


Gender dimensions in Pentecostal leadership: The Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa as a case study

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Dates:

Received: 06 Feb. 2019

Accepted: 06 June 2019

Published: 22 Oct. 2019

How to cite this article:

Kgatle, M.S., 2019, 'Gender dimensions in Pentecostal leadership: The Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa as a case study', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 40(1), a1980. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v40i1.1980>

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Women play an important role in Pentecostal Christianity, especially in an African context. They are a majority in most local assemblies and contribute a large percentage in terms of the income of such assemblies. Women are active participants in the activities of local assemblies such as prayer, fellowship and catering. The participation of women in general activities has been acknowledged by scholars interested in gender dimensions in Pentecostal leadership. The research gap exists in the representation of women in high structures of Pentecostal leadership. This article uses the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) of South Africa, the largest Pentecostal church in South Africa, as a case study to look at women misrepresentations in the leadership structures of Pentecostal Christianity. The study is located in missiology and is a literary analysis that aims to explore problematic aspects or rationale behind the misrepresentations of women in high echelons of leadership in the AFM. The article looks at the best practices that can enhance women representations in Pentecostal leadership. The outcome is that women in the AFM should initiate their own upliftment. Secondly, the AFM should disarm patriarchy. Thirdly, the AFM should rethink the Pauline prohibition of women. Fourthly, the AFM might have to rethink elections in order to drive transformation agenda. Finally, the AFM should learn from prominent leaders like Richard Ngidi who encouraged women to take part in leadership.

Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications: This article challenges gender inequality that perpetuates the marginalisation of women in Pentecostal leadership. Gender equality is proposed as an effective way to empower women to occupy highest offices in leadership.

Keywords: Pentecostal; Apostolic Faith Mission; gender; women; leadership.

Introduction

The Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) of South Africa is a classical Pentecostal Christian denomination. The AFM has been segregated according to various sections in South Africa for a long time. The sections include white, black, Indian and mixed race. Leadership in the segregated AFM has been dominated by the white section of the church. However, with the unity of the AFM in 1996, the church has experienced the rising of black leaders to take up roles in various leadership structures ranging from assembly leadership, Regional Leadership Forum (RLF), National Leadership Forum (NLF), National Office Bearers (NOB) and officers in the AFM International (AFMI). Although transformation has happened in terms of black representations, the AFM is still behind in terms of gender equality. The reason for this assertion is that there is a lack of women representations in the leadership structures. This article discusses women misrepresentations in the leadership of the AFM. The article looks at the dynamics around the absence of women in these structures. Gender equality is proposed as an effective way of empowering women to occupy the highest offices in leadership.

The history of the AFM is well documented by the Historians such as Pieter de Wet (1989), Japie Lapoorta (1996) and Marius Nel and Isak Burger (2008). These scholars have taken interest in studying the AFM from different subjects but not in the field of gender dimensions like inequalities and biases. There are exceptions like the master's thesis of Onnicah Selokela (2005) who looked at a study of women in the AFM of South Africa. Selokela's study is an:

[I]Investigation and description of ways in which the AFM churchwomen are succeeding in overcoming patriarchy. It also gives a critical evaluation of the extent to which these women are successful in their endeavour to overcome it. (p. 1)

Selokela's study is focussed on the discussion on the AFM church in Rustenburg, North West Region. In addition, Selokela's study addresses issues, as they relate to the participation of women

in the AFM, not necessarily women taking leadership roles in various structures of the church. This article pays attention particularly to the representations of women at the local assembly level, RLF, NLF, NOB and AFMI. The other difference is that one does not only look at the participation of women but also look at their leadership roles.

Another exception is the master's dissertation of Mmolotsane (2018:1) entitled 'Mme-mamoruti: Leadership impact on the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa – South Gauteng Region'. The weakness of this dissertation is the strength of this article. The first weakness is that the dissertation looks at the leadership impact of the pastor's wife. While this is very much connected with gender dimensions in Pentecostal leadership and in the AFM, the study is a discourse on the pastor's wife not a woman as a pastor or a leader. The second weakness is that the dissertation like that of Selokela concentrates on a particular region. In this context, it is concentrated on the South Gauteng region of the AFM of South Africa. It must be reiterated that this article is about the leadership of women and is addressing all the structures of the AFM not just a particular region. Thus, this article is relevant in the context of Pentecostal Christianity, especially the AFM. It affords the studies in African Pentecostal Christianity an opportunity to wrestle with how mission is performed in a context of gender inequalities that perpetuate the marginalisation of women. It also affords studies in gender dimensions an opportunity to address such inequalities and marginalisation.

Leadership structures of the Apostolic Faith Mission

Assembly leader

In 2000, the AFM adopted a new constitution, which at national level marked the beginning of a new philosophy. According to the Constitution of the AFM of South Africa (2010:3), 'successful, proven Christian leaders and pastors fulfill the role of apostles'. At the local level, decentralisation is the major effect, which allows churches to develop their own policies. The local assembly and their local pastor are autonomous and can decide on their own local policy. They only have to discuss the local policy with the local governing body. This practice was previously performed by the white division of the church to ensure that the black majority would not take over their property. The requirement for one to become an assembly leader is to be an ordained pastor after completing a proper theological training. This decision by the united AFM of South Africa has caused the church to grow in terms of numbers and financial income of assemblies because unlike in the past to a certain extent, the church no longer monopolises leadership but allows autonomy. Thus, local assemblies are operating like independent ministries. Other than having their own local policies, they have their own programmes that are relevant to their context. This contains certain dangers that should also be noted, like a spirit of independentism that loosens the boundaries of the AFM. The main question remains as to how many women

assembly leaders are there in the AFM. One will attempt to answer this question later in the article.

Regional Leadership Forum

The AFM is established in different regions according to the closest areas of fellowship. According to the constitution of the AFM of South Africa (2010):

Local assemblies are organized into geographical and non-geographical regions (NGR) or networks. In the case of geographical regions, leadership forums exist which are representative bodies consisting of pastors and delegates from each assembly. NGR in the form of networks of local churches that share a peculiar ministry philosophy also exist. (p. 4)

The main function of the region is to oversee the local assemblies and their pastors in a specific region. This is again an excellent move by the church to have an RLF because pastors are able to receive support at a regional level. In some regions like the Gauteng North region, there are workshops conducted to help the pastors for church growth. The challenge for the church remains NGR. The church should rethink having NGR because it somehow still divides the church in terms of the rich and the poor. Most of the NGR constituencies are white pastors representing rich assemblies. The local assemblies that choose to fall under NGR end up depending on such structures financially. Therefore, one wonders if it is a genuine relationship or a financial one. The big question again is, 'how many regional leaders are women?'

National Leadership Forum

The leaders of different regions in the AFM become the members of the NLF. The constitution of the AFM of South Africa (2010) puts it in this way:

The NLF, formerly known as the EC, is the AFM's policy making body and the guardian of doctrinal, ethical and liturgical matters in the church. It licenses pastors, sets standards for ministerial training and settles disputes. It also convenes the annual National Leadership Conference (NLC) and General Business Meeting (GBM). (p. 5)

The NLF is an important decision-maker of the church. In my view, key decisions are actually taken by the NLF than the NOB. The NLF is made up of regional leaders in the AFM. Thus, women representation in the NLF is dependent on their representation in the region. In addition, the NLF is responsible for the selection process and interviews conducted for the appointment of pastors. The NLF will schedule interviews and thereafter issue a certificate of ordination which remains valid until the appointment of the ordained pastor in a full assembly. Furthermore, the NLF is responsible for the reinstatement of pastors who have previously lost their pastoral status. The process of reinstatement is almost similar to one of the ordinations.

National Office Bearers

The highest national structure in the AFM is called NOB. The function of NOB is to oversee the day-to-day running of the

church like issuing of ordination certificate, administration and financial management of the church. It consists of four members, that is, the president, deputy president, secretary and the treasurer. The president and the secretary are full-time officials who report to the church headquarters on daily basis. For the election of the NOB, each assembly sends a pastor and one delegate, and other qualifying voting members including the members of the NLF, member from the church departments like children ministry, youth, men and women and representative of theological training (see the constitution of the AFM of South Africa 2010). There has been transformation in the NOB of the AFM. Since 1996 with the unity of the AFM, the NOB is well represented in terms of race and ethnic groups. Currently, the president is a black person. However, the challenge to this office remains the representation of women. In fact, the challenges to the ascension of women to this office emanate from the challenges with the representation of women in the RLF and NLF. Thus, change needs to happen in those structures before it can happen here.

Apostolic Faith Mission International

From the national structure, the AFM has an international structure that manages the churches from different nations. The official website of the AFM of South Africa (2019) mentions that:

From South Africa, the AFM grew into many countries on the African continent within the first 50 years. Today it has grown to Asia, Australia, Europe, North America and South America. These international churches of the AFM are linked up through the AFMI to which member countries affiliate. (p. 1)

The AFM is growing at high rates especially in Europe. There are AFM churches in both the southern and northern London including the Midlands. Thus, the church is spreading its wings in the global north at a great speed. There are pastors at that level who are equipped and who equal the task of leading local assemblies at an international level. There is also a huge growth on the continent of Africa. The AFM is represented on almost all the countries of Africa. Thus, the AFM is well represented in almost all the corners of the earth and in all the continents around the globe. The AFM is also showing some signs to grow further to other areas and parts of the world.

There are factors that contributed to the international standing of the AFM. The first factor alludes to people who were from the region of southern Africa and worked in South Africa. Majority of these migrant workers worked in the cities like Johannesburg and Cape Town. These workers later became the members of the AFM and helped the AFM to grow in their home countries upon their return. The second factor refers to South African missionaries who preached throughout the southern African region and the whole of the continent of Africa. These missionaries started AFM branches wherever they preached the gospel. The last factor is that in the 1990s, there was an opening for South African missionaries to do mission outside South Africa. This meant that the gospel could now spread to Europe,

America, Asia and other parts of the globe (see Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa 2019). The challenge for the AFM international is the new waves of Pentecostalism like the prophetic movements that keep on growing. The main question remains the representation of women in the structures of the AFM even on an international level.

Historical development of women's role in the Apostolic Faith Mission

The historical developments of women's role in the AFM are well captured by De Wet (1989) who asserts that woman workers:

[F]ormed an important part of the AFM's task force during the early years. A large part of the dynamic growth of the Pentecostal Movement is due to its ability since its inception to mobilize and effectively deploy women into missionary service. White women in the AFM were ordained for fulltime work. (p. 86)

In 1910, the white Executive Council (EC) allowing black women as local preachers passed a resolution. In that capacity, they could also be ordained. However, this was at a local assembly level not at a higher leadership level. Women were only used as missionary workers and could not take influential positions in the EC. Black women could not be recognised as full-time pastors but only as workers in local assemblies of AFM. However, it must be noted that the early AFM provided certificates for workers, evangelists, pastors and missionaries whose work showed their abilities, and women were issued certificates in all areas. The issue remains that women could become workers but not necessarily taking up leadership roles. The large numbers of these women were black women.

The women who tried to rise were dismissed from the church. For example, according to Burger and Nel (2008:107), 'Maria Fraser was dismissed when she developed the conviction that the church was spiritually "cooling down" and that sins were on the increase'. The AFM saw it fit to dismiss Fraser mainly because her prophecies were not proper. Nonetheless, the AFM could have looked for other alternative ways of addressing Fraser's erroneous doctrinal practices than to just dismiss her. Another according to Burger and Nel (2008:107) is Christinah Nku who was dismissed when the church 'objected to some of her more elaborate displays of prophetic rapture'. Nku was more practical in her application of divine healing because she could use various healing products to pray for believers who were sick. This practice is acceptable in indigenous churches and among black people. However, classical Pentecostalism could not stand Nku's practices and they dismissed her. In both instances, it shows that the AFM was biased when it comes to women leadership. There are male counterparts who committed more sins than Maria Fraser and Christinah Nku but were never dismissed from the church. On the contrary, both Maria Fraser and Christinah Nku were right in their call for a holy and contextual liturgy, respectively.

Misrepresentations of women in the leadership structures of the Apostolic Faith Mission

Misrepresentations in local assemblies

The AFM has 2400 ordained pastors – of which a substantial (and growing) number represents women. The number of ordained women pastors has grown over the years and currently sits at 300. Most of them are not leading assemblies. An increasing number are, however, co-pastors focusing on specific areas of ministries. Apart from the traditional pastoral tasks such as preaching, pastoral care, conducting of meetings and sacraments, pastors are principally expected to train and assist members for their ministries (Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa 2019). There are women pastors in the AFM taking up assemblies but the majority are assistant pastors or branch pastors. It must be noted that the category of assistant pastor does not exist in the constitution of the AFM but most big assemblies are using it. Otherwise, women in the AFM continue to occupy positions in the departments of local assemblies, and others play a supportive role to their husbands as pastor's wives. It must be noted that many women are not presiding pastors; although they are ordained, they do not receive a call to preside over local assemblies like their male counterpart. The researcher has studied with few women during seminary and undergraduate studies. However, a majority of these women have undertaken secular jobs, while others remain as pastor's wives.

Misrepresentations in Regional Leadership Forum

There are about 10 regional leaders in non-geographic regions and none of them is a woman. There are about 33 regional leaders in the geographic regions of the AFM, and once again, there is no woman leader in these regions (Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa 2019). There was a regional chair in the person of Pastor Antoinette Erasmus, who in a way was the first regional chair but had to vacate the position because of age. Even in the position of secretary of the region, one seldom finds a woman leader there. The regional leaders automatically form part of the NLF. This implies that the chances of women to take part in the NLF are very slim. The only way for women to be part of NLF is to be elected as the regional chairpersons. The only women representative at this level is Mrs Mahlobo who is only there because she is the leader of the women fellowship. This challenge is again caused by a lack of women representatives at a local level, which then escalate to the region, and ultimately the national level. This challenge actually emanates from the theological training level because if women do not graduate from theological training, they cannot become ordained ministers.

Misrepresentations in National Office Bearers

The misrepresentations of women at NOB level are historical and very persistent. The reason for this assertion is that there has never been a woman in the NOB of the AFM since unity in 1996. The current NOBs are Pastor M.G. Mahlobo as the

president, Dr L.P. LaPoorta as his deputy, Pastor H.J. Weidemann as general secretary and Pastor Barend Petersen as general treasurer. What is surprising is that women are a majority in the church and other sectors of society but they fail to make it in the high echelons of power in the AFM. It is also surprising that for many years, the pattern has not changed in the NOB. Is it because women cannot lead or they do not want to lead or are they made to think that they cannot be leaders? While one ponders on the questions, it is certain that women can lead because they are already leading in other sectors of the society. We can take, for example, in academia, Prof. Kgethi Phakeng, the vice chancellor of University of Cape Town, and Prof. de la Rey, the former vice chancellor of University of Pretoria. In politics, women lead in parliament and hold various cabinet ministerial positions. Nkosezana Dlamini Zuma has led at a continental level, and Phumzile Mlambo Ngcuka is leading at an international level.

Misrepresentations in Apostolic Faith Mission International

Equally so, there has never been a woman leader or office bearer in the AFMI. The AFMI is not an old leadership structure but this cannot be an excuse for not having a woman in the structure. The current president of the AFMI is Pastor Frank Chikane. Dr Aspher Madziyire is the deputy president, Pastor George Mahlobo is the general secretary and Pastor Jobe Repent Koosimile is the treasurer. Women on these platforms only serve as administrators and personal assistants. The church can become a good opportunity to become a model to the world if or when women move from Personal Assistant (PA) positions to become leaders of society. It remains a question to know who will succeed the ageing Chikane. Will it be a woman or another man? It might take years for one woman to reach the level of leading the AFM at an international level, especially if there are still misrepresentations at local, regional and national levels. If such a dream were to come true, it should at least start at a local assembly level into a regional level, national level and then move to an international level. If this is not done, the AFMI will remain a male-dominated territory in terms of its leadership.

The rationale behind misrepresentations

The first rationale identified in this article is patriarchy. In the words of Kobo (2018):

The exploitation of women even in the church today is undeniable! While they are marginalised from leadership positions and remain powerless in decision making processes, their contribution in church and in Society continues to be exploited. (p. 3)

In another article, Kobo (2013) says that:

[E]ven though they are now in leadership, they still feel obliged to being submissive to men, with a pure understanding that a man is the head. Women have been oppressed and dehumanised by the patriarchal system. (p. 6)

Therefore, according to Kobo, the struggle to challenge the patriarchal culture of subordination is still pertinent for our context today. This is because even when women occupy leadership positions in church, tensions arise (Kobo 2018:3). According to Ackermann (1991:95), patriarchy means 'the legal, economic and social system that validates and enforces the sovereignty of the male head of the family over its other members'. These members in classical patriarchal systems were the wives, children, servants and slaves. Today, patriarchy describes the male-dominated world that we live in. The patriarchal system is the phenomenon that is found in many cultures worldwide and has been influential in many aspects of human life. This patriarchal culture does not recognise the full humanity of women in churches and in societies (Selokela 2005). Patriarchy in the words of Andrew (2005) is:

[T]he exclusion and domination of women, by the sins of sexism and patriarchy in the structures of church and society, undermine their freedom to share their gifts and ministries with the local and the universal church. (p. 34)

The missionaries of the AFM made women to believe that leadership positions are only for men. Women pastors were given a wrong title (Full Time Lady Worker) after their graduation from the Bible College because the church had a policy that was designed by the missionaries that said women could not lead. This was in line with the Western Christianity of the time and with African cultural interpretation of the role of women (Selokela 2005:63). This meant that even after ordination, women could not take up positions as full-time pastors of the church but remained workers. It is the same trend today – women are ordained but do not lead assemblies at the rate of their ordination. However, it must be acknowledged that there are few presiding pastors in the AFM who are women. Furthermore, participation of women is limited to certain roles prescribed by this male-dominated denomination. In some instances, women pastors are taken as window dressing in this church, so that the church should be politically correct by allowing women to be in leadership and be allowed to preach (Selokela 2005:4). Men are intentionally competing women in the church. Consequently, women are left powerless and hopeless, as they are not able to compete with these men. They are left with no choice but to relent and maintain the status quo.

The second rationale is the Pauline prohibition of women. Men like to use the Pauline prohibition of women in 1 Timothy 2:11–15 to force women into keeping quiet in church and to ensure that they always submit to their male counterpart. They use Paul to undermine the capabilities and abilities of women to lead society. They therefore say that women should never address men, instead they should remain silent. This kind of belief causes women to always remain inferior. It also causes women to remain submissive even when they are involved in abuse relationships. Women are seen as the ones who sinned because it was Eve that allowed the snake in the Garden of Eden and was actually the first one to eat the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden. The only thing that most men or at least those who hold this

view of women prohibition see well about women is that women are good for giving birth to children. They see women as the people who must stay behind their husbands in a supportive role. As the saying goes, 'wherever there is a successful man, there is a woman behind him'. They do not see that woman next to him.

Creating gender equality in Pentecostal leadership

The role of women

It might sound arrogant and disempowering but the way to create gender equality in the AFM and Pentecostal leadership is to start with women themselves. Women have the ability to make a difference in their lives, rising above oppressive systems towards their own liberation, for they are the ones who know the pain of being oppressed. Oppression does not lie in the eye of the beholder; it tugs at the soul of the one who feels it. This implies that unless women do something about this oppressive structure, they will forever live in oppression. The power for the emancipation and empowerment of women lies within them and no one else. There is a need for women to rise and fight their own battles. Women have done it before in fighting the powers that oppressed them and forced the powers that be to listen to them. Therefore, the view here is that women can do it again, but this time it is not about the oppressor in the government but about the oppressor inside the four pillars of the temple. Women can empower one another to become leaders of the society, especially the church. Since well, they are a majority in many aspects, and they should use that to their advantage.

What should be considered then is that if women were primary participants in the deliverance of Israel from their oppressors. Women should look at examples of women in a leadership position like Deborah. For as the Book of Judges 4 says:

Deborah a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading Israel at that time. She held court under the Palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites came to her to have their disputes decided. (pp. 4–5)

Deborah was a prophet and she was able to exercise spiritual and political leadership. This is a very good example to show that God can use women to lead. It is still right for them in the AFM church to participate fully in the leadership of the church. It has happened in the history of Israel, and it is still happening today. This is to say that God can call a man or a woman to do the same job, which is of the same value before God. In view of this, we can authoritatively assert that no one is weaker than the other. After all, women continue to do jobs that were previously done by men like in engineering and construction. The same can be performed in church, leadership roles are not for men only; both men and women can lead assemblies and other structures in society.

Disarming patriarchy

The AFM church should look at its patriarchal structure as a sin, confess it and subsequently discard it – as a result, they

should be able to accept women's humanity as they are placed in their rightful positions of leadership in the church and the society as a whole. Seen in this way, the church should correctly view patriarchy as a deviation from God's plan and against the mission of God. This will lead to a healthy community where all experience the love of God as the true image of God (Selokela 2005:57). Andrew (2005) asserts that:

The question that needs to be addressed is whether the structures of the AFM really create the freedom and opportunities for women to live out their ministries and share their gifts in the same manner as males. (p. 36)

There should be deliberate ways in which the AFM seeks to transform their leadership by including women in their structures. Women with abilities should be identified by the leaders and should be groomed to take over the high reigns in the church. It is not an excuse that women are faced with challenges like pregnancy and child care. These challenges can be addressed and other people should be appointed to support women facing such challenges.

Rethinking Pauline prohibition of women

Paul's prohibition of women participation in 1 Timothy 2:11–15 should not be used to discourage women from teaching, leading and addressing men in the church but should be understood in the historical context of him trying to address the issue of order in worship. In fact, the text should be seen more as a way trying to protect women in this context because they have been a soft target of those who want to exploit them for their own benefit of making the church disorderly. Moreover, 1 Timothy 2:11–15 should be read with other text. For example, when reading Galatians 3:28, 'There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus' and other Pauline letters, it is very much clear that Paul encouraged the participation of women. Paul actually encourages equality. Paul worked with women in ministry. Although Aquila and Priscilla were a couple, Paul seems to be more acknowledging Priscilla over Aquila her husband. Other women acknowledged by Paul include Eudia and Syntyche whom Paul refers to as his fellow workers in the gospel. Thus, from these supporting texts, it can be seen that Paul was not opposed to women leadership if he himself was able to work with them.

In the gospels, Jesus allowed women to do everything even though his disciples were not comfortable with it. This is evidenced by their astonishment when they found him discussing theological matters with the Samaritan woman in John 4:27, '... and they were greatly surprised to find Him talking with a woman'. They could not imagine a Jewish rabbi' speaking to a woman whom they considered evil. Despite all that, Jesus treated women in a remarkable way. He allowed them to sit at his feet. He allowed them to participate in the ministry. Jesus was involved with women until his last day in this world – that is, even after resurrection. On the day of Pentecost, Jesus baptised the

women exactly like the men, and for the exact same purpose as the men are baptised (De Wet 1989:85). Before Jesus ascended to heaven, holy anointing oil had never been poured on women's head: but before he organised his church, he called them all into the upper room, both men and women, anointed them with the oil of the Holy Ghost, thus qualifying them all to minister in this gospel. On the day of Pentecost, they all preached through the power of the Holy Ghost. In Christ, there is neither male nor female, all are one (Andrew 2005:36).

Rethinking elections

It is good for the members of the AFM to exercise their democratic right to vote for the leaders of their choice in the various leaderships of the AFM such as the RLF, NLF, NOB and even the AFMI. But if the same people will be voted for over and over again because they are masculine, there is a need to change this trend. Therefore, in order to effect such a change, the church needs to ask herself a bold question: Is it not high time that if the AFM is serious about transformation should consider rethinking elections? Although it is very democratic, it seems that the current election system is recycling the leaders that are already in the minds of the voters when it comes to the elections. Maybe is high time that the church introduces an alternative in order to have a woman leader in the structures of the AFM. This can be performed even if it means that the nominated woman leader becomes non-executive. If this is not deliberately performed, it will take years before having a woman in the high echelons of the leadership structures of the AFM. Instead, the status quo will remain in the AFM, that is, a continuation of masculine leadership.

Lessons from Richard Ngidi

The ministry of Ngidi included women especially at leadership level. De Wet (1989) mentions that:

Ngidi was the first to effectively use black women-workers with 30 well trained women-workers under his supervision, several new assemblies were established. The AFM in Natal became known as 'the Church of Ngidi' because of the impact of his ministry and leadership in Natal. (p. 141)

The women were supported mainly by freewill offerings taken at conferences in Natal. There were no statutory contributions that could be used, because this was a novel idea in the AFM. These women became a force in the AFM in Natal, fanning revival fires in many regions (Burger & Nel 2008:258). To Ngidi, women were not just 'assistants' in the ministry of evangelism. He accorded them full status of ministry even long before the AFM could think about ordaining women. These women would at times conduct gospel crusades alone. They were requested to go to rural places to establish congregations. Under Ngidi's supervision and protection, these women gave their all for the extension of the kingdom of God. These women would start an assembly and Ngidi would come and receive the new converts into fellowship (Khathide 2010:111).

Conclusion

Gender dimensions in Pentecostal leadership deserve a more serious scholarly attention in future. There is a need therefore for studies that will empirically assess the representations of women in the leadership structures of the AFM. Such a study will benefit from the voices of women, especially those aspiring to become leaders at any level in the leadership of the AFM. Nonetheless, the achievement of this article must be acknowledged. One, the article was able to identify the dynamics around the absence of women representations in the structures of the AFM. The article found that women have been oppressed and dehumanised by the patriarchal system. Women have been seen as irresponsible people who are unable to take care of themselves. In addition, the missionaries of the AFM church made women to believe that leadership positions are only for men. Secondly, the article was able to make suggestion on how to change women representation in Pentecostal leadership. Women should take the responsibility to make a difference in their lives, rising above oppressive systems towards their own liberation, for they are the ones who know the pain of being oppressed. Consequently, the AFM church should look at its patriarchal structure as a sin, confess it and subsequently discard it. The AFM should rethink the Pauline prohibition of women and rethink elections if their drive for transformation is deliberative. The AFM should learn from their own in the person of Richard Ngidi, who empowered women at all cost.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the Department of Christian Spirituality, Church History and Missiology for the support provided in conducting this research.

Competing interests

The author declares that no competing interests exist.

Authors' contributions

I declare that I am the sole author of this research article.

Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for a research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

Funding information

This study was financially supported by the University of South Africa.

Data availability statement

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the author.

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