

# **GENDER DIVIDE IN MUSIC PROFESSION: IMPLICATIONS FOR MUSICAL ARTS EDUCATION**

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**Mary T. Omotosho, Ph.D.**

## **Introduction**

Studies in gender studies have focused on disparity among males and females on political, religious and social discrimination. However, fewer studies have engaged gender disparity in music profession. The objective of this study is to examine the implications of gender disparity in musical arts education. Female students (N=50) were involved in semi-structured interviews. The participants were randomly selected from fourteen (14) oldest Nigerian Higher Institutions in four regions, which offer Music program. All 50 affirmed disparities in their academic duties while 44 affirmed disparities in staff numerical strength. 46 female students affirmed suffering psychological depression in relation to their personal and academic biases. All 50 agreed that traditional gender ideology influenced their personal biases towards their studies thereby causing a decline in enthusiasm and courage, needed for full exploration of their capabilities in musical tasks, especially subjects perceived as 'masculine'. Findings revealed implications to include performance below capabilities, decline in enthusiasm, partial commitment to musical tasks, depreciation in musical artistry, lecturers' indirect tolerance of falling musical standards, limitation in choice and area of specialization, decline in productivity, and low rate of female employment in music arts education. In conclusion, employment of more female staff where lacking and inclusion of female students in all musical tasks will enhance learning balance and gradual end to gender disparity in higher institutions, in Nigeria.

One of the greatest biases that appear to be in all professions is gender. As a result, the nature of a profession is a determinant factor for which gender is more 'favoured', irrespective of position, be it the superior or subordinate. 'Gender' is a

word which captures one's attention when perceived irrespective of contextual usage. There is usually, a reflex subconscious comparison between a male and female, when both sexes are perceived. According to Alade (2006), gender is a social construct which is brought about by different societies and ascribed to the two sexes. He further explains that gender is a culturally determined concept based on belief and traditions of a given society or community. It refers to the roles, behaviours and qualities ascribed to male and female folks. Gender can be understood when sex is mentioned. Sex is the biologically determined characteristics and functions society ascribe to male and female.

So many varying issues surround the word, gender, and there appears to be a form of discontentment in its application to matters considered crucial. As a result, several works have been carried out by scholars on gender. These works have focused on gender from numerous angles such as jobs, sex, leadership challenges, abuse, ambition, profession, education, marriage, violence, empowerment, equality, to mention but a few. Discussing gender and class, Abdullah-Olukoshi and Olukoshi (1989) traced the history of Nigerian women's struggle for recognition and enforcement of their rights in the society.

*The struggle of Nigerian women for a less patriarchal, more democratic society has a long history which can be traced back to the pre-colonial period. Well before the celebrated Aba women's uprising of 1929 against the colonial state's obnoxious taxation policies, women had been engaged in various forms of "silent" and open struggle within and outside the household for the recognition and enforcement of their rights in society. society. p. 14*

In addition, Olukoshi and Oluokshi noted recent happenings among women which attempts to promote women issues in line with academics thus

*What is more recent is the attempt to promote the study of women issues both in general terms and as a distinct subject of academic interest, an attempt which, as can be expected, has not been altogether welcome by many critics. The growth of scholarly interest in women issues formed part of the efflorescence of radical ideas in Nigerian universities in the 1970s. An increasing number*

*of people began to raise questions on the place of women in the struggle for democracy and change in the country. One outcome of this was the formation of the radical-feminist Women in Nigeria (WIN) as an alternative to the establishment oriented National Council of Women Societies (NCWS). (Ibid)*

Almost everything pertaining to human existence and comfort is affected by 'gender'. However, agreement on plausible solutions to gender disparity is yet to be reached despite increased awareness of women's interests in the country's development process. In education, we have observed that gender bias can either be personal (internalized) or academic (traditional gender ideology). This paper aims at examining the implications of gender divide in musical arts education with particular reference to Nigerian higher institutions, via identification of the causes of gender bias in music departments and whose responsibility it is. In bridging this gap, the paper hopes to find probable solutions to learning-balance which will further enhance productivity in music professions in terms of numerical-gender-balance and quality of service.

## **Methodology**

This paper focused on gender divide from the view point of female involvement in professional activities in the field of music. In an attempt to eradicate that which has long been perceived as an 'age-long disease', we considered what brought about gender divide by tracing the origin of gender divide as far back as the creation of the world. Thereafter, we looked into the influences of gender-culture on education and considered gender disparity experienced in different professions but focused more on music students in Nigeria from undergraduate years to the level of professionalism.

Opinions of senior lecturers in music departments were also considered during the collation of data as regards numerical gender-strength of academic staff and students' gender-behaviours to studies. Discussions on the psychological effect of gender disparity on female was done. Finally, the implications of all aforementioned to musical arts education was determined.

In carrying out the above, the paper employed semi-structured interview method for fifty (50) female students in fourteen (14) oldest Nigerian higher institutions in

four regions of the country. This allowed respondents, freedom to express their views on gender divide in their own terms, using descriptive answers for open-ended questions and specific responses to few predetermined questions. Samples of the open-ended questions include, “what music profession would you like to take up after graduation and why?”, “what are your favourite subjects and why?”, “how would you assess your musical capacity?”, “do you feel academically challenged or intimidated by male colleagues in your department?”, and so on.

On the other hand, predetermined questions were selected from the list provided under ‘appendix’ in this paper. Selection was based on relevance to respondents involved. All of these enabled to ascertain whose responsibility it is for gender divide on issues of music professionalism in musical arts education. Consequently, the implications are revealed.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This paper is anchored on the feminist theory which emphasizes equality, difference, choice, care, time, and experience, between men and women. The six concepts as propounded by Hughes (2002) are discussed within the context of the paper. Equity, according to Obanya (2009), implies equal chances, equal treatment and equal gains. Uzoma (2014) believes men and women are not in most cases given equal opportunities to attain some height, educationally. She further argues that even where men and women possess same academic qualifications, men seem to enjoy higher economic gain than women due to their preferences at job opportunities, which tend to discourage upcoming young women.

According to Salawu (1995), the idea of equality means that all persons are born equally irrespective of their social status. Nature itself initiates inequality and therefore not every inequality is unjust. Salawu, cited in Uzoma (2014), argues that nature predisposes male species to superiority as opposed to the female counterpart, but the author condemned further stereotyping which negates equal and co-existence between men and women.

### **Origin of Gender Divide**

It is a general belief that right from when the world began, man was created before woman. As recorded in the Bible, the first man created was called Adam. When his creator (God) saw that he was alone, He (God) thought to himself saying

“it is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.” (Genesis 2:18, KJV). Hence, woman was created to be a helper to man. In other words, to be man’s assistant. The woman was formed from one of the bones taken from the ribs of Adam when he was put to sleep by God. That is why the Bible states that “the head of the woman is the man.” (I Corinthians 11:3, KJV).

There are several verses in the Bible which emphasize lordship of man over woman and submissiveness of woman to man. The primary responsibilities of man and woman are also addressed in the first book of the Bible. The woman was commanded to bear children while the man would engage in farming. The responsibilities of man have been designed by his creator. As a result, he finds himself naturally designing his duties according to authority and strength. Hence, tasks which require greater strength are attributed to men and lesser for women.

Existing literature on the history of mankind observed that the major work man knew and effectively carried out was farming and hunting while the woman stayed at home to take care of the household by cooking meals and cleaning the house. The place of woman was strictly in the kitchen while that of man was in the field. Gradually, in addition to the woman’s role in the house, she and the children were made to join the head of the home on the farm. Passage of time has led to increase and diversification in roles. Technology also plays vital role via impact of diverse innovations by man on his everyday activity. One of these developments is formal education - an innovation turned into profession.

Since profession has to do with expertise on a specific job or career, certain questions naturally come to mind as regards gender disparity in music professions with particular reference to Nigerian higher institutions. Some of the questions include – How many females are professionals in the field of music? Why does there appear to be gender-divide when it comes to employment into music professions that has trained and successfully graduated mixed students without any hindrance during admission into the higher institution? Could the traditional gender ideology have taken a toll on females in engaging in lecturing jobs in the department of music? Do the females feel incapable of handling music lecturing? How many opportunities are given to the female gender in music academia? Are there gender restrictions as regards employment in departments of music in Nigeria? Are there checks or controls for gender equalities in Nigerian higher institutions?

## **Influence of Traditional Gender Ideology on Education**

By traditional gender ideology, we are referring to gender-culture. Daramola (2012) noted that “culture as a word is a difficult phenomenon to define.” He explains that;

*there is always a conflict in its popular and academic uses. The popular use of the word stresses the social aspect of people's life while the academic use stresses the scientific or empirical aspects of people's total life and actions. Each discipline approaches its definition from the purview of its relationship to the discipline. p.1*

In addition, he goes on to state that “culture can be said to be premised on the beliefs, customs, practices, and social behavior of a particular nation or people.” It is a general belief that culture is the way of life of a people.

Olarinmoye (1992) noted Sapir's use of the word ‘culture’, “to denote that which is socially rather than biologically transmitted”. From the foregoing, we defined gender-culture as the societal belief of gender since ‘culture is shaped by or made compatible with the drives of the dominant force in their dominant mode of production through the values, mores, customs, propensities and behavioral patterns which the dominating force hold as legitimate or preferable.’ (Daramola, 2012).

The cultural belief of the people determines the role a woman plays in the society. In the indigenous traditional Nigeria community according to Alade (2012), there is the belief that woman's role is in the home, where she is a wife, a mother, and a house keeper. She is all depending on the male counterpart for survival in terms of shelter, clothing and feeding while the husband plays a major role. In contemporary society this impression about woman is gradually fading away. Women these days are involved in many professional occupations all over the globe. Nigeria as a nation is also not left out as women are actively involved in almost all professional fields though the number is still low compared to men.

Education is an exchange of knowledge-acquiring-processes – in other words, knowledge acquisition. This makes learning, the basics of education. It is all about giving and receiving knowledge needed for effective societal function. Education is

carried out formally and informally. Informal education is experienced within the home and environment while formal education requires conscious efforts in knowledge acquisition in schools, needed for impact in the society. The Nigerian educational system spans through three basic stages. They include Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Institutions. Since education is aimed at knowledge acquisition needed for societal impact, school curriculums are thus designed to reflect life in the society. The culture of a society is then mirrored in the content of the curriculum and learning method of the institution.

Due to the traditional gender ideology in Nigeria which ascribes breadwinning roles to men and caregiving roles to women, subjects taught in schools have been indirectly divided based on gender. These subject-division become obvious from secondary school and gets more pronounced in tertiary institutions, usually referred to as higher institutions where students are prepared to be well-equipped for the society after successful completion of their academic programmes. Some courses (subjects) are therefore perceived as 'masculine' courses, some as 'feminine' courses and others as 'unisex' courses. The 'masculine' subjects are considered more difficult than the 'feminine' ones while the 'unisex' courses are considered to be quite balanced in task-strength. For instance, science and technology-based courses are regarded as masculine subjects while home economics, food and nutrition, textile designs and secretarial studies among others, are regarded as feminine subjects. Even within the health science departments, a large number of female students enroll in nursing while more male students graduate as medical doctors. Doctors are thus considered to be of higher status than nurses and are celebrated based on that 'hierarchy' within the school and in the society at large.

The cultural belief of different parts of the country also reflects in the numerical strength of gender in the department of music. In the south-east, a large number of female students are seen in music department when compared with the south-west which could have as low as five (5) females in a class of 30 students. Today, the Igbo believe that men should go out and engage in business ventures that will fetch money for the family, once maturity of age is attained. On the other hand, the women are released to be in school to acquire the skills needed for proper management and support of their husband's businesses.

## **Gender Versus Profession**

Profession according to Oxford Dictionary refers to a type of job that needs special training or skill, especially one that needs a high level of education. Conceptually, a profession is referred to as that occupation that requires extensive education or specialised training. Odunewu (2000:3) stated that a profession is an “occupation requiring advance education and training, involving intellectual skills as Medicine, Law, Pharmacy, Engineering etcetera.” However, practitioners of these professions are referred to as professionals. Odunewu further highlighted some of the criteria by which professionals are judged. They include:

- Specialised education preparation
- Dedication of public’s welfare
- A distinct body of knowledge
- An enforceable code of conduct, that is, shared body of values and standard
- Individual accountability

From the submission above, it can be deduced that, for anyone to be called a professional, he or she must have acquired necessary skills needed in the profession (job) he or she is involved in.

Today, several professions are products of formal education. These professions are birthed from professional courses offered in the higher institutions. The most common professional courses include: Music, Drama, Medicine, Engineering, Law, Accounting, Computer Science, Mass Communication, to mention few. Gender divide in these professions vary according to the nature of the profession. Despite modernisation over the years, elements of historical background of work-gender are still found in these professions, especially that which require much energy for productivity. Thus, gender can be said to be in competition with these professions.

Below are some professions observed to be subconsciously categorized according to ‘strength and intellect’ in Nigerian higher institutions.

### ***‘Masculine’ Professions***

1. Music Instrumentalist
2. Lecturer
3. Doctor
4. Building Engineer
5. Electrical Engineer

### ***‘Feminine’ Professions***

- Vocalist
- Teacher
- Nurse
- Fashion Designer
- Home Economist



## 6. Chemical Engineer

## Food Technologist

Interviews held with respondents revealed that even within various music professions, gender disparity is still subconsciously categorized into masculine and feminine professions based on the nature of tasks the jobs require. For instance, majority of the female students interviewed, chose vocal trainer over choral conductor; vocalist over instrumentalist; violinist over cellist; performing artiste over recording engineer, and so on. For course specializations, the following were opted for: vocal performance over instrumental performance; project writing over composition; dance over drumming, to mention a few. The students admitted their choices to be anchored on level of preparedness, knowledge and intellectual skill as observed by Odunewu in some criteria by which professionals are judged.

During an interview with Olaniyan, a Professor in the Department of Music, Obafemi Awolowo University, he affirmed that the “cultural belief of a society strongly affects the type of profession men and women engage in”. He illustrated by comparing the traditional belief of the Igbo from the south eastern part of the country with the Yoruba people from the south west. He noted that in the south east, the business trade of selling provisions by men cannot be seen amongst the Yoruba race which considers such business as demeaning to a man. Also, menial jobs such as a hawking, fruit selling, and cobbler are peculiar to men from the northern part of Nigeria. It is rare to find a Yoruba man engaging in such business especially, itinerant cobbler. Some levels of prestige are thus attached to certain businesses before a man can delve into such. To further buttress his point, he stated that among the Yoruba race, local restaurants popularly known as ‘buka’ are relegated to the women while the same business, carried out in a more ‘classy’ and dignifying manner in reputable eateries or restaurants in hotels are seen to include men. This clearly explains why most chefs are males in prestigious hotels. Chefs are thus highly respected and celebrated in the society than cooks in a ‘buka’.

Narrowing down to choice of musical instrument, Olaniyan explained that it is a cultural belief among the Yoruba race that membranophonic instruments are for men. As a matter of fact, in ancient times, it was a taboo for women to touch the ‘iya-ilu’ (mother drum) despite the instrument bearing a feminine name. The instrument was strictly reserved for the men. Also, in academics, the piano is considered to be more prestigious and challenging, thus, males are most times

quick to learn it than the harp. Most females on the other hand tend to avoid playing big-sized instruments that are blown due to much energy involved. For instance, 47 out of the 50 female students interviewed chose flute over euphonium.

### **Psychological Effects of Gender Disparity and Implications to Musical Arts Education**

Olaniyan pointed out from his years of experience, that, male students generally perform better than female students particularly in the playing of musical instruments. In an attempt to evaluate this, we observed that female students have in their subconscious minds internalized gender divide. That is, they categorized the instruments according to size, role and technicalities involved in playing them. During the author's interaction with respondents, majority gave reasons based on societal norm as regards gender-strength, although they wished it was not so. Hence, the females lack self-confidence in learning some instruments even if they admired it, thereby making them feel psychologically depressed. Most lack the courage to attempt instruments which are mostly played by the males. About three-quarter of them expressed discriminating challenges when an attempt to learn some 'masculine instruments' is made. When difficulty is experienced by a female who summons some courage to learn such instrument, they claimed to sometimes be mocked and discouraged by fellow students and at times, a few lecturers with discouraging words such as "who sent you?", "which female did you see playing that?", "is this how you will play during exam?", etc. On the other hand, in a bid to encourage female students, lecturers find themselves reprimanding males much more than females especially in instrumental activities and this sometimes reflects in method and level of students' assessments especially in practical courses.

This attitude of incompetence was also attributed to female students' performance level in technical courses such as composition and instrumental performance related subjects. This ideology has over the years affected most female students' musical competence as well as their expectations in future occupation with regards to choice and area of specialization. Vleuten, Jaspers, Maas & Lippe (2016:181) while discussing on how gender ideology might affect educational choices, asserts that, "gender ideology shapes boys' occupational values and subject preferences, whereas for girls it shapes their competence beliefs." This explains why various musical instruments are mostly played by males than females. It also partly accounts for choice preferences in musical instruments.

As a result, professionalism becomes a threatened uphill task/achievement. With less engagement of females, musical expertise and artistry of upcoming female students will be limited.

With improvements in female self-confidence, there would be great and distinct positive changes in attitude to work. Enthusiasm for musical practice especially on instruments will increase, confidence in instrumental performance will get boosted, commitment to musical tasks will escalate, musical abilities would be explored better, and productivity impact would be greatly felt by both genders, in institutions of learning. Implications revealed therefore include, performance below capabilities, decline in enthusiasm, partial commitment to musical tasks, depreciation in musical artistry, lecturers' incidental tolerance of females' waning musical dexterity, limitation in choice and area of specialization, weakening productivity, and low rate of female employment in musical arts education.

### **Music Departments Academic Gender-Staff-Ratio in Nigerian Higher Institutions**

The table shows the number of male and female staff in Departments of Music in four regions of fourteen (14) oldest Nigerian higher institutions. The geographical location of each institution is specified and difference in staff numerical strength according to gender is clearly revealed.

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Name of Institution</b>	<b>Number of Male Staff</b>	<b>Number of Female Staff</b>	<b>Total Number of Staff</b>	<b>Geographical Zone</b>
1.	University of Lagos, Akoka.	6	1	7	South-West
2.	Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife.	9	1	10	South-West
3.	Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo	8	1	9	South-West

4.	The Polytechnic Ibadan	9	4	13	South-West
5.	University of Port Harcourt	13	6	19	South-South
6.	Delta State University, Abraka	7	4	11	South-South
7.	University of Uyo	9	2	11	South-South
8.	Ignatius Ajuru University of Education	2	4	6	South-South
9.	University of Nigeria, Nsukka	14	10	24	South-East
10.	Nnamdi Azikwe University, Awka	14	5	19	South-East
11.	University of Jos	2	1	3	North-Central
12.	Federal College of Education, Pankshin	3	1	4	North-Central
13.	University of Ilorin	3	0	3	North-Central
14.	Federal College of Education, Okene.	8	1	9	North-Central
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>148</b>	
	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>	<b>72.3%</b>	<b>27.7%</b>	<b>100%</b>	

*Table 1: Showing Academic Gender-Staff-Ratio in Departments of Music in Nigerian Higher Institutions*

Data above shows that out of 148 lecturers in the selected fourteen (14) higher institutions in Nigeria that offer music as a course, one hundred and seven (107) are men while forty-one (41) are women. The percentage for men is 72.3% while that of women is 27.7%. Of the fourteen (14) institutions, one institution in north-central region completely lacks the presence of female lecturers in their department while in six institutions, there is the presence of a female staff in each. A department in the south-south region however has her female staff numerically doubling the male. Overall, the south west and north-central regions are poorest in academic

staff gender divide. South-east and south-south have highest number of female lecturers than other regions despite numbering below 50% of the total academic staff in their departments. This clearly reveals a generally low rate of female lecturers employed in tertiary institutions where music is offered.

## **Conclusion**

This paper asserts that gender is one of the greatest biases that appear to exist in all professions and has been described as an 'age-long disease' based on reflex subconscious comparison among persons whenever the term is perceived. General awareness of gender divide in music profession has largely affected students' exploration of their capabilities in musical arts education. Most female students in particular, lack adequate self-confidence required for the profession. Music lecturers in Nigerian higher institutions also find themselves subtly tolerating their female students' weaknesses in a bid to encourage them rather than insisting on attainment of the required musical standard as is with their male students. The overall implication deduced is an academic downplay on music professionalism for most females.

The 'divide' in gender is considered a force which drives or determines an individual or society's distribution of gender roles. Hence, individual perception/self-confidence (internalized force) and societal ideology (external force) are responsible for gender divide in musical arts education. Since a society (family and environment) influences an individual's perception of crucial life issues, musical tasks in education and profession can be positively or negatively construed by males and females. A wrong perception of musical responsibilities by a female student would cause her to function below her capabilities hence, her enthusiasm drops; commitment becomes partial and productivity in musical artistry depreciates. Deliberate correctness of internalized gender-role-expectations will gradually eradicate wrong societal notion and bring about mind-cleansing of the apparent 'gender disease'. More women are hereby encouraged to increase their commitment and participation in musical studies to enable better consideration of female employment and leadership positions in higher institutions. This will enhance gender balance in musical arts education, in Nigeria.

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## **Religious Books**

Genesis 2:18, *King James Version*

I Corinthians 11:3, *King James Version*

## **Appendix**

The following questions (not limited to the list) were randomly picked as applicable to respondents via one-on-one and mobile interviews.

### **Structured (Predetermined) Questions**

- What class/level are you in your department?
- What are your major and minor instruments?
- What is your area of specialisation?
- What choice of music profession are you preparing for?
- How many male and female academic staff are there in your department?
- Which gender is the coordinator of your department's orchestral band?
- Which gender is the coordinator of your department's choral group?
- Which gender is the head of your department?

### **Unstructured (Open-ended) Questions**

- What do you understand by gender?
- What is the first thing that comes to mind whenever you perceive the word 'gender'?
- What do you understand by gender divide or gender disparity?
- Who or what do you think is responsible for gender divide?
- Do you think that the traditional ideology of gender influences education? If yes, how?
- What would you consider as the greatest bias in professions?
- Is Music a gender (biased) profession? What is/are your reason(s).
- What is the ratio of male to female students in your department for both undergraduate and postgraduate?  
If females are low in number, what do you think is responsible for the numerical difference?

- How would you rate the academic performance of male and female students in theory courses?
- How would you rate the academic performance of male and female students in practical courses?
- Which gender generally performs better than the other in theory courses? Give reasons for your answer.
- Which gender generally performs better than the other in practical courses? Give reasons for your answer.
- Are there gender restrictions in your department for lectureship positions? If yes, what are the restrictions?
- What are the requirements for academic positions in your department?
- How often do females apply for academic positions in your department?
- What is the ratio of females to males who submit applications for academic job positions in your department?
- Have you been privileged to be among the interview panel in your institution? If yes, how would you rate the performance of males to females during job interviews in the music department?
- What do you think could be responsible for their level of performance?
- How would you rate academic delivery of female to male staff in theory courses?
- How would you rate female productivity in practical courses?
- What do you think is responsible for low number of female staff in your department?
- Is there a gender criterion for leadership positions in your department? If so, what?
- What effect do low number or no female staff in your department have on you?
- What music profession would you like to take up after graduation and why?
- What are your favourite subjects and why?
- How would you access your musical capacity?
- Do you feel academically challenged or intimidated by male colleagues in your department?