership even in the spiritual realm for fairness and equity to measure up with their male counterparts.
2. Nigeria legislation emphasize on section 42 of the constitution to right to freedom from discrimination should be sacrosanct and implemented in all religious house in the country.
3. Cultural practices must encourage equality of gender in various communities in Nigeria.
4. Religious bodies in their doctrines should emphasize the need to allowing women into the highest position of authority without prejudice.
5. The Orthodox Roman Catholic and Anglican among others should set an example of women priesthood, so that others can emulate.
6. Transformation studies should be introduced into all academic systems in Nigeria, in order to correct their inherent cultural practices in female leadership in religion to be a welcome development at any levels.

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