A Review of Gender Status in Community Musical Activities for Societal Development in World Perspectives

By

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Abstract

All over the world, women hold a significant place in community activities and cultural displays. Although, diverse commentaries exist in literature on gender disparity in some social responsibilities and cultural bias placed on feminine gender. When it comes to professionalism and female participation in community musical activities, the fact remains that both gender are human tools for development. As a progressive effort to re-position gender participation in community musical world, this paper fostered a review of Gender Status in Community Musical Activities for Societal Development in World Perspectives. The paper reviewed available studies on the status of gender in music as related to career choice, gender association with musical instruments and relative participation of male and female gender in community music for socio – economic and societal development. This paper further brings to the fore, gender involvement in different areas of community musical activities in some countries of the world. In the concluding part of the paper, among the way forward suggested for stakeholders in music field in Nigeria include: support in different forms for gender parity in community musical activities in Nigeria environment for social engagement and community development. Also, relevant and contemporary researches focusing on gender and community musical engagement are being advocated for researchers in the music field, all to close the gap between gender differences in community musical activities in various societies of the world for enhanced societal development.

Keywords: Community Music; Gender Bias; Gender Status; Musical Activities; Societal Development.

Introduction

Music is a language which is understood globally, and as a means of expression, it exists in every community. Martis and Gutiez (2018) affirmed that music without society would be unthinkable, in the same way that we objectively do not know any society that manages without it. Thus, every society creates its own style of music for social engagement and societal development. On music and gender, gender is an essential part of every arm of any society which plays important roles in community develoment and in the larger society. Despite the relationship that exists between gender and music, gender disparity against female is an alarming issue in music performance. This is not unconnected with stereotype gender roles assigned to male and female gender in the society. Okunbor (2020) asserted that cultural norms that lead to gender roles also control musical performances in Africa. Most especially, in music dedicated for the worship of Afican dieties, female gender is restricted in music performance oftentimes.

In contemporary times, the female gender is breaking out of the barriers of gender discrimination in musical performance. This leads to female involvement in performance of music genres of musical instruments which are prior dedicated for male performances. In recent times, popular music offers feminity and identity which welcome African women involvement. This is also found in foreign religions music traditions such as Islam and Christianity. This is in line with Ebeli (2015) that in contemporary times, females have proven beyond every doubt that they are capable of performing some musical roles traditionally reserved for men which is evident in academic institutions.

Furthermore, from ages, women have been found in music circles and up till today, they have built strong contributions to the musical world. Although, in the music industry, there are certain styles of music socially constructed for the masculine gender while there are ones designated for the female gender. More especially, music with fast tempo is commonly assigned for men, and such include rock music and the likes, while music genres like R & B are designated for the feminine gender.

In Nigeria for instance, both the male and female gender are found in hip-hop music unlike the fuji style of music which is mostly dominated by males with a few upcoming female fuji musicians. Among Yoruba people, there is 'Waka' music, a popular music performed by female gender, although its instrumentalists are males. Also, there is 'Apala' and 'Sakara' music which are male dominated musical genres. Sergean and Himonides (2016) suggested that gender attribution to particular styles of music is due to "code embedded in musical gestures" being transmitted, conditioning the message received from the music. The need therefore arises to review the gender status in community musical activities with a view to encourage gender parity and more engagement

of the feminine gender in community musical activities, all to promote societal development in the world.

Gender, Music and Society

The term gender is socially constructed and every society determine its gender identities, and it varies across cultures. It also used to describe the differencies in behaviour between man and woman which are described as 'masculine' and 'femine' (https://archive.mu.ac>Gender and soc). On social terms, gender describes the disperity between man and woman according to their supposed ability or strenght. Therefore, gender is a social construct that explains biological and behavioural distinctions between men and women in any society. Thus, it is not uncommon to observe gender influence and gender interference in day-to-day human practices in various communities and programmes in the larger society.

On the other hand, the word music is relatively conceived in that, what an individual considers as noise could be considered as most interesting music by another. The power of music is felt in the society, ranging from social engagement to music as a community music theraphy for people with mental challenges. Each society creates its own specific type of music. Music without society would be unthinkable, in the same way that we objectively do not know any soceity that manages without it (Martis and Gutiez, 2018) . Society creates space for musical performances through which musicians enhance musical communication and eliminate gaps between performer and audience. Music performance in modern

society gives musicians the opportunity for individual expression, public engagement, and generate avenue to pass musical knowledge to next generation in the society. In line with this, Schyff and Silverman (2019) list possibilities offers by modern society for musical practices which include music education programme for primary and secondary schools, specialised training in performance, theory, musicology, and composition in universities and conservatoires. The society is therefore, the umbrella that accommodate various dimensions of community music which in turn add values to human life for sustinable development.

Community Music and Gender

Community as a word is oftentimes considers as an association of people who have a common interest and values towards progressive development of individuals and their environment. Community music in the other hand is an approach to music composition that are cooperatively performed together by groups in a particular locality. Similarly, Veblen (2007) see community music as active music making including performing, creating, and improvising. Community music influences individual lives, cultures, and it binds people in the community together in peace and harmony. In the same vein, Huib and Brydie-Leigh (2013) see community music as music which concerns people making music, and these help to develop cultural identity and celebrate cultural diversity. In addition, community musical activities promote artistic talents, cooperation among group members and allows various forms of musical engagement for enjoyment, cross-cultural transfer and a means to bind youths together with a view to usher in progress and harmony.

However, in the world over, women have been involved in several musical activities for a long period of time up till today. In African communities, gender roles are assigned to children at early-stage in life. Africans have norms and values in their various communities which extend to roles played by men and women in the community (gender roles) (Okunbor, 2020). Similarly, every culture state different gender roles for male and female. As Hallam, Rogers and Creech (2008) noted, one aspect of this differentiation has been gender-stereotyping of the musical activities which are perceived as appropriate for males and females.

There are societies that split musical roles based on gender lines, while women sing, men are expected to play musical instruments. Although, this role is interchangeable, and when this is done, it is based on social and sexual line. Despite the fact that musical instruments are genderless, gender stereotypes are assigned to a lot of them. The contemporary soceity is breaking out from the gender norms associated with musical instruments. Wych (2012) in the study based on 'gender and instrument associations' ascerts that hisorically, the gender norms associated with musical instruments have changed because fewer woman and girls are taking up some of the musical instruments belief to be masculine, and fewer men and boys are taking up musical instruments ascribed to be female gender. 'Dundun' drum as one of traditional instruments in Yoruba land in Nigeria which in some years past was commonly found with male drummers known as '*Ayan'* but in contemporary times, female drummers are emerging. Samuel (2018) affirmed that the general belief that forbids women from playing traditional drums cannot be strictly applied to the '*Dundun*' because its ensemble is more connected to social than religious ceremonies.

Literature Review on Gender Status and Music in Some Countries of the World

Music and Gender

Throughout the world, there are musical instruments which are not allowed to be played by female gender, especially those that are dedicated for deities' worship. In Africa for instance, every age group with respect to their gender, has its own music, be it for males and females. Some songs are for female gender which are predominant during ceremonial performances and rituals while there are also songs strictly for male gender. Atimes, both gender sing and perform together. Okunbor (2020) in line with the above observations ascerted that cultural norms that lead to gender roles also control musical performances in Africa.

Edverson's (2017) in his study on gender and music investigated whether or not one can observe difference between female and male composers and performers in classical music. The study gives history of women in music, the roles they played or not played, and different features of music which are viewed as masculine or feminine. Five different audio clips were given to the participants to figure out the gender of the composers and performers. From their responses, it was revealed that

there was no evidence to show that gender can be heared in music. Many of the participants responses were from their prior knolwedge. It was recommended that gender differentiation in musical composition should become a thing of the past for people in the society to debate. That instead of amplifying gender of composers and performers, it should simply be composers and performers.

Lemos (2011) focused on contextualising the relationship that exist between music and gender within the context of globalisation. It was revealed that in a situation where music tends to sustain cultural values and norms, there is going to be reactions and resistance of indigenisation by the localised globalism of specific musical genre as means of demonstrating gender division. Also, music can serve as instrument to challenge societies' belief on gender relations and thereafter change it. It was found out that there is a connection that exist between globalisation, music and gender.

The emperical study of Okunbor (2020) on a study on music and gender in three universites which included Department of Music Delta State University, University of Port Harcourt and University of Uyo in South-South, Nigeria. It was found out that, males show more interest in studying music as a career part than females. Also, male music students are focused and more serious, when compared to female music students, and they aslo have the ability to withstand stress. From the study, conclusion was reached that there is gender imbalance when comparing the academic performance of male and female students in the Music Departments of the selected universities used for the study.

Buckman (2017) carried out a research on music and gender. Four main hypohteses were used to find out whether: females consume more music than males; females devote more time to listening to music than males, and females have varing reasons for consuming music; as well as male and female preference for different music genres. The result showed that female consume more music compared to males, and also stayed long in listening to music on the long run than men. For listening reasons, the number of female listening to music because of their mood, distraction and dance is high than that of males, while the number of male listening to music based on productivity, identity, and social is high compared to female. Based on

preference for different music genres, classical music was scored highest for male and scored slightly below average for females.

Further, Werner (2019) emperically, presented vital areas and themes on feminist studies on music and gender from past decases and established the relationship that exists between music and gender. She pointed out that research on music and gender is an interdisciplinary research area that needs intersectional theory of gender for formulation of research questions and in the formation of gender, sexuality, race, and class among others that exist in music culture.

In Scharfenberger's (2011) analysis of participation of African women in music performances, which was carried out to analyse previous scholarship on West African's women's music, the study focused mainly on music performances of Ghanaian women. It was found out that gender roles exist for males and females in 'Ewe' soceity. It was emphasised that West African women music performances are frequently hindered in ritual settings music performance, and popular music provides for novel development of identity and feminity, which is brought about by global markets. This kind of music falls under foreign religious traditions as Islam and Christianity which give room for female particpation in music performances.

Furthermore, Ebeli (2015) reseached into the women participation in 'Avatime Totoeme' musical performance and its connection with rituals which is built on gender assumptions. The study also concentrated on elimination of barriers among women in musical performance of 'Totoeme'. This kind of music belongs to all women in 'Avatime' and they ensure that the music is sustained, and transmitted to the next generation. The women put in their efforts for the sustainability of the 'Totoeme' music heritage. In 'Totoeme' music performance, men play drums while women play their roles as dancers and singers.

Musical Instruments and Gender in Music

Despite the fact that musical instruments are not gendered, socio-cultural norm among other factors dictates the way instruments are alloted to genders. Musical instruments gender association is common, as a result, some instruments are

considered as masculine or feminine. So, attitudinalchange would bring about change in gender association of musical instruments.

Wiedenfeld (2012) emperically studied sex-type and selection of musical instruments' effect on grade five instrument choices. It was put forward through research questions to examine if their selection of instrument are gender-based, social perceptions, parental influence and sex role. It was found out that the participants of the study (both boys and girls) played both instruments that are considered gender-consistent and inconsistent. This shows that social perception of instruments' gender association is changing and more musical instruments are regarded as gender-neutral.

Relationship between gender and musical instruments' selection in middle school students band in North Central Florida was examined and their directors feelings were also examined by Crowe (2010). Most of the respondents including their directors, agreed that there is perception of gender imbalance in instruments' selection, but the data showed that the instruments were the same in terms of masculinity and feminility. Two of the directors said they are trying very hard to eradicate gender stereotype in musical instruments' selection of their students.

Furthermore, Walker (2004) reviewed some of the available literature on influence of gender and sex-stereotypng of middle school students' perception and their musical instruments selection. Literature were reviewed as regards influence of gender and sex-stereotyping on musical instruments' selection under the headings which include, biological consideration, cultural consideration, music and gender, gender stereotype and instruments' selection. It was concluded that as band directors admit new students every year, they should promote gender-equity by presenting musical instruments as gender-neutral as much as possible for the betterment of their instrumental music programme. This could be done when introducing the instruments to them at the first time.

Kuhlman (2004) examined students' choice of instruments in respect to timbre preferences and gender. Two hundred and thiry-two (232) students in fourth grade were examined. The study revealed that despite the fact that boys preferences for

instrumets' timbre do not support gender association of a particular instrument, their instrument selection supported it, and girls also corroborated gender stereotyping in their choice of instruments to study. The result of the study revealed that the students used for the study choose their instruments in line with existing gender association and their preferences for timbre did not corroborate their choice of musical instruments.

Kim (2021) documented the outcome of the study carried out in 2020 by a team of reseachers in Music Education Department in Colombia University on status of the gender association in musical instruments' selection of students and the role played by parental influence. The result showed that gender–stereotyping in the selection of musical instruments is reducing day-by-day and it was also observed that a child's selection of musical instrument stems from parental influence.

The emperical study of knecht (2009) on gender association for musical instruments was carried out on kingdergarten students through third grade in a school in Lancaster country, Pennsylvania. Several factors influnecing the decision of a student in the choice of musical instrument to learn and play. Such factors idenified include: potential influnces, friends, parents, teachers, type of musical instruments among others. It was stated that gender and social roles are foundation factors that instigate gender stereotype and dispartiy in students' choice of musical instrument to study. It was found out from the study that the participants of the study become gender-neutral as their grade level increases, and that mode of presenting musical instruments by the teachers may have impact on gender-association of musical instruments on students part.

Gender and Career in Music

The landscape created by social, and cultural belief have a great influence in choosing a career in music by both male and female gender. The music industry today is changing with the position of female gender in bridging the gap between career path constructed to be for male gender and advocating for gender quality and equal rights in music related career pathways.

Lowes (2021) explored gender equality in music industry using programme created for early career female musicians known as Both Sides Now (BSN). She claimed that the present working practices in music industry is changing in respect to limiting female access and professional progress as well as gender stereotyping. The thesis examined factors which create constant inequalities and also put forward the ways by which the gender gap can be eliminated. The study also highlighted the situation of work in current music industry and suggested a female-focused intervention as a tool for individual and collective change.

Wall-Andrew and Luka (2022) in their emperical investigation considered Canadian national Equity X Production programme which was to curb extreme under-representation of females as producers within canadian music industry. The study focused on how to create equity among women and other artists that want to be professionals in music production. It provided the ways by which women's creativity in music can be very good in technical terms and explained how they can overcome discrimination.

Further, Wang and Horvat (2019) in their quantitaive study on Music Brainz and Echo Nest as evidence of gender differences in music industry globally revealed that penetration of gender into artistic context resulted to global perception of gender disperities in music industry. Investigation was made on gender-related differences in features of artists' work, their listeners, the record label and how artists choose to collaborate with other artists in the industry. The result showed that gender differences exist in music production. The study then put forward strategies to improve female artists recognition and gender equity.

In the submission of Sergeant and Himonides (2014), music phenomena are gendered, and that gender attributes might be revealed through music composiiton, the performers or the perception of the listeners. Emperical evidences were obtained to evaluate the three stages mentioend. At the end of the study, responses did not agree that the structure of a particualr music is gendered, or the performers' sex- qualities are impacted during performance. The conclusion was reached that the listeners imposed gendered features, and these are associated with the music tempo. Sergeant and Himonides (2016) further their study on gender and

music composition, by claiming that gendered meanings are communicated in music. Despite the fact that gendering of music exists, it is in its listeners' views and not music property, and that musical structures did not portray gendering but listerners' perception do.

Wayforward for the Stakeholders in Music Field in Nigeria Context

In the available literature reviewed, the concept of gender has been variously described and socially constructed but its influence on community musical activities has not recorded much attention. Music has power, and its power is felt in social engagements and as a theraphy for people with varying mental challenges. As every society produces its own genres of music, they create space for social performances to satisfy the citizenry. Although, music performance, as reviewed in the existing literature create platform for social engagement, but however, the place of gender in community music programmes or outreach for societal development have been an insightful but a neglected area.

Community music, as reported in the literature, influences peoples' life, cultures, and it is an instrument for peace-making. However, the present study is a step further to investigate how community musical activities add value to people's socio-economic life of people from the perspectives of gender as a sociological construct. The fact remains that Africans, have norms and values using gender roles played to preserve such core norms and values, but the subject matter of community musical activities in respect of such cultural norms and values remain an area worthy of investigation.

In addition, the issue of gender differentiation often determined by gender stereotyping in various musical activities have been reported in the available literature as perceived by males and females, as such, gender–based research remains unabated. Further observations from the available literature reviewed showed relative perceptions of stakeholders on music, musical genres, musical instruments vis-a–vis gender in multi-cultural settings. While some studies focused on contextualising the relationship that exist between music and gender within the realm of globalisation, some others consistently reported gender inbalances,

gender division and gender preferences for music career, and different music genres.

Gender in community music is thus a historical and debateable issue. As a result, the studies of Edverson's (2017), Lemos (2011), Okunbor (2020), Buckman (2017), Werner (2019), Scharfenberger (2011), Ebeli (2015), Wiedenfeld (2012), Crowe (2010), Walker (2004), Kuhlman (2004), Kim (2021), Knecht (2009), Lowes (2021), Wall-Andrew et al.(2022), Wang and Horvat (2019) Sergeant and Himonides (2016), and Yonder et al. (2022) among others emperically explored music and gender-related studies. Apart from the fact that their studies with the exception of Okunbor (2020) carried out in three Nigerian universities, all others were foreign to Nigeria.

In sum, from the available literature to the researcher, studies on community musical activites and performances are still relatively foreign to the stakeholders in music field in Nigeria. The existing studies as x-rayed earlier were conducted outside Nigeria, and from various background and research on community music, a part in socio-economic empowerment had been recorded in Asia, South America, the Middle East, Australia, Scandinavia, United State, Canada, Europe, Portugal, Japan, Norway and South Africa among others. The reports and the findings of research from those countries of the world had revealed progressive contributions of community musical activities and programmes to their environmental development, but studies on gender–based community musical activities for societal development in Nigeria is still a neglected area deserving attention by researchers and stakeholders in music field. Studies in this area will no doubt add values to cultural, economic, social, educational and holistic development of African societies, Nigerian inclusive. In the emerging society which is continously gender-sensitive in various sectors and fields, music field inclusive, there is need for gender parity in community musical activities through non formal education by more establishment of community music schools by government, philantrophists and non governmental organisations.

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