

## **Negotiating Patriarchy in Juju Music: The Experiences of Female Performers in Ibadan**

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### **Abstract**

This paper aims to explore the issues of female juju musicians' visibility and professional sustainability in Ibadan. Although the evolution and popularity of juju music have been significantly associated with male artists and bands, research into the experience of women, specifically in relation to the informal sector of performance within Ibadan, is scarce. This paper, thus, focuses on two women who play an essential role in the development of juju music in Ibadan: Temilade Adeyemi, better known as Oyinomo, the founder of Oyinomo and Her Dignities Crew, and Busayo Adebajo, popularly called Loye Gold, the founder of Loye Gold Band. A qualitative methodology was used to collect data, which involved carrying out in-depth interviews and participant observation. As it turns out, female juju musicians have to deal with quite a lot of barriers to success, which include, but are not limited to, lack of access to performances, gender stereotypes, insufficient patronage, and marginalisation by professional circles. These barriers can be attributed to the specific image of women, as well as the idea of femininity and respectability. Despite all the obstacles, female juju musicians develop numerous mechanisms to achieve visibility and success, such as forging alliances, negotiating identities, media representation, and independence. This study demonstrates that the female musicians of Ibadan do not simply submit to male dominance, but they challenge the status quo by redefining the conditions of their visibility and sustainability in the field of juju music.

**Keywords:** Nigerian popular music, juju music, patriarchy, music and gender, female musicians

## Introduction

Juju music occupies a central position in the history and development of Nigerian popular music, particularly among the Yoruba people of Southwestern Nigeria. Emerging in the early twentieth century from a synthesis of indigenous performance traditions, Islamic influences, and colonial-era social transformations, juju evolved as a dynamic urban genre that reflects changing patterns of identity, leisure, and cultural expression (Alaja-Browne, 1989). Early forms of juju music were shaped by palmwine guitar styles and itinerant musicians who performed in informal social settings, gradually transforming into a more structured and commercially viable genre by the mid-twentieth century (Ogisi, 2010; Alaja-Browne, 1989). The evolution of juju music is closely related to the urbanisation and creation of new social classes in colonial and post-colonial Nigeria. With the growth of urban centers such as Ibadan and Lagos, juju musicians played a crucial role in articulating the urban experience and providing entertainment for various social events. Research has shown that juju music is not only for entertainment purposes but also for the archiving of social memory, moral education, and historical documentation (Oludare, 2019; Mosobalaje, 2018). In the form of praise-singing, philosophical musings, and narrative storytelling, juju musicians encode moral values and express community identity.

However, juju music has been characterised by a lack of female involvement and female juju musicians over the years. Although juju music has been dynamic and constantly evolving over the years, the genre has been dominated by male juju musicians. Omolaye (2021, 24) avers that “Looking at the Nigerian music industry, especially *Juju* music parlance from the past, there is no doubt that it has been dominated by male performers”. King Sunny Adé, Ebenezer Obey and other renowned juju musicians have not only shaped the style and form of juju music but have also shaped the economic and institutional structures surrounding the genre. This is a characteristic of the larger Yoruba musical tradition where male leadership is emphasised in musical ensembles (Omojola, 2012). As a result, the role and contribution of female juju musicians have been underrepresented in both performance settings and scholarly work.

This gender disparity is not unique to juju music but rather a reflection of the broader patriarchal landscape of Nigeria and its creative sectors. In this regard, as scholars of music in Africa have pointed out, music and its performance spaces are often gendered, and the participation of women is often determined by broader cultural understandings of respectability and morality (Samuel

2018: Omolaye, 2021). In many ways, the performance of women in public music spaces is often a complex issue, as they often have to negotiate the tension between artistic expression and broader societal understandings of appropriate female conduct. These factors often impact their access to opportunities and the manner in which they are received by the public. In the case of juju music, this is particularly evident as it is a style of music that relies on patronage and performance. Juju musicians typically work through a network of affluent patrons and social clubs. These networks and performance opportunities are often gendered, and men are typically able to access these networks more freely (Omolaye, 2021).

However, the existence of female juju musicians, although less visible, is neither new nor insignificant. Scholars have begun to explore the development and contribution of females to the genre, including their involvement as vocalists and band leaders (Omolaye, 2021). These female artists subvert the common narrative of juju music as a male-only genre by displaying strength and ingenuity in the face of adversity. The presence of females in the genre is a product of the changing dynamics of gender roles and the enhanced visibility of females in Nigerian popular music. Nevertheless, female artists within this genre have developed unique ways of coping with the patriarchal nature of the music industry. These ways include performing identities, forming coalitions with their male counterparts, and transforming traditional music styles to make them appealing to modern tastes. In some cases, females have been noted to practice what could be termed gendered negotiations, a practice whereby they walk a fine line between compliance and non-compliance, thus allowing them to sustain their careers while subtly subverting the dominant narrative (Samuel & Adejube, 2019).

The role of gender in Nigerian popular music has received increased attention in scholarly research in the recent past, with studies focusing on how issues of sexuality, representation, and power are played out in musical performance (Ogunrinade, 2016). However, most studies have concentrated on contemporary musical genres such as hip-hop and Afrobeats, with little attention given to traditional and fusion music like juju. This is interesting, considering that juju music is still very much alive in Nigeria, particularly in Southwestern Nigeria. This research aims to fill this knowledge gap by focusing on the experiences of female juju musicians in Ibadan, a city that has a rich musical heritage and a thriving musical performance culture. Through an examination of the experiences of Temilade Adeyemi (Oyinomo and Her Dignitaries Crew) and Busayo Adebajo

(Loye Gold Band), this research aims to answer two main questions: What are the challenges that female juju musicians face in their bid for success and recognition? How do they cope with the patriarchal structures that govern the music industry? By situating these experiences within broader historical and cultural contexts, this research contributes to ongoing discussions on gender, agency, and cultural production in African music. It also calls for a more inclusive understanding of juju music that recognises the diverse actors who shape its evolution. In doing so, the study not only expands the scope of juju scholarship but also foregrounds the voices of women whose contributions have long been overlooked.

## **Literature Review**

### **Music and Gender in Africa**

In ethnomusicology and African music studies, the connection between music and gender has been a major area of research. This is especially true in terms of figuring out how musical practices reflect and reinforce social structures. In African societies, music serves as both an artistic expression and a cultural framework for negotiating identities, hierarchies, and power dynamics. In this case, gender is not just a demographic group; it is a socially constructed framework that affects who can participate, represent, and access musical spaces (Viljoen, 2014; Maultsby & Burnim, 2016). In a general sense, research on music and gender stresses that musical practices are an important part of social identities and how people make sense of things together. Music plays a role in shaping social identity and group affiliation, affecting how people see themselves and others in cultural settings (Clark & Lonsdale, 2023). In Africa, where music is often a part of rituals, religion, and community life, these identity formations are made even more complicated by gendered expectations that tell men and women what their roles should be. Consequently, involvement in music creation is often organised by gender, with specific instruments, performance roles, and genres designated as masculine or feminine.

Research throughout the continent indicates that musical spaces are seldom neutral; instead, they function as gendered arenas where power is negotiated and contested. Sanga's (2007) study of *Muziki wa Injili in Dar es Salaam* illustrates that church music, frequently regarded as inclusive, continues to perpetuate gender hierarchies through the distribution of leadership roles, visibility in performance, and decision-making power. Even though there are more women than men in choirs, they are often given supportive roles while men are given positions of power and control. This

dynamic mirrors overarching societal conventions that favour male leadership and limit female agency in both sacred and secular musical spheres.

Research in African and diasporic music traditions underscore the significance of representation in influencing gendered experiences. Viljoen (2014) says that the way women are shown in music, whether as performers, subjects, or symbols, often reinforces stereotypes that already exist while also giving people chances to break them. In many cases, female musicians have to deal with a complicated landscape where being seen can both give them power and put them under scrutiny, objectification, or moral judgment. This tension highlights the contradictory role of women in music, as they are both creative forces and targets of regulation. Commercialisation and globalisation make issues of power, gender, and representation even more important in African pop music. Maultsby and Burnim (2016) assert that the music industry, as a locus of cultural production, frequently reflects overarching inequalities pertaining to gender and resource accessibility. Women may face structural barriers like not being able to get enough funding, not being able to join professional networks, and not having the same chances to move up in their careers. These problems are not only institutional; they are also cultural, shaped by how society sees women's roles and abilities.

In Nigeria, the relationship between music and gender shows both stability and change. For instance, Yoruba musical traditions have historically given men and women different roles. Men have often been in charge of drumming, leading bands, and performing in public (Omojola, 2012). Women, on the other hand, have been more visible in vocal and supportive roles, especially in religious and community settings. But these roles aren't set in stone; they change as women enter new musical spaces and question the rules that have been in place for a long time. Empirical research on Nigerian music elucidates the ways in which female musicians manoeuvre through these gendered limitations. Samuel's (2018) research on female *dùndún* drummers underscores the experiences of women who violate conventional gender norms by participating in activities traditionally designated for men. These performers not only go against what is expected of them, but they also face resistance and doubt from both audiences and other musicians. Their stories show that gendered ideas are still present in music practice, but they also show how people can change things by taking action.

In popular music, gender dynamics frequently manifest through performance aesthetics, lyrical themes, and industry conventions. Samuel and Adejube (2017) investigate the construction, archiving, and dissemination of representations of womanhood in Nigerian music, illustrating how female identities are both influenced by and resistant to prevailing narratives. In the same way, Adejube (2025) puts the Nigerian music industry in a bigger economic and cultural context. He points out that the industry gives people a chance to be creative and make money, but it also keeps structural inequalities that marginalise women more than men. Furthermore, the function of music as a medium for cultural negotiation is apparent in the ways female musicians address themes of identity, morality, and respectability. In numerous African societies, women's public visibility is meticulously scrutinised, and musical performance may serve as both a means of empowerment and a possible source of social stigma. Because of this duality, women musicians need to be strategic about their careers, finding a balance between their artistic expression and what society expects of them. These strategies might involve changing the way they perform, choosing themes that are socially acceptable, or using cultural norms to their advantage.

Although structural constraints are substantial, women are not merely passive recipients of these limitations. Instead, they actively negotiate, resist, and change the terms of their participation in music. This viewpoint changes the focus from being a victim to being strong, highlighting the creative ways that female musicians make their mark and have an impact in spaces that are mostly male-dominated. In general, the literature shows that music in Nigeria, it is an important place to look at gender relations because it shows how power, identity, and culture all come together. Gender still affects who participates, how they are represented, and what opportunities are available in both religious and non-religious settings, as well as in traditional and modern genres. These dynamics constitute a crucial framework for comprehending the distinct experiences of female musicians within specific genres, such as juju music, where historical, cultural, and economic factors intersect to create unique forms of gendered engagement.

### **Power and Agency in Nigerian Juju Music**

Juju music, a highly influential genre in the history of Nigerian popular music, has developed through intricate interactions among culture, commerce, and social hierarchy. There is a lot of information about its musical structure, performance style, and historical development (Alaja-Browne, 1989; Ogisi, 2010), not as much about the gendered dynamics that affect its production

and performance. Nonetheless, current scholarship offers essential perspectives on the dynamics of power within the genre and the strategies employed by female musicians to navigate their roles within it. Historically, juju music originated from male-centric performance traditions, especially within the framework of urban Yoruba social life. The shift from early palm wine music to a more electrified and commercially viable style of juju in the middle of the twentieth century happened at the same time that men started to take over bands and performance circuits (Alaja-Browne, 1989). King Sunny Adé and Ebenezer Obey are two well-known people who not only changed the sound of the genre but also set up systems of power that favoured male musicians. These structures encompass band hierarchies, patronage systems, and access to performance venues, all of which have traditionally been less accessible to women.

The importance of patronage in juju music makes gendered power dynamics even stronger. Waterman (1990) says that juju musicians depend a lot on social networks, sponsorship from the elite, and live performances at social events like weddings, funerals, and parties. These places aren't just for fun; they're also places where people negotiate their social status and power. In this context, male musicians often have more freedom and legitimacy, while female performers may have to follow rules about how to act and dress that society expects. Such expectations can restrict women's involvement in late-night performances, interactions with patrons, and participation in the informal economies that support the genre. Scholars have also pointed out how the use of lyrics and text in juju music can either support or challenge power. The genre's focus on praise-singing, *oriki*, and philosophical reflection enables musicians to craft narratives that reinforce social hierarchies while simultaneously allowing for nuanced critique (Mosobalaje, 2018; Oludare, 2019). However, the power to tell these stories has mostly been held by men. When female musicians are there, they often have to walk a fine line between following the rules and bringing in new ideas that reflect their own lives. Recent studies have started to look into this imbalance by looking at how female juju artists have come about and what they have done. Omolaye (2021) offers a significant evaluation of women's involvement in the genre, highlighting that although their numbers are still limited, their participation contests the enduring notion of juju as a male-dominated sphere. These musicians play a variety of roles, such as bandleaders and singers which broadens the ways that women can get involved in the industry. Their participation also shows how society and culture are changing in Nigeria, where women are becoming more visible in public and professional settings.

Even with these improvements, female juju musicians still face a lot of problems that are deeply rooted in patriarchal power structures. Some of these problems are: not having enough access to resources, being left out of professional networks, and being stuck in gender roles. Women in Nigerian music may be judged not only on their musical skills but also on how well they follow social norms about femininity and morality (Ogunrinade, 2016). This dual burden can limit artistic expression and affect career paths, as female musicians must always negotiate the terms of their visibility. The notion of agency is essential for comprehending how female juju musicians react to these limitations. Recent research focuses on women's ability to navigate and change the conditions of their participation, rather than seeing them only as victims of structural inequality. This viewpoint corresponds with research in African music that emphasises how performers participate in strategic negotiation within gendered contexts (Sanga, 2007; Samuel, 2018). For instance, female musicians might make friends with male bandleaders, use family or social connections, and choose performance styles that appeal to both traditional and modern audiences.

Also, performance itself becomes a place where people negotiate and resist. Female juju musicians can assert their identities and challenge dominant norms by making choices about their repertoire, stage presence, costumes, and how they interact with the audience. Samuel and Adejube (2019) illustrate how musical performance can encapsulate nuanced forms of resistance, especially regarding the representation of gender and sexuality. Even though their study looks at a different type of music, the things they learned can also be used for juju music, where performance is still a big way to show and challenge social meanings. Another aspect of agency is how female musicians interact with the changing Nigerian music scene. Adejube (2025) says that the industry has changed a lot because of new technologies, globalisation, and changing tastes of consumers. These changes create new chances for visibility and distribution, but they also bring about new kinds of competition and inequality. Female juju musicians must be flexible and creative to find their place in both traditional and modern music production.

Also, the mix of old and new in juju music makes things even more complicated when it comes to gender relations. The genre is based on Yoruba cultural practices that stress hierarchy and continuity, but it also works in a modern entertainment industry that values uniqueness and marketability. Because of this, female musicians have to find ways to honour tradition while also standing up for their own rights. This process frequently entails reinterpreting cultural norms and

redefining the essence of being a female performer in a historically male-dominated genre. The examination of gender, power, and agency in juju music significantly informs broader discourses on cultural production and social transformation. By analysing how female musicians negotiate structural constraints, researchers can understand how cultural practices both mirror and alter societal norms. In this regard, juju music exemplifies the broader gender dynamics in Nigerian society, emphasising the persistent conflicts among tradition, modernity, and gender equality.

The literature indicates that juju music constitutes not merely a musical genre but also a social domain organised by power dynamics that influence participation and representation. Historically, male dominance has characterised the genre; however, the rising prominence of female musicians indicates significant transformations in its dynamics. These women assert their agency and contribute to the ongoing evolution of juju music through strategies of negotiation, adaptation, and resistance. Their experiences highlight the necessity for more sophisticated and comprehensive methodologies in the examination of Nigerian popular music, especially in acknowledging the various contributors who influence its history and current practices.

## **Methodology**

This study employs a qualitative research methodology to investigate the gendered experiences of female juju musicians in Ibadan. The study centers on two deliberately chosen artists, Temilade Adeyemi (Oyinomo and Her Dignitaries Crew) and Busayo Adebajo (Loye Gold Band). They were selected for their significant involvement and prominence in the local juju music scene. Data were gathered via comprehensive, semi-structured interviews and participant observation at designated performances and rehearsals. The interviews revealed the musicians' personal experiences, challenges, and strategies for navigating the industry, while observation facilitated a contextual comprehension of performance practices, audience interactions, and the socio-cultural environment in which they function. The data were analysed thematically, focusing on recurring patterns associated with gender, power, and agency. This method allows for a detailed examination of lived experiences within a particular cultural and musical framework.

## **Findings and Discussion**

### **Challenges of Recognition and Survival among Female Juju Musicians**

The quest for recognition and professional endurance among female juju musicians in Ibadan is influenced by a multifaceted interaction of structural impediments, cultural norms, and daily negotiations within a male-dominated musical domain. Juju music has long been supported by systems of patronage, performance circuits, and social networks (Alaja-Browne, 1989; Ogisi, 2010), but these systems are not available to everyone equally, especially women. For female musicians, the challenge is not only to participate but to be recognised as legitimate practitioners in a space historically dominated by men. One immediate barrier is limited access to opportunities to perform. Juju musicians need to perform live to stay in business and get noticed, especially in clubs, lounges, and private events. Women musicians, on the other hand, often get turned down when they try to get these spots. As Loye Gold explained in her interview:

Whenever I write to a club or lounge seeking space for performance, I usually would be rejected if there were other male musicians, banking on concern for my well-being and safety... despite all of this, I keep pushing, money must be made (**Interview/Loye/F/August, 2025/Ibadan**).

This statement emphasises a persistent dynamic wherein gendered assumptions regarding vulnerability are employed to rationalise exclusion, thereby constraining women's opportunities to earn and attain visibility. These exclusions are not only practical; they also show how society expects women to act with propriety and respect (Sanga, 2007; Viljoen, 2014). In the juju scene, where musicians often perform late at night and interact with fans, these norms are especially strong. It puts female musicians in a strange position: they need to perform to be successful, but their presence in performance spaces is closely watched and limited.

Another major challenge is gendered stereotyping around competence and leadership. Oyinomo reflected on her early career, describing the male-dominated music scene as a “minefield”:

When I started in the late 2000s, it was like walking through a minefield. The music scene was completely controlled by men. They would look at you and immediately assume you couldn't handle an instrument, couldn't lead a band, couldn't understand the technical aspects of juju music. I had to be twice as good, twice as prepared, and three times as resilient (**Interview/Oyinomo/F/August, 2025/Ibadan**).

Her experience exemplifies the extra pressure on women to always prove their skills in ways that men don't have to, which is a common pattern in African music where women who perform in male-dominated roles are under more scrutiny (Samuel, 2018). Competence alone is not enough; it must be shown and proven over and over again. This creates a constant "performance pressure"

that affects how you prepare, present, and interact with audiences and industry stakeholders. These problems are made worse by economic problems. The juju music economy is heavily dependent on informal networks and patronage systems, where success often hinges on social ties with event organisers, sponsors, and prominent community figures (Waterman, 1990; Adejube, 2025). Women musicians often have trouble getting into these networks because of gender norms that make it hard for women to move around and interact in male-dominated areas. As a result, they have fewer chances to get well-paying jobs or build a career that will last. Even with these problems, Loye Gold and Oyinomo show that they are strong and can make smart decisions in the industry. Oyinomo emphasised how she adapts her performance to engage with gendered expectations while asserting her artistic identity:

I handle these spaces in the way I dress, the way I move, the lyrics I choose. I speak about women's experiences, our struggles, our strengths. I create music that doesn't just entertain, but educates and empowers. My performance is a conversation, a challenge to the status quo **(Interview/Oyinomo/F/August, 2025/Ibadan)**.

Loye Gold similarly framed performance as both survival and resistance:

Performance is an instrument of change. Every time, I'm not just playing music—I'm challenging a narrative. My body, my voice, my music are statements. I refuse to conform to the traditional expectations **(Interview/Loye/F/August, 2025/Ibadan)**.

These statements illustrate how performance becomes a medium for negotiating gendered norms and asserting presence. By strategically using dress, movement, and lyrical content, female musicians challenge assumptions about their abilities while creating spaces for empowerment and visibility. This aligns with scholarship highlighting the performative and resistant dimensions of women's musical participation in Nigeria and across Africa (Samuel & Adejube, 2017; Samuel, 2018). Collaboration and networking also emerge as critical strategies. As Oyinomo noted: "I try as much as possible to be close with other artistes and leverage as much as I can, one cannot do life alone." Such relational strategies reflect an understanding of the music industry as a networked field, where success often depends on social capital and mutual support (Adejube, 2025). By forming alliances with peers, female musicians create collective strength to negotiate performance opportunities, challenge exclusionary practices, and support each other's growth.

The interplay of structural limitations and adaptive strategies demonstrates that, despite ongoing challenges in recognition and survival, female juju musicians are actively influencing their careers

and the genre itself. Omolaye (2021) says that the growing presence of women in juju music changes the long-held view that the genre is mostly male. These musicians not only keep their careers going by showing that they are good at what they do, working together strategically, and using performance as a way to communicate and change things, but they also help to slowly change the way men and women interact in the field. But the process of getting recognition is still ongoing and not always smooth. Women musicians have to deal with the tension between what society expects of women and what the music industry expects of them as professionals in a competitive, male-dominated field. To be successful, they need to be able to bounce back, think strategically, and be flexible in their thinking. In this context, challenges are not just problems; they are also opportunities to grow in independence, set goals, and come up with new ideas. The experiences of Loye Gold and Oyinomo underscore that the quest for recognition is both an individual and communal undertaking, rooted in perseverance, cooperation, and the tactical navigation of gendered environments.

Female juju musicians in Ibadan face a variety of problems, including access, perception, and structural inequality. But these problems make people stronger, more creative, and more able to make strategic decisions. Through their adaptive practices, they assert visibility, challenge entrenched norms, and contribute to reshaping the gendered landscape of juju music, demonstrating that survival and recognition in the field are achieved not only through talent but through perseverance, strategic engagement, and a transformative use of performance itself.

### **Negotiating Patriarchal Structures in Juju Music Practice**

In addition to the immediate problems of access and recognition, female juju musicians in Ibadan are always working to change the deeper patriarchal structures that define participation, visibility, and success in the genre. These structures aren't always enforced in a clear way. Instead, they are built into the everyday expectations for professionalism, performance, identity, and audience engagement. Because of this, negotiation is an ongoing, changing process through which female musicians strategically place themselves in the field. One of the main ways this negotiation happens is through the ability to change how you perform and move between genres. Female musicians are much more flexible when it comes to meeting audience needs than traditional juju performers, who have strict rules about how to perform. Oyinomo explains:

I don't just sing or perform, I ensure I sing other genres that many can relate, just like a DJ doing his job, I give my audience back-to-back whatever genre they want. I go to the extent of singing whatever musician's song that they want me to sing; I sound and blend my voice as much as possible. It's difficult to opt for a DJ when someone like me is performing, down to oldies and blues (**Interview/Oyinomo/F/August, 2025/Ibadan**).

This approach reflects a strategic expansion of musical identity beyond the boundaries of juju, allowing female performers to remain competitive in a diverse and demanding entertainment market. By positioning herself as both a performer and a curator of audience experience, Oyinomo negotiates her relevance within a system that might otherwise marginalise her. This aligns with broader shifts in the Nigerian music industry, where versatility and audience responsiveness are increasingly valued (Adejube, 2025). However, for female musicians, this adaptability also serves as a survival mechanism within a patriarchal structure that demands constant proof of value. Closely related to this is the role of entrepreneurship and self-created opportunities. In response to limited institutional support and mentorship, Oyinomo established a mentoring platform for aspiring female juju artistes. She describes this initiative as both a personal and economic strategy:

I'm giving back to these ladies what I didn't get; there was no single person to mentor or help me in my journey, I had to do it myself. While helping them with a place to learn, I'm making my money. If I'm not on-stage making money, then the inflowing fee is filling my pocket from the consultation sessions (**Interview/Oyinomo/F/August, 2025/Ibadan**).

This illustrates a significant aspect of agency; wherein female musicians not only manoeuvre through established frameworks but also actively construct alternative ones. Oyinomo is not only filling the gap in support systems for women by setting up mentorship networks, but it is also changing the way people make money from juju music. This aligns with research that emphasises how marginalised individuals in cultural industries frequently establish alternative systems of support and knowledge dissemination as a reaction to exclusion (Maultsby & Burnim, 2016). In this instance, mentorship serves as both a form of resistance and a strategy for sustainability. The body and how it is shown in performance settings are also very important places for negotiation. Women musicians have to deal with expectations about how they look, how respectable they are, and how desirable they are all the time. They often have to balance these conflicting demands. Oyinomo captures this tension:

Every public appearance is a negotiation, every photograph and every performance is a statement against decades of systemic marginalisation...

Dress too casually, you might be tagged unprofessional, dress too feminine, you might be tagged seductive, dress modest, you'd be mistaken as a church girl who might not be able to perform juju music well. What exactly do fans want? **(Interview/Oyinomo/F/August, 2025/Ibadan)**

This statement reveals the complexity of gendered performance, where the female body becomes a site of interpretation and judgment. The impossibility of fully satisfying audience expectations underscores the double bind that female musicians face: they must be visible yet respectable, expressive yet controlled. This aligns with Viljoen's (2014) argument that representations of women in music are often shaped by competing narratives that both enable and constrain agency. In the context of juju music, these tensions are intensified by the genre's social setting, which often blurs the boundaries between entertainment, morality, and social status.

Many people initially doubted my ability to lead a juju band because I am a woman. Some organisers assumed I was only a backup performer. I had to consistently prove myself through strong performances and disciplined rehearsals. I also built relationships with senior male musicians and promoters, whose support helped me gain access to important performance opportunities. Social media has further allowed me to promote my music and connect directly with audiences **(Interview/Oyinomo/F/August, 2025/Ibadan)**.

As a female bandleader, people sometimes negotiate my fees differently or assume a man should be in charge. I quickly learned to assert my authority by managing my bookings, rehearsals, and finances myself. I have also formed strategic collaborations with established male juju musicians, which has increased my visibility and helped me challenge the idea that juju music belongs only to men **(Interview/Loye/F/August, 2025/Ibadan)**.

Oyinomo and Loye Gold's stories show how female juju performers strategically engage with the patriarchal dynamics shaping juju performance. Faced with scepticism regarding their abilities and expertise, both of them adopt strategic behaviours involving professionalism, careful networking, and exercising leadership. The networking activities pursued by Oyinomo, as well as her use of social media, indicate how the importance of visibility and networking may contribute to access to a performance scene controlled by male performers. In addition, the way in which Loye Gold personally manages bookings, financial matters, and rehearsals indicates how female juju musicians may strategically assert leadership over a domain in which leadership is often associated with males. Thus, the stories confirm that participation in the juju genre is not limited to women's inclusion in the process but rather involves an ongoing process of negotiation. This point supports the findings made by Omolaye (2021), who observes that female juju artistes in Southwestern

Nigeria have managed to carve out a niche for themselves in a genre traditionally controlled by men. The strategies employed by female musicians also support Oladejo's (2022) argument that Yoruba popular women often resort to agency, perseverance, and strategic presentation of themselves when faced with gendered cultural conventions. Moreover, the way in which both women emphasize their ability to exercise leadership at the level of performance confirms Oluniyi's (2014) observation about the importance of directing juju music in the Yoruba community.

Loye Gold further highlights how these expectations extend into performance behaviour and audience interaction. She notes the need to embody seemingly contradictory traits: "I was in a gig and a fan requested a male fuji musician's song, yet he wanted me to sound exactly or closely like him; it was funny, but I think nothing can really satisfy fans, except the loyal ones." Her experience illustrates the pressure to conform to male performance standards while simultaneously preserving a unique feminine identity. This is part of a larger trend in African music where women are often compared to men, even in genres that have been mostly male-dominated in the past (Omojola, 2012). The expectation to "sound like" a male musician shows how deeply ingrained these standards are. They put male performance in the "normal" category and female performance in the "variation" category, which must always prove itself. Loye's remark that "nothing can really satisfy fans" also shows how hard it is to predict how an audience will react and how far negotiation can go. Women musicians use different strategies to deal with expectations, but they work in a system where approval is not always guaranteed and standards are always changing. This supports the idea that negotiation is not something that happens once; it is an ongoing process that needs constant adjustment and reflection.

It is important to note that these talks are not just reactive; they also involve proactive changes to identity and space. Female juju musicians are changing what it means to be a part of the genre by performing, mentoring, and working together. Their actions push the limits of traditional juju music and bring in new ways of interacting that are more in line with modern life. This is in line with what Olusola (2023) said about Nigerian popular music, including juju, being a field that is always changing and where meanings and practices are always being reinterpreted. The focus on mentorship and group growth also shows a change from strategies that focus on individual survival to ones that focus on the community. By helping other women, Oyinomo not only makes her own

position stronger, but she also helps change the way men and women interact in the juju music space. This collective aspect of agency is important because it shows that change can happen not only on a personal level but also through shared practices and networks.

Negotiating patriarchal structures in juju music entails a multifaceted interaction of adaptation, resistance, and innovation. Women musicians interact with these structures by being able to perform in different styles, starting their own businesses, being strategic about how they present themselves, and working together with other musicians. Even though these strategies don't completely get rid of all the inequalities that already exist, they do make room for people to take action and make changes in a limited environment. The experiences of Oyinomo and Loye Gold illustrate that negotiation is both essential and a means of empowerment, allowing female juju musicians to navigate, contest, and ultimately transform the gendered dynamics of the genre.

## **Conclusion**

This research demonstrates that female juju musicians in Ibadan navigate a profoundly gendered musical environment influenced by structural disparities, cultural norms, and male-centric systems of patronage and performance. Instead of being limited by these restrictions, they actively negotiate their visibility, relevance, and survival by being resilient, adaptable, and strategic. These musicians show that participating in juju music isn't just about being included; it's also about changing things. They do this by dealing with limited access to performance spaces and stereotypes that don't go away, redefining performance practices, building networks, and creating new support systems. Their experiences show that trying to get recognition is both hard and undoubtedly a way to think of new possibilities in the genre. By asserting their presence and reshaping modes of engagement, female juju musicians are not only sustaining their careers but also contributing to a gradual reconfiguration of gender relations in juju music and Nigerian popular culture at large.

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