No Country for Women. Women Working in the Italian Music Industry

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Abstract

The article looks at the characteristics of workers in the Italian music industry from a gender perspective. I studied female workers in the Italian music industry, which is analyzed as a male-dominated context. Based on 38 interviews conducted in Italy, this paper investigates female worker participation in the industry in question, stressing the perception of existing gender differences that show how female workers explain inequalities. The discourse analysis of the interviews collected focuses on the characteristics of the interviewees' jobs, on their perceptions about their relationships with colleagues and on their work role. The study highlights that Italian music industry seems to be "No country for women". First, there is the existence of "women's jobs" and "men's jobs" within the Italian music industry. Secondly, an exclusive club emerges, from which female workers feel they are shut out. Lastly, the distancing of female music workers from "other" women is highlighted, tending to define themselves "super-women".

Keywords: music industry, labor sociology, gendered workplace.

1. Introduction

An increasing number of sociological studies have attempted to explore the world of music (Silbermann, 2013). Although it has been a subject of curiosity, scholars tend to consider music as a product with a cultural meaning (Crane, 1992; Peterson & Anand, 2004; Ardizzone, 2012 that has to be used, and it is considered as a workplace only in rare cases (Weber, 1958; Bourdieu, 1996; Di Maggio, 2000; Ardizzone & Barbarito, 2012).

The article focuses on Italian music as an industry: it is in fact a fundamental industry of the Italian economy (Ardizzone, 2012). In Italy, the

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music industry is gaining more and more weight both in musical terms and in economic terms, thanks to the increasing role of national independent and major labels (Win, 2016, 2017, 2018). This is one of the reasons why there is a growing need to study music as a job-creating industry and not only as a cultural product.

In particular, the contribution studies the jobs and the roles of female workers within the Italian music industry, analyzed as a male-dominated workplace. It explores how the social construction of gender occurs within this context, contributing to the knowledge on women's participation in this phenomenon.

In particular, the article focuses on the perception of existing gender differences and shows how female workers explain inequalities, struggling to be recognized as "more than simply women", notwithstanding their femaleness. The Italian music industry seems to be "No country for women". This justifies the need for studying female workers of the sector, the work of whom is largely hampered by gender inequalities and stereotypes. Furthermore, this research addresses the purpose to highlight gender representations in an understudied context: the Italian music Industry.

The article is structured as follows. The next paragraph explores the Italian music industry as a male-dominated workplace. Subsequently, the methodology of the research is outlined, after which the main findings of the research are presented. The article concludes with the discussion of some potential implications of the debated issues.

2. The Italian music industry: a male-dominated workplace

What is a male-dominated workplace?

The causes of gender differences in work activities and the unbalanced distribution of genders both at the level of employment and at the sector level have been widely debated and continue to attract the attention of several scholars today (Bettio & Verashchagina, 2008; Reskin & Bielby, 2005).

The existence of stereotypes is related both to the nature of certain professions and to the characteristics that the professionals who work there must have to define a male or female job (Fana et al., 2021).

Furthermore, to connote a job or a working environment as male or female, in addition to the characteristics that are attributed to being a man or to being a woman and to the type of work, there is also the numerical prevalence of one of the two genres and the scarcity (or sometimes total absence) of the other (Betti, 2004). This aspect often leads to the identification between a job and a genre.

The phenomenon of gender typing of some professions, that is, "as a man" or "as a woman" as a consequence of the sexual division of labor, does not necessarily imply an impediment to entry: on one side it makes it difficult, on the other it is not obvious what happens when access is allowed. The increasing entry of women in sectors and activities from which they were previously excluded has led to the feminization of different professional fields, only partially eroding the traditional division of roles based on gender. This has led the orientation of women towards female intensive jobs and has exposed the existence of a "glass ceiling" (Albertini, 2011) which makes it extremely difficult for women to reach top positions. The latest report on the gender gap in the world (World Economic Forum, 2021) also highlighted how the gender gap problem within the labor market still exists in our country. 56.5% of women work against 81.5% of men and only 27% of these hold top positions. Again, the same report highlights the existence of a gender pay gap, whereby women, on average, earn 5.6% less per hour than men employed in the same jobs and at the same level.

It is necessary to overthrow the idea that these differences are due solely to supply-related factors (Gallie et al., 2012). The idea that women deliberately decide to work in female-dominated settings and to resort to part-time employment contracts to reconcile working and family obligations has been challenged by two factors: firstly, several researches have demonstrated that it is not true that working in female-dominated sectors facilitates the management of family commitments (Glauber, 2011); secondly, the data show that the involuntary part-time employment is high (OECD, 2022).

Despite this, within the labor market the existence of "men's" and "women's" jobs is evident, as well as the fact that there are sectors with prevalence of both men and women. Finally, what characterizes the presence of women in the labor market are traits not only linked to the job or context, but also to working conditions (Rizza & Santangelo, 2014). Women, in general, tend to be less present in the job market than men, less paid and tend not to hold positions of power within the contexts in which they work (Bozzon et al., 2019).

Is working in the music industry something "for men"?

Despite being a full-fledged industry, the music industry is governed by unclear boundaries and rules, which result in working relationships that are often informal. In this context, being a woman is even more complex. It is not easy to define and describe what "the Music industry" is, because it is a broad concept involving different types of activities and actors. To understand each part of this production chain, Ardizzone and Barbarito (2012) simplified the complexity of this object, dividing it into two groups: the first, larger group, encompasses the second, smaller one. In the *large group* all the activities

implicated in the creation of music are included, for example the production of inputs to realize a music project, or the output for its diffusion. This group involves the production of instruments, as well as the didactic training in music schools, and all the media necessary for the consumption of music.

The *small group* includes the creation of music and thus composers, authors, performers and producers; the intermediation, consisting of publishers, record companies, distributors, organizers of live music and copyright collection companies, and the end consumers of the music produced. Regarding the discographical industry, it is divided into major or indie (i.e. independent) labels. Major and indie labels have two different structures, but both have the same goal: to create and enhance musical artistic products. Unlike other types of industries, the discographical industry is governed by unclear boundaries and rules which constitute the lack of formal working rules - often made in the field - and the 'informalization' of working relationships (Bayer et al., 2008; Daghini et al., 2019). In this context, being a woman is even more complex. On one hand, the deconstruction of career paths fails to help them access the market (Wikström, 2020), while on the other hand there is structural and systematic lower visibility of female figures in productive, performative and organizational sectors of music industry (Aguiar et al., 2021; Lieb, 2018; Micalizzi, 2021). As such, the Italian music industry can be considered a male-dominated industry.

Scholars have highlighted the lack of access to spaces associated with music. Clawson (1999a) focuses her study on women and men who play instruments, because instrument playing is the musical activity from which women have been mostly excluded, in contrast with singing. The author highlights the emergence of female bass players in alternative rock music. Studying 19 rock bands with female bass players, the research shows that the musicians involved consider the bass as "the easiest instrument to play" (Clawson, 1999b, p. 199) and the guitar was the instrument played by the most authoritative person in the band (in all the bands involved the guitar was played by male musicians). The second result shows that the women interviewed did not perceive themselves as participating in relations of deference, even if women's positions as bassists are directly linked to men's ability to monopolize the most prized positions. The relative inaudibility of women in music and the supposed intrinsic masculinity of various musical practices, particularly those of 'creating' or composing music (Buscatto, 2007; Strong & Raine, 2018; Wolfe, 2019), has been increasingly documented.

Björck (2011, 2013) studied the way in which language is used in round-table discussions among staff and participants from girl-centered music programs and how it contributes to constructing ideas about gender, popular music and social change. The necessity to develop this kind of "safe space" stems from the lack of girls enrolled in music schools in Sweden. Her study

shows that a central argument in these discussions is that females need to claim space to participate in popular music, creating girls-only settings to counter the gendered character of musical spaces. The author analyses 7 round-table staff discussions among programs which expressed the aim of consistently using girls-only environments (even if the staff sometimes included one or two male professors). The research shows that such girls-only spaces seem to offer a certain sense of freedom from competition, control, and distraction because of a less pervasive gaze, but these offer only temporary and partial relief, because from the outside it is seen as gender-marked. Leonard (2016) investigates the "ingenue singer": a white archetype of feminine youth that emerges time and again in Western art and performance. The ingenue's liminality is a consequence of her body being in a state of transition, and of the way that public perceptions of her may change as she becomes older and ceases to be discernible as an ingenue (and consequently stops being a singer). Studying representations of women in alternative music, McFadden (2017) highlights the existence of a "boys' club" that makes it hard for women to access information and networks.

Table 1. Female presence within the annual charts of the Top 50 songs, absolute and % values for the years 2002, 2012, 2017, 2021 and 2022.

Year	Number of female artists in the Top 50 *charts*	Percentage of female artists in the Top 50 charts
2002	17	34
2007	16	32
2012	14	28
2017	4	8
2021	4	8
2022	4	8

Source: www.fimi.it, author's elaboration.

We can define a "boys' club" as an informal organization, which goes beyond the boundaries of the work context, and is created spontaneously among males to give themselves horizontal support (McGuire, 2000). The phrase "boys' club" is generally used with reference to the gender imbalance in certain working sectors or to certain types of sexist behaviors in the workplace (Delvaux, 2019). Gender often emerges as a factor that generally amplifies women's disadvantage (Mencarini & Solera, 2011; Magaraggia & Vingelli, 2015) also when the workplace is within the Italian music industry (Creative & Cultural Skills, 2018; Micalizzi, 2022). In fact, in Italy equality between men and women within the music industry still seems far away. During the Milan Music Week 2022, Federica Tremolanda from Spotify Italy illustrated data from a researcher on the gender gap within the streaming platform: women represent 14.1% of the total number of artists on the official music charts in Italy. At the top of the Italian charts, less than 1 out of 5 artists therefore is a woman. The

same is confirmed by the annual FIMI (Italian Federation of the Music Industry) rankings of the 100 most listened to songs in Italy, from 2002 to 2022.

Female artists seem to be fewer and fewer, or rather fewer and less listened to. The next table illustrates data in line with the previous one. It shows in fact the female participation at the annual Italian Song Festival, also called *Festival di Sanremo*, in the last 26 years.

Table 2. Female participation at the annual Italian Song Festival from 1998 to 2023.

Year	Number of female participants	Percentage of female participants out of the total number of participants
1998	8	32
1999	6	24
2000	8	32
2001	7	28
2002	9	36
2003	9	36
2004	4	16
2005	8	32
2006	7	28
2007	7	28
2008	5	20
2009	5	20
2010	6	24
2011	7	28
2012	9	36
2013	5	20
2014	4	16
2015	9	36
2016	8	32
2017	9	36
2018	4	16
2019	6	24
2020	7	28
2021	7	28
2022	6	16
2023	10	36

Source: www.rai.it, author's elaboration

In the last 26 years, there have never been more than 10 women competing at one time in the competition. In the 2023 final, not a single female name was among the 5 finalists. Research conducted in 2018 by Nuovoimaie[1] (New Artists Mutual Institute for Performers and Interpreters) based on 765,789 musical recordings in 116 countries, shows that females have supporting roles in 9,5% of the cases while holding primary positions in 7,4% of the cases. In Italy there are 8,3% primary roles for women and 91,6% for men out of a sample of 389,219 musical recordings. But, as anticipated before, working with music is not limited to working as an artist. The concept of the music workforce

1 The research was presented during the 2019 Milano Music Week.

includes anyone involved in performing, creating, producing, recording, promoting and selling music. Creative & Cultural Skills (2011, p.3) proposes a comprehensive list of professional roles in the music sector which has been reported in Table 3. According to Micalizzi (2021), for each job a label based on the type of work has been assigned: on the stage, backstage, or in management.

Table 3. Works of music divided by type of work.

Work	Type of work
A&R: Artists & Repertoire	Management
Agent	Management
Audio engineer	Backstage
Audio equipment manufacturer	Backstage
Booking agent	Backstage
Collection society executive	Management
Community musician	Stage
Composer/arranger	Backstage
Concert promoter	Management
Conductor	Stage
Distributor	Management
DJ	Stage
Education officer/workshop leader	Management
Event programmer	Management
Event manager	Management
Instrumental teacher	Backstage
Licensing and royalties officer	Management
Lighting technician	Backstage
Live event technical support	Backstage
Lyricist (talent scouting)	Management
Manager	Management
Mixer	Backstage
Musical director	Management
Musical instrument maker	Backstage
Musical instrument distributor	Backstage
Musician/artist/performer	Stage
Music publisher and Distribution	Management
Programmer	Backstage
Press officer	Management
Promoter	Management
Producer	Backstage
Remixer	Backstage
Songwriter	Stage
Sound engineer	Backstage
Sound technician	Backstage
Studio manager	Backstage

Source: Creative & Cultural Skills (2011), author's elaboration

Of the 36 jobs listed (Table 3), only 5 are on the stage. The others all involve creating the product on stage: 16 are backstage and 13 are in management. The shortage of women in the music industry in Italy affects not only female artists, but also (and especially) female workers: performing tasks

labeled as *Management* and *Backstage* are predominantly men. Willrodt (2016) shows the fact that men in music typically work in technical or prestigious creative jobs, such as those of A&R, artist manager or producer. There is a notable absence of female music producers, which is potentially caused by a lack of female role models, making it difficult to overcome the image of a producer that remains masculine in nature. According to research conducted by *Women in Music* focusing on women working backstage, men represent approximately 20% of registered composers and songwriters. For instance, in the UK, women make up just 5% of all sound engineers and according to the Dutch Authors' society Buma/Stemra, even though women are slightly over-represented among graduates from music schools and conservatories in the Netherlands, they are still highly under-represented among members of professional organizations for music creators and production. In a vertical sense, the music sector is like other professional cultural sectors, where men can move up. Less than 20% of the leading positions in the music industry are held by women (Willrodt, 2016), leading to a large gender gap between men and women. Women in the music arena are under-represented in all type of jobs: on the stage, backstage and in management. Furthermore, also female presenters are still highly under-represented, considering both talent shows on TV and music shows (Kahlert et al., 2022). In line with this data, in Italy no woman has ever presented the famous television show called "X Factor" (in 11 years of existence) and the *Sanremo* Festival, in 73 editions has seen only five women presenting it.

The Italian music industry does indeed seem to be "No country for women". This justifies the need to study the female workers of the sector. Furthermore, this research addresses the purpose of highlighting gender representations in an understudied context: the Italian music industry. In fact, in Italy there is only one research on the topic conducted by Micalizzi (2021), that studies Italian singers, songwriters and producers. This research focuses also on those professions labeled Management and Backstage (see Tab. 3): indeed, much light has yet to be shed on these professions (Creative & Cultural Skills, 2018). Within this scenario, gender represents a categorical variable through which the behaviors of individuals are read, interpreted and, before that, regulated (Sassatelli, 2009). According to de Beauvoir (1949) the gender difference takes shape with the organization of work in sedentary communities. Until that moment, in the distribution of tasks for community survival, women had been involved, with duties certainly different from those of men but just as essential. So, gender is still a social representation through which individuals and social groups build and give meaning to reality, to maintain a given social order (Howarth, 2006; McRobbie, 2009).

3. Methodological consideration

This research uses qualitative techniques to delve into the perceptions of female music workers in Italy.

The paradigm of qualitative research appears more open and predisposed to capture the unexpected and allows information to be gathered in its "entirety", allowing the more specific to emerge (Cardano, 2011). It prefers, in fact, the in-depth study of detail to be used, to then reconstruct the overall picture in order to achieve the broader purpose which is to understand the complexity of social phenomena (Corbetta, 2014). If quantitative research responds to this ambitious purpose by simplifying the object of study, qualitative research follows the path of reducing the extent of the field of interest, bringing out the peculiarity of its object of study and adapting its tools to the specific context (Bryman, 2016). For that reason, 38 semi-structured interviews were conducted between September 2019 and November 2021, with an interruption during 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The group of women working in the Italian indie music industry is composed of 38 workers, selected through a snowball sampling process: starting with a small group of 5 initial contacts, subsequent contacts were created.

Table 4. Female workers interviewed by type of work, absolute value.

Type of work	Number of interviewees
Management	18
Stage	10
Backstage	9
Others	1
Total	38

As shown in Table 4, 18 interviewees work in management, 10 work on the stage, 9 work backstage. The age of the interviewees varies from 21 to 44 years old. 23 out of 38 interviewees have a qualification higher than a high school license, 14 of whom work in management. For 27 of the interviewees, working within the music industry is their main job. It is the second job for 8 out of the 10 women who work on the stage (as artists or musicians).

The interview, in line with the critical incident technique, aims to collect information on facts and events that are significant for the workers involved (Hughes et al., 2007). The interview starts with the description of the type of work and experience, to then move to the narration of a typical working day. The interviewers were asked to tell one or two stories about real episodes in which they had the perception of being advantaged or disadvantaged due to their gender. The stories had to be real and the interviewees were left free to tell the stories in their own words, without any interruption. The goal of this

narrative strategy is to highlight their interpretation of the situation, their visions and values, contributing to their understanding and management of any situations of gender discrimination within their workplace (Poggio, 2018). The data collected have been analyzed through a QDA software (Nvivo), applying a framework approach (Welsh, 2002), using *a priori* concepts derived from the aims of the research. The interpretation of the materials followed the constructivist approach of Grounded Theory (Walker & Myrick, 2006), studying the agency capacity of the interviewees, understood as active actors in the construction of their own lives (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). This methodology is data-driven, relying on an inductive approach in which relevance is given to the researcher's relationship with the empirical data and what emerges from coding and analysis. According to Leonardi (2015), the analysis studies the characteristics of the interviewees' jobs, their perceptions about their relationships with colleagues and their work role, through an in-deep discourse analysis (Gill, 2000).

4. Principal findings

This research closely investigates female workers in the Italian music industry, interpreted as male-dominated. The analysis focuses on the characteristics of the interviewees' jobs, interpreting data through the lens of gender. The discourse analysis of the interviews collected unequivocally reveals that Italian music industry is in point of fact "no country for women".

First, the existence of "women's jobs" and "men's jobs" in the music industry is clear; not only, the women's jobs are jobs at the service of men. Then, from the interviews emerges the existence of exclusive 'clubs' from which female workers feel they are ostracized/shut out. Lastly, of particular interest is the propensity of some female music workers to define themselves as "super-women" and distance themselves from "other" women at times even going as far as to make reference to male attributes by way of reinforcing the superlative quality of the image.

4.1 Women's jobs in a male-dominated industry: press officers and promoters

The first outcome that emerges from the analysis of the interviews concerns the fact that although the music industry is a male-dominated context, there are some jobs -among those listed in table 4- that are legitimate for a woman to do. Of the 38 jobs involved with music listed in Table 4, only 2 are

considered "women's jobs": those of press officer and promoter. Both are mainly office jobs that do not require physical presence in the places where music is performed (live clubs, recording studios).

Of the 18 interviewees who work in management, 10 work as press officers, 6 as promoters and 2 as managers in two small independent companies. One of these two is also the owner of the small independent label.

Although female employment within the music industry sector exists, this seems to be limited to predetermined roles: a horizontal segregation emerges. Women are mostly employed in the communication sector as press officers and promoters. These are jobs that in most cases can be done remotely and not at night, as is the case with concerts. This makes it possible to reconcile caring tasks that are typically feminine for Italy's familistic welfare model with the pace of work.

Moreover, these are jobs that require graphic and communicative care skills, which are considered typically female characteristics. Therefore, these jobs are "for women", which means, "suitable for women".

> I work mainly from home. It is an office job, you have to be patient and be precise. I don't find it different from similar jobs in other industries. (Press Officer).

> Let's say that if you are a girl and you want to work in the music industry without being an artist, in my opinion, promotion is one of the best ways to get into it. For one simple reason: they listen to you. You know your place, you're not running off with a man's job, so to speak [laughs]. You can work on your stuff, and you can even get some free tickets for a concert. (Promoter).

> It is not an easy job. It often happens that I have to work during concerts, although it is mainly a back-office job, You might have to go to live shows sometimes, perhaps because the Artist X's manager asks you for a live report or things like that. And let's say that it's a great test of patience. The feeling you sometimes get is also that of being out of place. To give you an idea, once after a concert I relinquished the chance of an interview with a famous artist because it was 2 am and I knew that to others, even if I went backstage to do the interview after the live report, it would have looked bad. I don't want people to start talking. So, I chose to do without, and refused the interview, opting to not do my job at 100% because the situation could be read in an ambiguous way by other people present. (Press Officer).

What comes to light from the interviews is that we can talk about the functional specialization of female work within the music industry, which also

affects the gender pay gap: with the exception of the one who owns the label, the other 17 workers in the management have occasional collaboration contracts in 5 cases, in 4 cases the VAT number, in the remaining 7 cases they have temporary contracts, while only in one case the contract is permanent. All 18 interviewees in the management sector have an educational qualification equal to or higher than a bachelor's degree.

4.2 *"Women bring bad luck on tour". The music industry as an exclusive boys' club*

As mentioned in the second paragraph, scholars highlighted the existence of boys' clubs based on male-dominated informal professional networks (Brass, 1985; Clacher et al., 2020). Unwritten rules are created ad hoc for the men of the context, which are over-represented in the contexts in which the boys' clubs are born and survive and which therefore exclude women. From the interviews the difficulty emerged for female workers of the sector in "having to be men" in order to integrate. Considering the stage and backstage workers interviewed, 18 out of 19 argued that it is difficult to start doing this job, as if in this type of industry, it is not only the ceiling that is made of glass, but also the entrance door.

> Before starting this job I did a lot, really a lot, a lot of apprenticeship. Too much. Much more than is required of men who do the same job as me. They still call me "little girl", even though I'm 36 and I have been doing this job for 11 years, of which we can consider 6 of internships [laughs]. And it's no good, they still don't trust you. When will they understand that we [women] can work with machines? (Sound engineer).

In the excerpt just mentioned, not only the difficulty in entering the sector emerges, but also the difficulty in demonstrating that you have the skills to be able to do that job. Getting in seems to be as difficult as staying there.

> Let's say that the trend of the sector is to believe that we are not doing this job because we know how to do it, but because we have come across it by chance. Girls who just got incredibly lucky…. Or maybe just because we slept with someone who counts [laughs]. Sometimes it's like a witch hunt. "Oh my God!! A female tour manager? She's stealing our jobs! No guesses why she's here! And they just don't get it that you're there simply because you're just doing your job. And I see this happens especially with my female colleagues who are technicians, sound engineers. But it's like that also in the world of live shows, onstage. If you do well they make out that's it's easy for you…

you are a woman, all you need to do is just show your boobs and you get what you want". But couldn't I just be good at what I do? and know how to do my job? (Tour manager).

When I'm on tour maybe I find myself in situations I've never worked in before as the band's sound engineer, and when the organizers understand that they have to talk to me about the technical aspects, then they start talking to me very slowly and articulating the words. The amazing thing is that 90% of the time I not only have more experience, but I also have a higher qualification than my male colleagues to whom, I know for sure, no one talks as if they have problems with understanding. (Sound engineer).

One of the last times that I worked in booking for this famous band, we fell out because I was in charge of organizing the dates and transfers. And part of my job was also to follow them on tour, to verify that all requests were accepted, to check that everything dovetailed perfectly. To do my job. And when they found out I had to go, that was when the trouble started, because "what happens on tour must stay on tour" and because women, according to them, bring bad luck. In short, they are like a bunch of bandits [laughs]. (Booker).

If it is difficult to have access to male-dominated work contexts, the "boys' club" seems to be an impenetrable place for women workers in the sector, who suffer from its comments and frequent sexual allusions. The same interpretative lens can be used in studying the boys' clubs that form spontaneously within work contexts and which serve to make the separation between "us, males" and "you, women" even more evident. On a theoretical level, women have the same opportunities as men to access this context, but women are not welcomed. Women "bring bad luck on tour", so the existence of these informal groups within work contexts discourages and hinders female participation, reproducing traditional models of machismo and camaraderie.

4.3 More than women, super-women. The distancing from women not working within the music industry

From the analysis of the interviews, and especially those of the women who work in the live music contexts, it emerges that women find themselves negotiating their presence within the male-dominated context. In many interviews what becomes apparent is how the symbolic violence of male domination (Bourdieu 1990) is welcomed and reproduced: if a woman is not accepted in the sector and she is in there, she is 'not' a woman, thus distancing

herself from women who do not work within the industry. This emerges from many interviewees, who tend to dissociate themselves from women "under the stage", users of the music product, but also from being a woman in general. In the first case, they tend to define women who go to concerts as "groupies" - in a derogatory sense-; in the second case they tend to deviate from those characteristics associated with the female universe, marking the fact that they are "super-women" or, rather, that they have masculine characteristics.

> Let's say they often don't understand [referring to male colleagues] that we are there to work. Because we are women and we are backstage, they [referring to male colleagues] immediately think that we are there because we want to sleep with the artist, but we are not die-hard fans, we are workers. (Promoter).

> To do this job you need to have balls. (Sound engineer).

> Doing this job is tough, you can't do it if you have a family. It sounds strange, but drinking beer after the concert is part of the job, because we are networking. And if you have children, you don't stay out until 3 in the morning drinking beer. And then you have to be able to drink like a man [laughs]. (Promoter).

> I can do this job because I am very strong and direct, I am not easily shocked, and I can raise my voice when it is necessary to make myself respected. When they see me they underestimate me because I'm small, but I can stand up to a man. (Tour manager).

> There aren't many women who do this job. Therefore, we recognize ourselves at first glance in work situations. And with some we also became friends even though we hardly ever worked together. We have a WhatsApp group called 'super women'. (Tour manager).

Women who work in the music industry tend to acquire a male view of the world, according to which women who go to concerts have other reasons that have to do with the sexual sphere and not with music. In the same way, women, in general, are perceived as weaker and more vulnerable than men, not strong enough to survive in these contexts, so, if you are a woman who arrives and stays, it is because you are not a woman, but much more: a 'super woman' (Pitti, 2019; Sheerin & Garavan, 2021). Only in this way can it be proved that they deserve their place in this industry.

5. Discussion and conclusion

The Italian music industry does not seem to be a country for women. The article shows how when it comes to music, there are few female workers, both in the charts and in the workforce. This research is based on 38 semi-structured interviews with female workers in the Italian music industry, carried out between September 2019 and November 2021.

Certainly, among the limitations of this study is the fact of focusing on gender in a binary way (male/female) and not through an intersectional feminist lens (Fast & Jennex, 2019). For this reason, further research on this topic and in this sector is encouraged. Despite this, the recent study by Werner (2022) on feminism and gender politics in mediated popular music shows from the narratives collected by interviewing the #MeToo movement, how the aspect of gender is the only recurring socio-cultural element: ethnicity, class and sexuality are (still) absent. Also, from the 38 interviews of this research, gender in the binary sense is the only socio-cultural aspect that emerges as discriminating for the people interviewed. Only 2 of the 38 interviewees declared themselves homosexual during the interview, stating that, being homosexual women is easier than being heterosexual women within the environment. In all cases, the inductive analysis of the collected material made it clear that for women who work in the music industry it is not only the ceiling that is made of glass, but also the front door: entering this world is indeed very complicated. Those who, like the interviewees, manage to enter, tend to do so either in jobs considered "for women" within a male-dominated industry, thus staying in the "right place", where they belong, or they have to constantly negotiate their position. In fact, all the interviewees belonging to the "internship" and "backstage" macro-categories affirm that they have to demonstrate much more than male colleagues to gain respect in the workplace. Furthermore, the workers complain about the existence of a sort of unwritten regulation, of male boys' clubs that reinforce gender disparities, making women guests or, often, spectators, also in informal situations that are created within the workplace. Finally, an interesting result concerns the fact that from some interviews it emerges that the same workers adhere to male models, reiterating repeatedly during the interview that they "are women with balls", "super-women", women "strong enough" to work in this environment and as such, unlike other women, for example, those who failed to get through the glass door at the entrance. Obviously, these results emerge from the analysis of 38 interviews conducted in Italy and, for this reason, they cannot be generalized in relation to the entire music industry. Furthermore, the research does not include male workers' perceptions. Despite this, it is interesting to think about the relationship of gender and hierarchies in a perspective of social reproduction of symbolic violence; in this case similar

results could also emerge from research on other contexts in which male dominance is prevalent. In general, that of music remains an under-studied context, especially if investigated through the lens of the sociology of the workplace. Research in this area is still needed. Lastly, studying the music industry from a gender perspective helps to think about the order that (still) guarantees male domination, particularly in unstructured contexts, such as that of the music industry, where formal and informal often tend to overlap. Future research could investigate the recent mobilizations and women's organizations within the sector. On an international scale, in 2014 "She said so" was founded: a global independent community of women and minorities in the music industry to connect and empower all its members. "She said so" (www.shesaidso.com) has created an awareness of issues and more visibility for the problems facing women working within the sector and is striving to create an alternative culture in the industry. In Sweden there is an informal network that since 2015 has been organizing the "Women in jazz" (https://www.facebook.com/womeninjazz.it/), a festival in which concerts and seminars alternate to encourage and support female musicians and composers in their effort to enhance gender equity on the music scene. In Italy, with similar intentions, "Equaly" (www.equaly.it) was born in 2021. It is a community of music workers that deals with gender equality within the music business through the organization of events and moments of confrontation. These initiatives can be studied with an institutionalist logic (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), studying the changes that these realities bring (or could bring) in the music industry.

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