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Gender Balance in Church Choir and Choir Leadership: A Study of Selected Churches in Ibadan

ABSTRACT. The struggle for gender equality has been a long and continuous skirmish. The need for gender equality continues to evolve globally and hasn't left a field of study such as music and an institution; church choir vindicated for a no discourse. The imbalance between men and women in choir is a global issue that has garnered attention from researchers, Music educators, and music directors. Some scholars claimed the gender identity of choir singers has shifted dramatically in the past century, from a male only club into an activity for females. The leadership positions; Music Director, Assistant Music Director, Organist, Welfare Director, Treasurer, Financial Secretary, Librarian, Public Relation Officer, General Secretary etc. though relative from one church choir to another has some gender struggles. The aim of the study was to propose gender balance in the Church Choir and Choir leadership. In doing this, it analyses the ratio of female choristers and male choristers in selected churches in Ibadan and the gender representations on the different leadership positions in the Choir. It also aimed at identifying leadership roles or responsibilities of female and male in the selected choir. It elucidates aptly on biblical acme as it touches Church choir and gender. The study employed a descriptive survey research design and data were collected through observation and interview and analysed with Pie chart and Percentage error. The study concludes that both males and females gender are fit to be a member of the Church choir and can play any leadership role. Church music directors and Choral music educators must celebrate all elements of music; not only encouraging members to engage in musical experiences during adolescence, but also equipping them with the necessary knowledge and skills to find success and lifelong engagement with music.

KEYWORDS: gender balance, church choir, choir leadership

Introduction

Several studies on gender equality and its advantages have been well documented. Several frameworks have affirmed its centrality to human rights and sustainable development. The subject of gender cut across all spheres of human life such as education, economy, politics, religion and a lot more and without the exception of human existence since humans were made both male and female. Gender is an integral component of ev-

ery aspect of the economic, social, daily and private lives of individuals and societies, and of the different roles ascribed by society to men and women. The gender viewpoint looks at the impact of gender on people's opportunities, social roles and interactions, but as this study is concerned, it looks at it from its implication on religious roles and responsibilities. Successful positioning of the subject gender may have some fundamental effect on policy, programme and output of the Church choir.

The Church Choir remains an institution that also demands scholarship belvedere and critical examination to ascertain sustainable development. A Church that consists of both male and female also has different working groups that make it function as expected in performance of religious rites. The choir definitely will have to function by having the mixed sex work together as a group. Some scholars have observed a lack of male participation in choral music activities. This male to female imbalance is often attributed to a perception that singing is a feminine activity and results in a lack of balance in choral music ensembles.

1. Issues on Gender Balance in the Choir

The subject of gender equality in every facade of the society continue to evolve in gender studies. Faseun and Bello (2017) asserts that culturally, women are meant to operate in the background, supporting the male folk. Women, Power and Performance in the Yoruba Public Sphere have viewed the issue of gender discrimination from different directions and expressed their varied views on the need to offer women equal opportunity as their male counterparts. Omojola (2009). The most crucial in the involvement of either men and women in the Choir should be subjected to their abilities and interest. The divergence view consequently will have relative effects on the participation of both men and women in the Choir. A motivating factor for the increase in female involvement was the perceived effeminate nature of singing, which supported the view that women were more suited to vocal music endeavours (Gates, 1989; Szabo, 1999).

As public singing by women became more widely accepted throughout history, their dominating participation began to modify our cultural perception of choral music, leaving many choral ensembles today severely lacking in the balance between the sexes (Gates, 1989). This indicates that when considering the ratio of women participation in the Choir to a large extent more women are represented than men.

Men of all ages strongly perceive that singing is for girls or is strongly believed to be a feminine activity (Hall, 2005; Harrison, 2007; Kennedy, 2002; Sweet, 2010; Szabo, 1999; Warzecha, 2013). Several studies have been conducted on gender stereotyping, noting that many people have preconceived ideas about what instruments and activities are masculine or feminine. In most cases, singing was viewed as a more feminine activity and therefore an unacceptable avenue of pursuit for many men (Hall, 2005; Harrison, 2007; Szabo, 1999). Considering the above assertions, in my own view, it is important to state that the reason for having more women participate in the Choir sometimes might not also be because of perceptions of people that the activities in the Choir are feminine but as a result of the observations of men who have from time to time watch that women are the highly populated in the Choir for quite some time and this alone can form their thoughts. The assertion that the activity is more feminine needs to be debunked or questioned in future studies.

In addition to the gender stereotyping that is associated with choral singing, research also suggests that puberty can be a major deterrent for students and their interest in participating in choral music experiences (Mizener, 1993). Some believe music ability is innate and that they do not possess it (Hallam, 2006) while others do not find enjoyment in the activity (Freer, 2015). Societal obstacles inhibiting male students from participating in the performing arts include pressure from family, friends, and the community (Adler, 2012).

2. Biblical Perspective on Gender and Choir/ Music

Considering the Holy Bible perspectives on Men and women involved in Church Music, we see where the word music first occurred from the Biblical account. Jubal was spoken of as the father of such that handles harp and flute. "His brother's name was Jubal. He was the father of all those who plays the harp and flute" in Genesis 4:21. It is so crystal clear that history shows the involvement or participation of a man in Church Music though the holy Bible was silent about Jubal's involvement in vocal music but specifically pointed out that he was actively involved in playing of instruments. Jubal's leadership role cannot be undermined in the scripture being "the father" of those who play the harp and flute. Jubal's role, responsibilities and contributions must have resulted in the scriptural documentation, which confirms the dynamic participation and leadership role of the male gender back in history in Church music or Choir.

According to Faseun and Bello (2017). Much as the bible is silent on the position of women in music and music leadership in the church, there were references to a few instances where women were involved in musical activities in the church. One of such instances was the activity of Miriam (the sister of Moses) who functioned as somewhat worship leader.

And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them, Sing, ye to the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. (Exodus, 15: 20–21).

The scripture confirms that Miriam (Female) and other women were part of the Church Choir. The tripartite functions of those women include playing musical instruments (Timbrel), dancing and also sang. To note was also the leadership role Miriam played as recorded in the Holy Bible that when Miriam took the timbrel, other women went after her. Other women were followers who were members of the Choir. The Holy Bible also made reference to Men who were singers among the Levites as put in (1 Chronicles 9: 33–44.) “And these are the singers, chief of the fathers of the Levites, who remaining in the chambers were free: for they were employed in that work day and night.” It’s obvious that those men served freely in the Church Choir both day and night. This shows the dedication and commitment of men in the Choir which went on from one generation to another till verse 44 according to the scriptural account of the Holy Bible went on from one generation to another.

Faseun and Bello (2017) states that both Ecclesiastes 2:8 and 2 Chronicles 35:25 made reference to singing men and women. David appointed men who were skilled singers and used brass cymbals, harps, trumpets, and other instruments to accompany the singing from among the Levites (1 Chronicles 15: 16–24). The Levites who led the music at the dedication of Solomon’s temple were all men (1 Chronicles 5:12–13). When the temple was being rebuilt, the sons of the Levites were appointed to lead the music in the temple service (Ezra 3: 10; Nehemiah 12:24).

The New Testament contains no specific instructions or examples of how worship was, or should be, practised in the Church. The New Testament at no point spoke positively or negatively regarding female music ministers or worship leaders. Though in the epistle of Paul he wrote in 1 Timothy 2:12, “I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet.” The interpretation has a lot of

contentions in many Church denominations but as it were, the focus of the contention is in ministering in words and not in songs. The focus of the contentions or arguments is on the pastoral role of shepherding/teaching than on other forms of leadership. Nothing explicit in Scripture would forbid women from serving in the role of worship leader.

3. Musical Implication of Inequality of a Church Mixed Choir

Basically, in Nigeria Churches, the formation of the Church's central Choir is mixed. (Male and female). Depending on the Church, other Choirs function within groups or societies in the Church. In Freer's 2012 study, he describes the inability to have a mixed choir of the traditional four parts without a substantial and preferably equal number of Males to their Female counterpart. The Male in the Choir is divided into tenors and basses while female students are sopranos and altos (Elpus, 2014). Each of the parts has a voice range below and above to which they can operate or sing. If there is a shortage in a number of a particular voice parts in respect to their abilities to produce the acceptable sound, there will not be part balancing. If there are not an equal or near equal number of male students a Choir Director can forego splitting the men into two parts and have them all sing baritone which can diminish or simplify the music quality compared to having them split into tenors and basses (Harrison, 2007). Considering Harrison's view, in a case where the composition requires both tenor and bass, performing that music will be very difficult.

The imbalance of male and female gender in the mixed choir setting creates problems for the ensemble, and the overall experience of the group (Harrison, 2007). There are cases where gender disparity does not play an important role in the success of the performing ensemble such as an all-female band (Elpus, 2014). Although gender disparity does not affect all performing ensembles, limited or no males participating in a mixed choir would eliminate the feasibility of the choir succeeding or possibly existing (Roulston and Misawa, 2010).

4. Choir Leadership

Today we have many different types of choirs, not only church choirs, but pop choirs, acapella choirs, male choir female choir and mixed choirs,

folk music choirs, adult, children, youth choirs and etc. Most Choirs operate with a board and the board members are responsible for managing the Choir. The choirs often have boards, that together with the leader plans the activity and sometimes also the repertoire (Brink, 2019). Positions are relatively different from one church to another depending on the denomination but basically the most common are Music director, Assistant music director, Organist, Choir secretary, financial secretary, treasurer, Public relation officer, Welfare director, librarian etc. Usually in Nigeria, the position of the Music Director and Organist is done by the appointment of the Church Council or the Pastor/ Bishop/ Reverend in charge of the Parish or Church because those positions require some special expertise and spiritual prowess. Other positions are usually voted for among members of the choir or by the appointment of the music director. The question of gender comes in the kind of offices occupied by each gender and the ones who dominates those offices.

In my study, investigations were made on some selected churches at Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria.

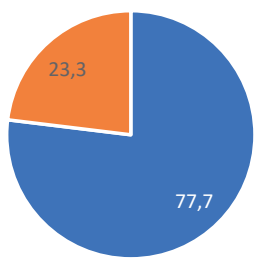
5. Demographic Data

Table 1 revealed leadership role occupied by the female at Praise land Baptist Church, Ologuneru, Ibadan is 77.7% compared to that of Male that is 23.3%. The Population of the female is 68% to 32% of Male in the Choir. It shows there were more female in the Choir and female also dominated the leadership positions in the Choir.

Table 1. Praise land Baptist Church, Ologuneru, Ibadan

S/N	Leadership Roles	Gender
1	Music Director	Female
2	Assistant Music Director	Female
3	General Secretary	Female
4	Librarian	Female
5	Treasurer	Female
6	PRO	Male
7	Organist	Male
8	Financial Secretary	Female
9	Welfare Director	Female

Gender of Leaders



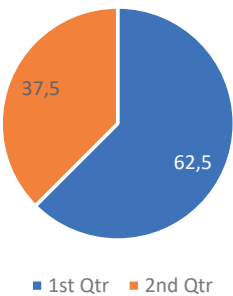
Choir statistics

S/N	Gender	Total	%
1	Male	7	32
2	Female	15	68
3	Grand Total	22	100

Table 2. Comfort Life Mission International, Opposite Wema Bank, Ibadan

S/N	Leadership Roles	Gender
1	Music Director	Female
2	Assistant Music Director	Female
3	General Secretary	Female
4	Treasurer	Female
5	PRO	Male
6	Organist	Male
7	Financial Secretary	Female
8	Welfare Director	Male

Gender of Leaders



Choir statistics

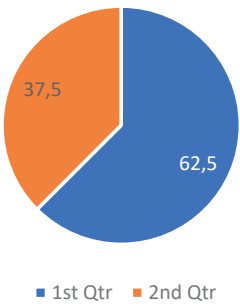
S/N	Gender	Total	%
1	Male	13	27
2	Female	35	73
3	Grand Total	48	100

The data of Comfort Life Mission also shows that female gender dominates both the leadership role and the population of the choir. 62.5% of the female are leaders while 32.5% male are also leaders. Considering the gender representation of members of the Choir, 73% are female while 27% are Male.

Table 3. Cathedral of St’ James the great, Oke-Bola, Ibadan

S/N	Leadership Roles	Gender
1	Choir Master/ Organist	Male
2	Associate Organist	Male
3	General Secretary	Male
4	Librarian	Female
5	Treasurer	Female
6	PRO	Female
7	Financial Secretary	Female
8	Welfare Director	Female

Gender of Leaders



Choir statistics

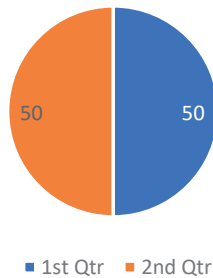
S/N	Gender	Total	%
1	Male	12	33
2	Female	24	67
3	Grand Total	36	100

St' James Cathedral, Oke-Bola, Ibadan has only twelve (12) male members of the choir (33%) and twenty-four (24) female members of the choir (67%). Out of the leadership roles, females occupied five positions while males occupied three positions. The data revealed both gender were represented in the leadership positions.

Table 4. Christ Power Evangelical Church Celica, Ibadan

S/N	Leadership Roles	Gender
1	Music Director	Male
2	Assistant Music Director	Female
3	General Secretary	Female
4	Treasurer	Female
5	PRO	Male
6	Organist	Male
7	Financial Secretary	Female
8	Welfare Director	Male

Gender of Leaders



Choir statistics

S/N	Gender	Total	%
1	Male	14	40
2	Female	21	60
3	Grand Total	35	100

Table 4 revealed that at Christ Power Evangelical Church Celica, Ibadan, the Choir has fourteen 14 (40%) male members and twenty-one 21 (60%) female members. The leadership positions were evenly shared as four of each (50%) gender occupied leadership position.

6. Discussion of Findings

Table 1 revealed the population of both male and female members of the Choir and the leadership role occupied by the female and male members of the choir at Praise land Baptist Church, Ologuneru, Ibadan. Female population 77.7% compared to that of Male that is 23.3%. The Population of the female is 68% to 32% of Male in the Choir. This clearly shows that the female gender dominates both the leadership role and the entire population of the Choir. Having the female as the Music director also indicates that the role of a Music director can be either a female or male in as much the person has the quality required to be a music director. The data of Comfort Life Mission also shows that female gender dominates both the leadership role and the population of the choir. 62.5% of the female are leaders while 32.5% male are also leaders. Considering the gender representation in the Choir, 73% are female while 27% are Male. The low population of Males in the choir also affects the percentage of males playing a leadership role. Cathedral of St' James the great, Oke-Bola, Ibadan choir data representation of gender playing a leadership role is same as that of Comfort Life Mission while the population of females in the choir is 67% and Male is 33%. At Christ Power Evangelical Church Celica, Ibadan, the data shows that 50% of female and male members of the choir holds a leadership role. The data revealed 60% are females in the choir while 40% are Male. This data also revealed that in two of the churches the female is the Music director and Male also are music director but in all of the selected churches, no female is an organist. In an interview with the Music Director and Organist of St' James Cathedral, Mr. Sunday Ajayi, the researcher enquired if there is any rule that states a male must be the Organist but he asserts that the office of the Church organist has always been opened to both male and female who applies for the job and selection wouldn't have been done out of merit if there exists a female application.

In the study, it was reported that leadership is not a position and power, it is a way of getting people forward in the same way to share vision and wisdom, to delegate information and tasks, to be the person to lean on and to trust in and that why both female and male can play leadership roles. Mr. Ajayi Sunday, the choir master of Cathedral of St' James the great, Oke-Bola, Ibadan also reported that a leader is the person who knows how to share knowledge and how to work together towards the best result. Leaders are one step ahead, that is why they are called leaders. Leaders aim for progress, knowledge and development not only in them but in the company/team as well. (Maxwell, 1998) A leader should not believe that their team is fully

learned nor let the leader position go to their own heads. Leadership is not built by power nor by knowledge alone, leadership is more an activity than a position (Bolman and Deal, 2013). If you want to be a trustworthy leader you cannot use your position to gain power and think people will willingly follow your vision and strategies. As a leader you earn the power by having influence, being charismatic, sharing your vision and having respect for the people you work with (Maxwell, 1998) Mr. Adeyeye Adetoyese, the organist of Praise land Baptist Church, Ologuneru, Ibadan, also state that a choir leader is more than someone who waves her hands to the beat of the music. Most of the work the choir leader does happen before the performance. A big part of the work even happens before the actual rehearsals start.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is crystal clear that both male and female gender are fit to be a member of the Church choir and can play any leadership role. The imbalance between men and women in a choir is a global issue that erupts as a result of the personal thoughts and decisions of people. In much the same way that researchers cannot agree on the biological and psychological influences on the development of gender, music scholars find themselves in a difficult position to balance effectively the traditionally viewed masculine and feminine elements of choral music. The church has great power to influence people during all stages of development, which in turn, can have a positive effect on their participation in the choir. Although many may view singing as a feminine activity because of its connection to the affective domain, there is also great power and strength exhibited within the realm of choral music. However, it is imperative that choral music educators and Church Music directors continue to encourage all aspects of music, both feminine and masculine, to create a holistic art form. Church music directors and Choral music educators must celebrate all elements of music, encouraging members to engage in musical experiences during adolescence and equipping them with the necessary knowledge and skills to find success and lifelong engagement with music.

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