



# Closing the Gender Gap in Music Education and Performance Through the All-Female Band: A Case of the University of Ibadan

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## Article History

Received: 2025-07-04

Revised: 2026-01-30

Accepted: 2026-05-18

Published: 2026-05-26

## Keywords

All-Female ensemble  
Creativity  
Gender gap  
Pedagogy

## How to cite:

Sofola, K., Azeez, E. A., & Ojo, O. M. (2026). Closing the Gender Gap in Music Education and Performance Through the All-Female Band: A Case of the University of Ibadan. *Eastern African Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 5(2), 50-60.

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## Abstract

Research has identified a major challenge regarding the low participation of females in instrumental roles in ensemble settings. This challenge is often influenced by male dominance and culture-related gender restrictions. Employing the pragmatic research paradigm within the framework of Self-Determination Theory, this study explores the creation of an all-female ensemble to bridge the gender gap in ensemble pedagogy at the University of Ibadan. It interrogates how participation in the All-Female Band enhances female students' involvement in creativity, musical performance, and expressiveness. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered to 58 participants through a self-selection sampling technique. Interviews, participant and non-participant observation techniques were also employed. Findings revealed that the ensemble compels participants to fill the vacuum created by the absence of males, enabling them to take ownership of creative processes and challenge gendered expectations in musical roles. The ensemble can be further strengthened through instrumental clinics. There is a need for further studies on strategies for bridging gender gaps in music education in African contexts, especially in ensemble settings.

## Introduction

Ensemble performance is a vital part of music education, especially in higher education. It provides students with the avenue to socialise, while also learning from each other in their various groups. Besides this, students use these avenues to gather performative experience that helps them build their repertory, performance competence, stage presence, leadership, and performer-audience interactions in real-life settings. Despite these notable roles of practical ensemble studies, there has always been the challenge of male dominance over female participation, which is partly influenced by the patriarchal nature of the Nigerian society, where leadership roles are naturally reserved for men (Makama, 2013). In addition, studies like Aluede and Aluede (2021) and Makama (2013) have noted gender stereotypes within the context of musical performance, particularly in Nigerian cultures. It is therefore understandable that the cultural restrictions in several indigenous musical practices have, over the years, driven low participation of women in ensembles, which extends to musical study at the higher education level.

To address the issue of low participation of female students in instrumental roles in ensembles, the Department of Music at the University of Ibadan employed the strategy of creating an All-Female



band, in which female students are left alone to coordinate themselves, create their own musical arrangements, and play all necessary roles in the ensemble without any input from male students. Although a number of studies, such as Powell (2024), Almqvist (2019), Baker and Biggers (2018), and Warnock (2009) have examined gender-related issues in music education from the perspective of the Global North, there is a dearth of literature on gender issues pertaining to ensemble participation in the Global South, particularly in Africa. In addition, while studies like Sofola et al. (2025), Mensah (2023), Amonyeze and Agbo (2022), and Owoaje et al. (2020a; 2020b) have explored female agency within the Nigerian context, gaps remain in ensemble pedagogy. This study, therefore, contributes to filling this knowledge gap through the lens of the All-Female Band of the University of Ibadan. It intends to answer the following research questions: how does participation in the All-Female Band enhance female students' involvement in creativity and musical performance? Does participation in the All-Female Band allow participants to be more expressive than being in a mixed ensemble?

The study is significant given a number of factors surrounding music education in the higher education context. First, it provides insightful information on how the issue of low involvement of females in ensemble performance and leadership can be addressed, especially in African contexts. Secondly, the study advances knowledge on ensemble studies and leadership management, creating a pathway for a more transformative music education, especially given the campaign for competency-based education.

The paper is structured into six main parts. It begins with the introduction, which presents the background, the problem statement, and the significance of the study. Following this, it presents the methodology, which discusses the research paradigm, study design, study population, sampling technique, research instrument, and analytical technique. The third section is the literature review, which examines existing literature relevant to the study, in a bid to establish the knowledge gap into which this study fits. The theoretical framework follows this section, discussing the Self-Determination Theory and how it enhances the analysis of the study's findings. The fifth section presents and analyses the data, followed by a conclusion.

### **Methodology**

The research is guided by the pragmatic research paradigm, employing a mixed method that combines the qualitative approach with a quantitative survey (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Recent studies on music education in Nigeria, such as Lawal (2025) and Sofola (2025), have used this methodological approach. The population of the research is made up of all students who had been members of the All-female band and had performed with the ensemble for at least a semester. The study employed a self-selection sampling technique for the quantitative survey, in which invitation for participation was open to a population of 150, but only fifty-eight (58) responded voluntarily. The purposive sampling technique was also employed in selecting five (5) members of the group for oral in-depth interviews. They included the group leader, assistant group leader, lead vocalist, drummer, and backup vocalist. The selection criteria for these participants required that they had performed with the group at least once in the ensemble examination. For data collection, the study employed a structured questionnaire to assess students' experiences, skills development, and perceptions about their musical roles in the group. It includes Likert-scale items, multiple-choice, and open-ended questions that enabled them to share their individual experiences.

Semi-structured interviews were held with key participants to gather in-depth insights into personal growth, challenges, and perceived benefits of being members of the all-female ensemble. The study also employed non-participant observation during rehearsals and performances, with a focus on group dynamics, interactions, and individual confidence levels in musical tasks. Descriptive statistics in the form of percentage (%) were employed in analysing quantitative data, while content analysis



was used in analysing data from interviews and observation, as employed by existing studies such as Sofola (2025), Sofola et al. (2026), and Owoaje and Adegbola (2022). To uphold ethical standards in carrying out the study, the questionnaire, although electronic, did not collect personal data from participants. Due to this, data analysis does not include any personal information. In addition, participants were allowed to participate at will, given the utilisation of the self-selection sampling technique. They were duly informed of the objectives of the study and allowed to participate if they wished to do so.

### **Literature Review**

Gender disparity in music education and performance has been a subject of extensive research, which reveals significant differences in how male and female students are perceived, taught, and represented in various musical contexts (Cao et al., 2025; Li et al., 2023; Sergeant & Himonides, 2022; Aluede & Aluede, 2022). For instance, Li et al. (2023), in a higher institution context, examined how teachers had different performance expectations for male and female students. Having studied 91 teachers and 480 undergraduate students from two universities, they found that music teachers held higher expectations for female students than their male counterparts in learning voice performance. They also found that teachers held higher expectations for male students' learning instrumental performance than they did for their female counterparts. Sergeant and Himonides (2022), in a study conducted in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Europe among 40 world-class orchestras, 40 competition brass bands, and 40 top-selling recorded popular music groups, also noted the outnumbering of females by males across the three genres. The study noted the highest level of imbalance in orchestra settings, where 60% of musicians were orchestra chairs, with females making up 40% of chairs in the selected orchestra groups. The study reports a ratio of 76% males to 24% females in brass bands, with sectional leaders being predominantly males. Most significantly, the study records 85% male dominance in pop music, against 15% females in every performance aspect, while leadership roles in this genre even record a more significant imbalance at the ratio of 90% to 10%. This is in line with the findings of studies like Aluede and Aluede (2022), who noted culture-backed gender restrictions as some of the factors for male-female imbalance in ensemble performance.

Examining gender representation in Chinese middle school music education textbooks, Cao et al. (2025) noted that although men and women are represented in professional musical activities like singing, women are under-represented in areas like conducting and music composition. The study also found that females dominate the popular genres in terms of singing, while males are projected more as instrumentalists. This resonates with findings from Europe and the United States (Sergeant and Himonides, 2022), and Africa (Aluede & Aluede, 2022). Källén and Almqvist (2024), in a study of four higher music education institutions in northern, eastern, and central Europe, found that although there is an increase in activities channelled towards awareness of gender equality, this awareness, despite targeting both students and staff, has not resulted in a significant change in practice.

Research has also shown disparity in gendered attitudes in ensemble participation. For example, Abramo (2011) in a study of boys and girls in a secondary school setting, found that gender influenced students in a popular music class, in which they had to perform original music, self-composed. According to Abramo (2011), boys and girls composed and rehearsed differently. The boys merged musical gestures and nonverbal communication into a single unbroken rehearsal process, whereas the girls separated conversation from musical output, finding it difficult to combine both. In mixed-gender groups, tensions emerged because individuals used various learning approaches, which members of the opposing gender misunderstood. McKeage (2004) also examined the relationship between gender and participation in high school and college instrumental jazz ensembles. The study found that gender influenced attitude towards participation, with more women withdrawing from



jazz ensembles compared to men. According to McKeage (2004), the decision of women to discontinue was influenced by their selected primary instrument, their narrowed participation options caused by institutional obstacles, the lack of connection between jazz participation and their career aspirations, and their better relatedness with traditional ensembles. In an African context, Phiri and Magaraushe (2025) examined gender disparity in Zimbabwe's audio engineering industry, identifying social factors linked to patriarchy, such as abuse and disrespect, and the lack of role models, as reasons for the poor presence of females in Zimbabwe's audio engineering industry. Within the Nigerian context, Ibekwe (2018) noted that gender disparity in musical performance is reinforced by cultural and social factors, reflecting the need for reorientation and gender balance. The foregoing review reveals a dearth of literature regarding gender disparity in higher education ensemble participation in African contexts, particularly in Nigeria.

### **Theoretical Framework: Self-Determination Theory**

This study is anchored on Ryan and Deci's (2018) Self-Determination Theory (SDT). The theory postulates that individuals become most motivated and creative when their psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are met. The theory makes a distinction between being autonomous and being controlled, in relation to motivation. According to Ryan and Deci (2018), being autonomous requires one to be able to act with a full sense of choice, endorsement and volition, whereas the feelings of external pressure, being compelled to behave in certain ways guided by the promise of reward, avoidance of punishment, or other external forces, are manifestations of being controlled. The theory also holds that people display higher interest, vitality, confidence, and excitement when they are autonomously motivated, leading to better creativity, persistence and overall performance output and well-being. Self-regulation, social relationships and well-being are better promoted in social environments that satisfy autonomy, competence and relatedness - the three most important psychological needs that drive motivation (Ryan and Deci, 2018).

The theory has been applied to studies across disciplines, showing that autonomy, competence, and relatedness shape learners' engagement. In music education, Virkkula (2020) applied the theory in a study involving 62 Finnish popular and jazz students who participated in workshops that required them to plan performance goals, make artistic decisions, and collaborate with professional musicians. While this structure strongly supported autonomy by giving students control over learning choices, competence was built through challenging performance tasks and expert feedback. Beyond the arts, Wang et al. (2022) demonstrated that university students with higher autonomy and competence reported stronger autonomous motivation in mathematics, and this leads to better achievement outcomes. Together, these studies confirm the central proposition of SDT, that learning environments supporting psychological needs promote deeper motivation, persistence, and performance across both creative and academic contexts.

In respect of an all-female ensemble, which is the focus of this study, SDT provides a framework for understanding the feelings of the all-female participants of this study, especially how autonomy, competence and relatedness enhance their motivation and boost their creativity, as they are able to work together at their own pace, without male intrusion. The unique ensemble enhances autonomy, enabling them the freedom to express themselves musically; competence among the ladies is driven by autonomy and built through confidence in performing without traditional gender biases; relatedness is enabled through connection with each other as female musicians. This setting fuels intrinsic motivation, which leads to enhanced creativity, a strong sense of accomplishment, and well-being among the female participants.



### **Data Presentation and Analysis**

This section presents and analyses the findings of the study. It discusses the data under five subsections, including demographic characteristics of the participants, a historical background of the All-Female Band, autonomy and confidence in relation to creativity and musical performance, relatedness and expressiveness, as well as motivation and sustainable engagement. This offers a compelling insight into the efficacy of single-sex ensembles – in this case, an all-female ensemble in bridging the pertinent gender gap in music education. This section explores how the satisfaction of psychological needs, such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness, drives musical growth and confidence through an examination of the demographic distribution and the participants' feedback through the lens of Self-Determination Theory (SDT).

### **A Historical Background of the All-Female Band**

The All-Female band of the University of Ibadan was created in December 2017 to encourage female students to feature in the annual University Carol Service, which is hosted by the University Choir through the Department of Music. The band, although with the help of a number of male students at inception, featured at the 2017 Carol Service, with ladies occupying all the major positions in the band. In 2021, the ensemble/Choral unit, which is compulsory for students of music, and also taken as an elective by students from within and outside the Faculty of Arts, expanded due to the high influx of elective students, necessitating the formation of about fifteen different ensemble groups in which students of music serve as group leaders and assistant group leaders. The All-Female band, which had been in existence prior to this time, became one of the ensemble groups, consisting of only female students, most of whom were elective students. Apart from the group leaders, who are students of music and are positioned to succeed current leaderships of the ensembles, other members of the group are selected through a randomised process that ensures that every female student who has registered for the unit has the same opportunity of being a member of the ensemble. As a result of these, some of the students are lucky to have been members of the All-Female bands for more than one semester, while others have to go and experience other ensembles after being in the All-Female band for only one semester.

### **Demographic Characteristics of Participants**

The demographic data provides a necessary context for understanding the composition of the All-Female Band. It reveals that the ensemble serves a diverse academic population beyond the Department of Music. Out of the fifty-eight (58) participants of the study, the age distribution reflects a predominantly young undergraduate population. The majority of participants, being 96.5%, are within the age bracket of 16–25, an age bracket typical of the traditional university age in Nigeria. A smaller segment (3.4%) comprises students aged 26 and above, representing mature learners. Regarding their academic discipline, apart from music students being the coordinators of the All-Female Band, members of the ensemble who participated in this study, were drawn from various disciplines across the Humanities, Sciences, and Education, including European studies, Linguistics and African Languages, Classical Studies, Theatre Arts, Political Science Education, Anthropology, Archaeology, Communication and Language Arts, Religious Studies Education, English, History, Library, Archival and Information Science, and Special Education, and Philosophy. This is consistent with the expansion of the band over the years to accommodate elective students. This mix is crucial to the study, especially as it suggests that the benefits of the ensemble are not limited to students with prior professional musical training, but also to those engaging with music as part of a broader liberal arts education. In addition, 82.8% of participants have been in mixed-gender ensembles and are able to compare their experiences in both ensembles.



In terms of their level<sup>1</sup> of study, participants were distributed across various academic years. The highest representation came from the 100-level and 400-level, both of which account for 39.7% and 22.4% respectively. This is indicative of the period of study when students typically enrol in the ensemble/Choral unit. However, the ideal representation of 200-level and 300-level students, each of which makes up 19% of the study's participation, suggests a retention of interest. It is important to consider that 100-level students, being new to the university system, would usually choose to be in ensembles where they would only attend rehearsals in preparation for a performance examination upon which they are graded. The same can be said of 400-level students who see the ensembles as a way to maintain their grades without having to read and write an exam, while focusing on their final-year project. Generally, the balanced representation of 200-level and 300-level students in the ensemble is a testament that the All-Female Band, like the other ensembles, provides an avenue for students to earn good grades outside the typical academic model of lecturing and written examination.

### **Autonomy and Competence in Creativity and Musical Performance**

The first research question sought to determine how participation in the All-Female Band enhances female students' involvement in creativity and musical performance. The findings strongly suggest that the absence of males creates a vacuum that the female students are compelled to fill. This, therefore, fosters a heightened sense of autonomy and competence among the participants. According to the quantitative data, 65.6% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that the All-Female Band allows them to freely express their creativity. In addition, 77.5% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they feel a strong sense of belonging in the All-Female Band, while 56% agreed or strongly agreed that their confidence as musicians has increased due to their involvement in the All-Female Band. It is also important to mention that 79.3% of participants feel motivated to perform better in the All-Female Band because of the supportive environment it offers them. In the context of SDT, this represents the satisfaction of the need for autonomy, the feeling that one's actions are self-endorsed and volitional rather than controlled by external forces (Ryan & Deci, 2018). To put this in context, literature has shown that male students often dominate the creative direction in mixed ensembles by merging musical gestures and rehearsal commands in a way that can alienate female participants (Abramo, 2011). However, in the All-Female Band, the absence of this "male gaze" and male regulatory trait allows the ladies to take ownership of the creative process. As noted by Owoaje et al. (2020a; 2020b), music has always provided female artists an avenue for self-expression, especially regarding sexual objectification.

The qualitative responses further confirm this statistical finding. When asked about their creative inputs, several students noted that they felt "in charge" for the first time. One participant, a lead vocalist, stated:

*"The group has really helped to bring out a lot in me – things I never knew I could do, such as leading a song and facing a crowd. It has helped to shape my confidence and improve my singing."*

Regarding the role of autonomy in the creative process, this participant noted that the absence of males in the group helped to filter out distractions, thereby creating an atmosphere of freedom and expression. According to her:

*"We related as one. There was nothing like a male or female trying to 'form' (make an impression) on the other, or some males gossiping about some girl. It's actually been about oneness."*

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<sup>1</sup> Level of study refers to the year of study. 100-level is Year 1, 200-level is Year 2, 300-level is Year 3, while 400-level is Year 4.



Another member of the group, a singer, stated as follows regarding creativity and autonomy:

*"Being in the band has increased my creativity by teaching me more about singing, vocal warm-ups, and harmonies. It also inspires ideas like adding spiritual poetry and instrumentals to our performances."*

In addition, a participant (a female drummer) who had once been a member of the group recounted a scenario in which her creative suggestion was regarded without stress. She stated, *"There was a time I suggested the beat we were working with was too slow, and it was adjusted."* Regarding the contribution of the All-Female Band to her music competence, she stated: *" I can say it has boosted my confidence level a bit."*

Although Cao et al. (2025) have noted that women are often under-represented in composition and arranging, the case of the All-Female Band is different, given that the absence of males in the ensemble leaves the females with no other choice than to take up all the roles. This helps to convert a potential deficit (lack of men) into a driver for creative autonomy.

Additionally, the involvement of these ladies in playing musical instruments offers insightful perspectives into how the band challenges gender stereotypes. In mixed settings, there is a documented tendency for females to be relegated to singing while males play instruments (Cao et al., 2025; Aluede & Aluede, 2022). However, the data emphasises female students' active engagement with the drums, bass guitar, and keyboard, roles they likely would not have been able to play in mixed ensembles where male presence would have provided "better alternatives" in terms of competence. One participant explicitly highlighted this shift in competence:

*"The power of females doing unimaginable things like drumming, playing keyboard, guitar and the like has brought about my conclusion that with unity we can do all things."*

This finding is significant. It suggests that the perceived incompetence of female students on certain instruments in mixed ensembles is not a result of a lack of ability, but rather a lack of opportunity and psychological safety that makes them opt for the roles they can easily handle without intimidation – in this case, singing. When the environment supports their competence by removing the fear of negative evaluation from male peers, the female students demonstrate a high capacity for technical growth. The "higher expectations" that teachers often hold for male instrumentalists (Li et al., 2023) are effectively neutralised in this setting, and it allows the female students to set their own standards of excellence, while also working towards improving their performance skills.

### **Relatedness and Expressiveness: The Impact of Psychological Safety**

The second research question investigated whether participation in the All-Female Band allows participants to be more expressive than being in a mixed ensemble. The results overwhelmingly support the affirmative. It highlights the critical role of relatedness, which borders on the feeling of being connected to and cared for by others, and how it fosters musical expression. Comparative analysis of the survey data reveals a contrast in comfort levels, but with a high level of neutrality. While 36.9% agreed and strongly agreed with feeling more creative in the All-female Band compared to mixed-gender ensembles, 35% of participants remained neutral. In addition, 28.1% disagreed with feeling more creative in the group. It is, however, important to note that qualitative data tilts more in the positive direction. The neutrals are most likely participants who did not play any special role in the ensemble, or those who are in the ensemble just to earn their grade at the end of the semester without bothering themselves about optimum participation. This is because the ensemble has no less than 150 students per semester, giving room for a good number of members to be nonchalant about the ensemble's activities. In addition, adhering to ethical principles did not allow for further probe of this. However, several participants responding to an open-ended question stated as follows:



*"...the group creates a real sense of belonging and makes room for an atmosphere of freedom of expression the more."*

*"I think I am more free to express my true self because it's my gender compared to how I will do things if the other gender was there."*

*"It has been different in a good way. I felt more freedom in an all-female band than in the other mixed groups that I've been in."*

*"The group creates a real sense of belonging and makes room for an atmosphere of freedom of expression the more."*

*"All-Female band kind of made it easier for me to express myself."*

*"All-female band experience has been different from my previous ensemble because it makes me feel unique and also gives me a strong sense of belonging."*

*"With just females present, I am actually now confident with my voice. I am able to sing better. With the others, I'm not as confident."*

*"It was an open band where everyone's ideas and opinions are acceptable"*

These views directly address the issues raised by McKeage (2004) regarding the high attrition rates of women in jazz ensembles due to a lack of connection and "institutional obstacles." In the All-Female Band, the shared gender identity creates a sense of "sisterhood" that acts as a buffer against performance anxiety. This creates a direct link to the Self-Determination Theory. Ryan and Deci (2018) posit that social environments that promote relatedness enhance intrinsic motivation. In the mixed ensembles, the environment is often perceived as "controlling", given their heavy male influence and domination in terms of role play, where female participation is secondary (Makama, 2013). Consequently, female students often adopt a defensive posture, limiting their expressiveness to avoid criticism. In contrast to this, however, the All-Female Band satisfies the need for relatedness, creating a "safe space" where vulnerability is permitted.

The expressiveness the participants refer to in this context is not just about playing the correct notes. It encompasses stage presence and performer-audience interaction, both of which are gradually improved upon during their rehearsal sessions. In the absence of the cultural restrictions that often demand modesty or passivity from Nigerian women in the presence of men, which has been noted by Aluede and Aluede (2022), the students in the All-Female Band reported being able to build the skill, expression, and confidence to achieve an engaging stage presence. This distinction suggests that the male gaze present in mixed ensembles does not just inhibit musical risk-taking by females, but also polices physical expression. By removing this variable, the All-Female Band allows students to reclaim their performative bodies, leading to a more holistic musical education that integrates movement, emotion, and sound, all of which are core components of African musical philosophy.

Within the scope of the All-Female Band, the combination of autonomy, competence, and relatedness manifests in higher levels of motivation. The survey indicates that 79.3% of the participants agreed that the supportive environment motivated them to practice more. This is also buttressed by a couple of participants who stated: *"I've not really experienced another ensemble, but the All-Female band was interactive; it did not make me miss a rehearsal. I was so happy to go to rehearsals. "When I saw the violinists and drummer playing, I was motivated to do more. "Seeing beautiful ladies with skills is empowering and motivating.* This finding aligns with the position of Wang et al. (2022), who demonstrated, regarding SDT, that autonomous motivation leads to better achievement outcomes. Although the artistic outcome of the All-Female Band may sometimes not be as profound as that of the mixed-gender



ensembles, the gain for the members of the All-Female Band would be better quantified from the perspective of achieving a level of artistic output that the majority of them would not have been able to attain in mixed-gender ensembles.

These female students are not practising avoiding the criticism of male peers (controlled motivation); nor are they practising just for the purpose of meeting the external demands of examiners. Instead, they are practising because they feel a sense of ownership over the band's output (autonomy). They also believe in their ability to master the given/selected repertoire (competence), and they do not want to let their "sisters" down (relatedness). Although it is not impossible that critics might argue that such bands do not prepare students for the "real world" of male-dominated professional music, it is important to note that the sense of ownership, freedom, and the opportunity to take charge of every role in the ensemble present an opportunity that does not exist in the same volume in mixed-gender ensembles. By building a reservoir of self-efficacy in a safe environment, these students are better equipped to enter mixed professional spaces not as subordinates, but as competent equals, given their creative and performance experience gathered from their experimentation in the All-female Band. Ultimately, they have internalised the belief that they can be drummers, band leaders, and arrangers. This is a major psychological shift that is difficult to reverse, even when they find themselves in a mixed-gender ensemble.

Despite the overwhelming gains exemplified in the data, there are areas of weakness that have to be addressed with respect to the All-Female Band experiment. The data shows a significant amount of neutrality, which signifies ambivalence, lack of motivation, and indifference. For instance, the response to the item "I have gained new skills and confidence as a musician in this group more than my female colleagues in mixed-gender groups" received 50.9% neutrality, as against 40.2% agreed or strongly agreed. This could be due to many factors. One of these factors is the population of the ensemble, which is not less than 150 each semester. This gives room for a good number of members to be indifferent or feel left behind in the activities of the group. There could also be issues relating to musical preference, where a number of members do not relate to the specific musical styles the group had selected for the semester. Lastly, it is likely that there is an issue of power and communication, where a few members feel they have a better idea, but their voice has not been heard. This seems to be the case in the response of a participant that: "*All-female band is the most boring group I have ever joined, there is no cooperation, and everybody just wants to exercise their power.*" It is, however, worthy of note that these issues are not peculiar to the All-Female Band, given the possibility of dissenting views in every human gathering.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the study provides robust evidence that the All-Female Band experiment of the University of Ibadan is a potent pedagogical tool for closing the culture-motivated gender gap in music education. The success of the experiment is not merely the exclusion of male students, but also the strategic fulfilment of the psychological needs of female students whose chances of being involved in the core aspects of music making are very slim in mixed-gender ensembles. The lack of males in the group has left the members with no other option than to take on every role necessary for a successful musical performance, as required for their examination. Viewing the study through the lens of Self-Determination Theory, the results show that when the constraints of patriarchal expectations are removed, female students will naturally gravitate towards autonomy and competence. Their involvement in complex instrumental roles, engagement in creative improvisation, and exhibiting of a high degree of stage expressiveness exemplify these traits. The high levels of relatedness within the group further serve as a scaffold that allows students to take musical risks without the fear of gendered judgement. Thus, the All-Female Band does not merely teach music. Rather, it re-socialises



female students into seeing themselves as authoritative, capable, and creative musicians, thereby challenging the historical marginalisation documented in the literature.

Although the All-Female Band experiment has emerged as a potent pedagogical tool for closing the culture-motivated gender gap in music education, there is a need for the Department of Music at the University of Ibadan to drive the ensemble into more productivity, in order to reduce the possibility of participants being ambivalent or indifferent to the activities of the group. This could include creating sub-groups within the ensemble, where the population would be maximised for better musical engagement. The department should also consider organising instrumental clinics or workshops for members of the group, so as to further solidify their competence and close skill gaps between them and their male counterparts. Lastly, the ensemble's leadership can be strengthened through training in collaborative leadership and conflict resolution. These soft skills will further assist the group's leaders in managing the dynamics of the "sisterhood" more efficiently. There is a need for further studies on strategies for bridging gender gaps in music education in African contexts, especially in ensemble settings.

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