


PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN IN THE MUSIC MARKET

PRECONCEITO E DISCRIMINAÇÃO COM AS MULHERES NO MERCADO MUSICAL

PREJUICIOS Y DISCRIMINACIÓN CONTRA LAS MUJERES EN EL MERCADO MUSICAL

 <https://doi.org/10.56238/sevened2025.029-052>

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ABSTRACT

The study stemmed from the need to listen to women's voices and how they express themselves, how they enjoy the desired autonomy, freedom, and equality, while often submitting to male power. The analysis of the Paraíba music scene is historically marked by male dominance, where men and women clearly lack equal opportunities for participation. This study aimed to analyze the participation of female artists in the Paraíba music market, revealing a scenario still marked by gender inequalities. The theoretical framework was grounded in studies that reflect on music as one of the most closely related cultural manifestations of everyday life and how it can be directly affected by determinations that affirm or challenge prevailing models and customs at a given historical moment, contributing to an understanding of the factors of gender and sexual orientation and how they can be expressed in the musical production of men and women. The methodology used was based on content analysis of open-ended responses in structured interviews, supported by the use of the Likert Scale. The results demonstrated that discrimination and prejudice, access to funding, and support for registering works have fueled the struggle for rights and recognition and are gaining ground in Brazil and Paraíba, reducing disadvantages for women in both the social and musical arenas. The research indicated that women still face internal and external obstacles to their careers, balancing family responsibilities with the pursuit of diverse creative outlets to enrich their artistic journeys.

Keywords: Women in Music. Music Market. Discrimination and Prejudice.

RESUMO

O estudo partiu da necessidade de ouvir as vozes das mulheres e como elas registram, como desfrutam da almejada autonomia, liberdade e igualdade, se submetendo, na maioria das vezes, ao poder masculino. Considera-se que analisar a cena musical paraibana como um espaço historicamente marcado pela predominância masculina, na qual é visível que homens e mulheres não possuem iguais oportunidades de participação. Este estudo teve como objetivo analisar a participação das mulheres artistas no mercado musical da Paraíba, revelando um cenário ainda marcado por desigualdades de gênero. O escopo teórico esteve fundamentado nos estudos que refletem sobre a música, como manifestação cultural das mais próximas do cotidiano e como pode ser diretamente afetada por determinações que afirmam ou contestam modelos e costumes vigentes em um dado momento histórico,

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corroborando para a compreensão do fator gênero e orientação sexual e como podem ser expressos na produção musical de homens e mulheres. A metodologia utilizada foi pautada na análise de conteúdo de respostas abertas em entrevista estruturada, com apoio da utilização da Escala de Likert. Os resultados demostraram que a discriminação e o preconceito, o acesso ao financiamento e o apoio para o registro de obras, têm alimentado a luta por direitos e por reconhecimento e vêm ganhando espaço no Brasil e na Paraíba, diminuindo desvantagens das mulheres tanto na cena social, quanto na cena musical. A pesquisa apontou que as mulheres ainda têm que lidar com obstáculos internos e externos às suas carreiras, conciliando responsabilidades familiares com a busca de saídas criativas diversas, para enriquecer suas jornadas artísticas.

Palavras-chave: Mulheres na Música. Mercado Musical. Discriminação e Preconceito.

RESUMEN

El estudio surgió de la necesidad de escuchar las voces de las mujeres y cómo se expresan, cómo disfrutan de la autonomía, la libertad y la igualdad deseadas, mientras que a menudo se someten al poder masculino. El análisis de la escena musical de Paraíba está históricamente marcado por el dominio masculino, donde hombres y mujeres claramente carecen de igualdad de oportunidades de participación. Este estudio tuvo como objetivo analizar la participación de las artistas femeninas en el mercado musical de Paraíba, revelando un escenario aún marcado por las desigualdades de género. El marco teórico se basó en estudios que reflexionan sobre la música como una de las manifestaciones culturales más estrechamente relacionadas con la vida cotidiana y cómo puede verse directamente afectada por determinaciones que afirman o desafían los modelos y costumbres predominantes en un momento histórico dado, contribuyendo a la comprensión de los factores de género y orientación sexual y cómo pueden expresarse en la producción musical de hombres y mujeres. La metodología utilizada se basó en el análisis de contenido de respuestas abiertas en entrevistas estructuradas, con apoyo en el uso de la escala de Likert. Los resultados demostraron que la discriminación y los prejuicios, el acceso a la financiación y el apoyo para el registro de obras han impulsado la lucha por los derechos y el reconocimiento, y están ganando terreno en Brasil y Paraíba, reduciendo las desventajas de las mujeres tanto en el ámbito social como en el musical. La investigación indicó que las mujeres aún enfrentan obstáculos internos y externos en sus carreras, ya que deben compaginar las responsabilidades familiares con la búsqueda de diversas salidas creativas para enriquecer sus trayectorias artísticas.

Palabras clave: Mujeres en la Música. Mercado Musical. Discriminación y Prejuicios.

1 INTRODUCTION

This article contains analyses from research carried out on the perception around the struggle of women in the music market, with a look at the phenomenon in the context of the State of Paraíba. It was consolidated from the theory of the exclusion of women in the public space of the music scene and the effervescence of the activity in a given state or region. The relationships between the various agents involved, such as entrepreneurs and support teams, are articulated with the consumption and division of musical genres of Brazilian popular music.

The state of the art of the theme was articulated with the understanding of the music market for women in Brazil, which has been dynamic and evolving, with several challenges and achievements over the years. Wall-Andrews and Luka (2022) reinforce gaps and silences of women in the music industry. The challenges are persistent. Despite the advances, women still face significant challenges, including wage inequalities, prejudice, and a lower presence in leadership positions within the music industry.

2 METHODOLOGY

The area covered by the research consisted of the universe of 52 musicians registered in the database of the Cultural Foundation of João Pessoa – FUNJOPE, a public law entity, subordinated to the Department of Education and Culture of the Municipality of João Pessoa, State of Paraíba. FUNJOPE (2025) has the function of mapping and registering artists, for greater knowledge of the field of activity of each one of them. Its objectives are to promote, encourage, disseminate and value culture and the arts in the city of João Pessoa/PB. It is considered a reference institution in the execution of public policies for culture. Its vision and mission is to foster and democratize participation and access to culture in its diversity, providing citizenship education through social inclusion and the development of the creative potential of the population. A probabilistic sample of 12 musicians was constituted in the universe of 52 registered in the FUNJOPE databases. Considering the specificity of the study and the characteristics of the population, the probabilistic sample was defined.

According to Richardson (2011), the reliability characteristic of the probabilistic sample lies in the fact that, in principle, all subjects have the same probability of being chosen, and this selection is made in the form of a draw. The choice was based on the fact that all elements in the universe have an equal chance of being selected. That is, each of the 52 musicians had the same probability of participating in the survey. Considering the total

universe of the research, composed of 52 subjects, a sample of 12 participants was selected, which represents approximately 23% of the total population, adequate for the qualitative and exploratory objectives of the research.

Thus, the choice for the number of participants took into account both the practical feasibility of the collection and the adequacy to the specific objectives of the research, which focus on understanding complex phenomena from a qualitative/critical/reflective perspective. The data for the study were collected from 06/01/2020 to 06/30/2025, through a research instrument composed of 12 multiple-choice questions, with definitions referring to each of the categories. The Likert scale was used to compose the questionnaire, a technique used by social scientists to analyze and measure the perceptions of individuals in a given context, providing a qualitative assessment based on knowledge of the research area. Data were collected through a semi-structured questionnaire, using the *Likert Scale*, with objective and open questions, whose subsequent analysis was carried out with statistical bases for the closed questions and content analysis for the open questions.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 GETTING TO KNOW THE PROFILES OF WOMEN MUSICIANS IN PARAÍBA

As delimited in the methodology, the sample that composed the investigation was made up of 12 women participating in the Paraíba music scene, chosen in a probabilistic way, in the universe of 52 musicians registered in FUNJOPE. We seek to build the profile from the concept of social identity, since we seek through inquiries, to combine personal and biographical trajectories in their significant social and professional contexts. In this way, we understand that the process of construction of social identity and the recognition of personal and professional identity is a subjective process that only the voices themselves can translate. The construction of identity profiles as a social process is a fundamental aspect in the research, as it allowed each one of them to carry out the elaboration of their self-profile. This is a socially constructed, dynamic and unfinished process. It was important in the analysis to know their belonging and reference in their self-definition.

The profile of the musicians shows that women recognize themselves, for the most part, black and in the age group over 35 years old. The percentage of 75% of them with more than 15 years of career was predominant, which demonstrates maturity and professional experience. The profile was built from the need to visualize the different faces that racism can assume in the process of constructing the subordination of black women.

The answers allowed us to infer that the representation of women in music is affected by several other factors they receive from the cultural, social, and legal structure, where they would systematically benefit or not (ROSÁRIO & DACUNDA, 2022; VILJOEN, 2013). The data on women in music in Paraíba are at odds with national data, where the characteristic detected by the Data Sim survey is that most declare themselves cisgender and white. As for age, it is approximate. Research by the Brazilian Union of Composers (UBC) (apud Silva, 2025) shows that about 29% of members are between 31 and 40 years old. The interviewees are characterized as black professionals.

The study carried out by Pilar (2010) brings to this reflection, argumentative elements that there is persistence in the low insertion of women in the profession of musicians, whether as interpreters, conductors, composers or as propagators of music, which distances women from the best paid and most prestigious positions, such as orchestral conducting, soloists and first stands, for instance. As for the activity of professional musicians, exercised primarily by men and in public spaces, it presented a gradual change in the second half of the nineteenth century, with the gradual presence of women musicians on stage, although still in smaller numbers.

As for ethnicity, a study by Gomes (2025) corroborates the recorded answers, regarding the fact that the presence of black women is still a challenging factor. Although we can say that black women still live in greater margins of social rights, their struggles for greater achievements were (and still are) important to establish a place for the guarantee of rights. We can argue that music is currently an important place for the demarcation of these achievements.

Muniz & Vieira (2025) corroborate the finding that musicality continues to constitute one of the strongest instruments of Afro culture. In times of slavery, songs marked both the time of collective work and the way of transmitting knowledge to other generations. It is still considered today as a fundamental cultural element in the formation of African identity. Music was also an important vehicle of resistance.

3.2 THE MUSIC MARKET AND WOMEN IN PARAÍBA

As for financial investments, spaces in the media to play their roles as artists and inclusion campaigns in the events of their regions, by the business and artistic environment, a large percentage of the singers (practically half and half) diverged their opinions between "agree" and "disagree" that the business and artistic environment collaborates. Such answers

do not correspond to published works, which show that there is still little collaboration from the business and artistic world with regional singers. There are still many obstacles encountered in building a female career in the music ecosystem, as shown by the monitoring, evaluation and learning reports of the ASA Program – Arte Sônica Amplifica (2025). Another project that brings practical horizons to deal with this issue is AMPLIFYhER, developed by the University of São Paulo – USP. It is a pilot study, designed to assess the most pressing challenges that female musicians face in Brazil, namely those linked to lack of media exposure and poor access to job opportunities, income and funding. This project aims to stimulate tangible actions in the amplification of the voices of women artists in the music industry and in Brazilian society. It also intends to support the defense of gender equality in music and trigger additional research on the subject in Brazil. The project foresees the offering, by the team of researchers, of training sessions aimed at providing participants with fundamental skills of self-promotion, networking and digital media. Our perspective is that this research brings elements to raise important discussions within the state.

We did not find in the answers elements that can positively corroborate the increase in the number of works registered in the state. The absence of data in the state points to the need for in-depth investigations so that we can point out ways out or alternatives for the national movement that shows an increase, albeit small, in female participation in registered phonograms, which grew in four categories: 22% as phonographic producers, 13% as authors or versionists, 10% as interpreters and 9% as instrumentalists (UBC, 2024).

We have seen from most of the responses that the issue of barriers to funding is an element of marginalization of women. As Adão (2023) asserts, funding becomes a unifying and driving element for the careers and skills of participating women who work in the sound and music market. This demonstrates that the national data contained in the Report of the Brazilian Union of Composers -UBC (apud Santos, 2025) through a survey in the musical field, with regard to the great gender disparity with regard to the dividends of music produced in Brazil. The studies pointed out that in 2022, women received only 9% of the total distributed in copyrights over 2021. As responses point to the replication of national barriers here in Paraíba.

Cameron (2003) recommended that unconscious biases in the initial investment of music capital serve to improve women's performance and opportunities in the industry. Berkers et al. (2019) noted that this has to do with ongoing inequality, due to the music industry's gendered perceptions.

It is recognized by the musicians that this space of access to funding still carries strong male domination. It is urgent that the discussions reach the public sectors responsible for state and municipal culture policies and can produce gender statistics, so that a comparability framework can be built on access to financial resources by men and women.

According to the 2021 UBC report, the increase in the number of women associated with the music market has been 68% since 2018 (UBC, 2021). In addition, a survey pointed out that the percentage of women in executive branches of the music industry in Brazil does not exceed 23% (Noize, 2024). The results showed the predominance of women from the Southeast region: 72.1%. Predominance also pointed out in the UBC survey, where 63% of the members are in the Southeast region.

When reporting on the landscape of women's learning in music, it is characterized by historical underrepresentation, ongoing gender disparities, and evolving roles in teaching and songwriting (Howe, 2012). The field of women's music education has historical roots of marginalization and invisibility. However, while women have made significant contributions to music history, bifurcation and leadership date especially from the field of legal composition and these contributions are hidden under the rug of ignorance (Howe, 2012).

In terms of labor market participation, women represent 53.3% of the participation rate, while men represent 73.2% (IBGE, 2024). It is important to note that female participation in the musical area is still lower than that of men, but there has been significant growth in the last decade (UBC, 2021; PLAYPBM, 2024).

3.3 INDIVIDUAL ROLE IN PROMOTING IT IN THE MUSIC MARKET

Asked about their roles in promoting their careers, the answers to the questionnaires showed that the singers see themselves as active agents in the process of promoting women in music, but do not observe the same commitment on the part of the universities, with regard to inclusion, nor do they see affirmative action on the part of the government.

For Ingleton (2014), the socio-political context diffuses creative productivity in several other important areas. Women musicians often use their artistic productions to question and reconfigure existing musical orthodoxies (Ingleton, 2014; Bosma, 2012). According to Reis et al., (2017), barriers of female personality and creativity, as well as their forms of support, are listed. The first level, according to the author, is that of women individually.

Women have acquired a type of strategic knowledge that involves the search for respect for their own aspirations, praising their real daily experiences, where the whole

society recognizes them, and this is not provided in the artistic environment in the same way, and thus, women have to deal with internal and external obstacles, reconciling family responsibilities with the search for diverse creative outlets, to enrich their artistic journeys.

Muniz & Vieira (2025) state that, currently, through cultural appropriation, many whites sing and play samba and profit from it, thus showing that it does not matter what work to be done, but that capital is always destined for white hands. The author rightly records that samba and hip-hop, for example, are cultural expressions appropriated and expressed by white voices, generating a loss of their meanings, markings and political positions. It also states that these rhythms were created and originated by black people, as a denunciation of their problems and experiences, and that this appropriation makes them weaken their original meaning.

3.4 ON THE ROLE OF UNIVERSITIES IN THE PROCESS OF INCLUSION OF WOMEN IN MUSIC

Although the answers of the 12 musicians point, for the most part, to the non-recognition of the role of Universities in the process of inclusion of women in music, studies show that through black feminist movements, the struggle for spaces of voice, power and even the right to the presence of their bodies, were more strengthened and gained greater visibility, guaranteeing black women significant achievements such as greater insertion in schools, universities, dance (Mercedes Baptista is a great example, where she was the first black ballerina to join the Municipal Theater of Rio de Janeiro), in theater (Teatro Experimental do Negro in Brazil, emerging with Abdias Nascimento), in the job market, in music, among others (MUNIZ & VIEIRA, 2025). Another significant example is the AmplifyHer Project, developed by USP, which focuses on women in the music industry and has research assistants, doctoral students, and postdoctoral students on its team, which means an important space for engagement.

Regarding the process of opportunities in universities, Gould (2009) and Howe (2015) state that women in music education are seen as "nomadic" figures, challenging traditional limits and creating new possibilities for teaching and learning. The historical narrative of musically educated women reveals a rich tapestry of contributions that has largely gone unnoticed. While progress has been made, historical and structural barriers continue to influence the role of women in music, suggesting the need for continued awareness and recognition of their contributions.

There are current interventions that aim to increase the visibility of female instrumentalists, particularly in genres such as jazz, where conscious efforts are made to address the problem of gender imbalance on stage (Björck & Bergman, 2018). In addition, the representation of women in music is affected by several other factors, which are given a cultural, social, and legal framework, where women would systematically benefit or suffer from those who cast them (Rosário & Cunda, 2022; Viljoen, 2013).

4 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

It was possible to create an open space for the singers to record their struggles and achievements through the research instrument, which met the general objective of the article: to analyze the participation of women artists in the music market of Paraíba, revealing a scenario still marked by gender inequalities. It is understood that music is an important place of speech for black women. Their voices through singing become tools for the search for different listenings and achievements in the struggle for better positions and social places.

The results demonstrate that discrimination and prejudice, added to funding difficulties and insufficient support for the registration of works, remain significant barriers to women's full participation in music.

The profile was built from the need to visually represent the different faces that racism can assume in the process of constructing the subordination of black women. From the answers of the interviewees, we can infer that the representation of women in the field of music is influenced by multiple factors, such as cultural, social and legal structures, from which they can benefit or suffer systematically.

Discrimination and prejudice, added to the difficulties in obtaining funding and the lack of support for the registration of works, still severely limit the participation of women in the area. However, these artists are increasingly active in the fight for recognition and equality. The participants demonstrate a critical understanding of their role, considering themselves active agents in promoting their careers, valuing the female presence in the music industry. Institutions such as Universities, however, have not yet matched this personal domain of women, remaining distant from the need for inclusion, as well as governments do not promote effective affirmative action.

In addition, reconciling personal life (especially family responsibilities) with an artistic career remains a significant obstacle. However, many artists have developed creative and



innovative strategies to overcome these obstacles and strengthen their presence in the music industry.

The analysis of female participation in the Paraíba music market shows the persistence of unequal structures, which limit women's opportunities and artistic expression. Despite some advances, the study demonstrates that gender bias and discrimination remain evident in professional relationships and in the conditions in which music is created and disseminated.

Listening to the experiences of these women reveals the challenges they continue to face in terms of access to resources, institutional recognition, and reconciling personal life and artistic career. However, several forms of resistance, creativity and expression have also emerged, contributing to the construction of a more autonomous and conscious trajectory for the musical community.

Regarding discrimination, prejudice, difficulty in accessing funding and lack of institutional support, these continue to be significant barriers to the consolidation of the female presence in music. The answers of the 12 musicians interviewed indicate that they see themselves as protagonists of their careers and actively promote their spaces in music. However, most point out that Universities do not recognize their responsibility in the process of including women in music. This institutional gap contrasts sharply with the progress of feminist movements, especially black feminist movements. These movements have played a vital role in expanding the voice, power, and presence of women, especially women of color, in all areas of society.

Historical experience shows that, despite resistance, the struggle for representation has achieved concrete gains, such as the increase in the participation of black women in schools, universities, the labor market, dance, theater, and music. These trajectories reinforce that collective resistance is a powerful tool for social and cultural change.

The survey showed that while internal and external barriers to women's careers in music remain, creativity, solidarity, and critical awareness are also paving the way for the future. Therefore, there is an urgent need to strengthen public policies, inclusive education initiatives, and affirmative action to ensure equal opportunities and recognition of women in the music industry. Only through the active participation of all sectors of society can we build a fairer, more diverse, and more representative scenario.

Another relevant point concerns the role of the business and artistic sectors. When asked about investment, media exposure and inclusion in regional events, the artists'

answers revealed a division. While some artists believe that there is a degree of collaboration, recent research and monitoring, evaluation, and learning reports suggest that this remains limited. There are specific, structural, and symbolic barriers that prevent women from building solid careers in the music ecosystem, especially in the regional context.

Despite these challenges, the resilience and strength of reinvention demonstrated in the life trajectories of these artists are evident. The balance between personal responsibility and music production reveals creative and coping strategies, which fuel the struggle for recognition and equality.

This work, therefore, highlights the urgency of public policies committed to gender equality, expanding the role of Universities as agents of change and the responsibility of the artistic and business sectors, in the construction of a more inclusive music market. Promoting an equitable and representative cultural landscape depends on actively listening to the voices of these women and a collective commitment to structural change.

Public policies, inclusive cultural initiatives and the recognition of gender diversity are suggested as pillars for the construction of a fairer and more representative music market. May the recognition of inequalities be the starting point for concrete changes, so that women's voices are not only heard, but also fully respected and recognized.

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