

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF ORGANIZING MUSIC THERAPY WORK IN EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

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Abstract: This article analyzes the theoretical foundations of organizing music therapy work in extracurricular activities from a pedagogical and psychological point of view. It also reveals the scientific and theoretical principles of using music therapy in extracurricular activities, its educational and developmental capabilities, and its importance as a factor enriching the educational process. The article substantiates the theoretical aspects of organizing elements of music therapy through circles, creative activities, and musical events.

Keywords: music therapy, theoretical foundations, music education, aesthetic education, emotional development, psychological health, creative activity, musical impact

Introduction

Extracurricular music classes are often defined as voluntary, extracurricular or out-of-school music education by private tutors or specialized music schools, and occupy a large place in modern education. Drawing on empirical work in psychology, music education, and pedagogy, we examine how extracurricular music activities impact musical skills, as well as nonmusical domains such as collaboration, self-regulation, and academic achievement. Where there are discrepancies and nuances in the literature, these are acknowledged and contrasted. The synthesis relies only on references cited in the presented corpus, with claims supported by multiple sources in IEEE citation style¹. However, educators and researchers recognize that these lessons can foster broader cognitive and social competencies, even if they are not the primary focus of instruction.

The main claim in the literature is that extracurricular music lessons contribute to non-cognitive development, particularly social skills, cooperation, empathy, and social behavior. Kawase and Kitabayashi note that “a large majority (over 90%) of music teachers report that students develop non-musical skills, with non-cognitive skills such as cooperation and communication being frequently mentioned. The observed association between collaborative musical activities and socialization is supported by a large body of evidence that group music-making develops social competencies and emotional intelligence in children”².

The social context of music ensembles outside the classroom can serve as a form of social training by providing children, especially at primary school age, with structured opportunities to practice teamwork, turn-taking, listening, and working towards a common goal. While some studies “highlight the aesthetic and expressive benefits of music education, the focus in the out-of-classroom setting has been on the social and collaborative aspects, which is consistent with

¹ Kawase, Satoshi, et al. "Perspectives of teachers at music schools toward children's extra-musical abilities promoted by music lessons". *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol. 14, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1190731>

² Kawase, Satoshi, et al. "Perspectives of teachers at music schools toward children's extra-musical abilities promoted by music lessons". *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol. 14, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1190731>

broader concerns about how arts participation supports interpersonal relationships and socio-emotional development in young people”³.

A long-standing question in the field is whether musical training translates into general cognitive advantages beyond music-specific skills⁴.

A body of research in the music education literature, both longitudinal and quasi-experimental, suggests that long-term music training may be associated with improvements in executive functions such as working memory, inhibitory control, and cognitive flexibility, which in turn are associated with academic achievement in some contexts. For example, “longitudinal imaging and behavioral studies demonstrate neural and cognitive benefits of music training in school-aged children, with evidence of improvements in inhibitory control and development of related brain networks over time”⁵.

“Meta-analytic and longitudinal perspectives suggest that the strength and direction of these effects may depend on factors such as duration of training, age of onset, quality of instruction, participation, and the presence of confounding variables (e.g., socioeconomic status, prior ability). Some studies report moderate effects on specific performance functions and general domain skills, while others emphasize domain-specific musical outcomes and motivational mechanisms as more important mediators”⁶.

A key feature of the research is that while music engagement can be associated with cognitive benefits, duration, intensity, and learning context (outside the classroom versus formal schooling) modulate these associations. In addition, some impressive work suggests the mediating role of factors such as motivation, self-awareness, and metacognition in explaining how music engagement impacts broader educational outcomes.

Engagement in music education, including out-of-class activities, is associated with motivational beliefs and self-regulation. “Research in the context of music education suggests that engagement is directly related to performance outcomes and is mediated by metacognitive factors such as cognitive confidence and self-regulation strategies. This highlights the importance of developing metacognitive skills alongside technical training in out-of-class programs”⁷.

Teacher training and professional development of extracurricular music teachers affect outcomes. Research shows the importance of preparing teachers to integrate instrumental technique with ensemble management, repertoire development, and didactic approaches appropriate to the typical extracurricular group setting. The literature “emphasizes that quality

³ Martin, Andrew, et al. "Interpersonal Relationships, Motivation, Engagement, and Achievement: Yields for Theory, Current Issues, and Educational Practice". *Review of Educational Research*, vol. 79, no. 1, 2009, p. 327-365. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654308325583>

⁴ Davydova, Alexandra, et al. "Manifestation of Professional Interest in Junior Students of Pedagogical College". *Bulletin of Kemerovo State University Series Humanities and Social Sciences*, vol. 2019, no. 4, 2019, p. 302-308. <https://doi.org/10.21603/2542-1840-2019-3-4-302-308>

⁵ Hennessy, Sarah, et al. "Effects of Music Training on Inhibitory Control and Associated Neural Networks in School-Aged Children: A Longitudinal Study". *Frontiers in Neuroscience*, vol. 13, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnins.2019.01080>

⁶ Pauly, Rinu, et al. "Music Education and Cognitive Development: A Longitudinal Investigation of Musical Training Effects on Executive Function and Academic Achievement". *International Journal of Arts and Liberal Studies (Ijals)*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2026, p. 13. <https://doi.org/10.63090/ijals/3108.1673.0009>

⁷ Zhang, Jieru, et al. "Music engagement, metacognitions, and performance outcomes: an empirical investigation among Chinese advanced music students". *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol. 16, 2025. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2025.1712501>

teacher training is associated with higher student outcomes in both musical and non-musical areas.”⁸.

Given the diversity of extracurricular offerings, policies and practices need to balance the intensity of engagement with student well-being and time management⁹. A number of studies have linked extracurricular experiences, including participation in the arts, to academic outcomes, although the evidence is mixed. Some evidence suggests that sustained engagement in music may lead to higher school performance and broader academic achievement, although this relationship is moderated by many factors, including socioeconomic status, parental involvement, and the overall school climate. Extracurricular activities may contribute to the development of a professional identity, motivation, and engagement with learning, which may contribute to academic achievement in the long term.

“Experimental and quasi-experimental studies of music education and cognitive development suggest potential benefits in executive function and mathematics performance, with some studies suggesting domain-general gains when exposure to music is prolonged and well-integrated with the quality of instruction.”¹⁰. The evidence base cautions against overgeneralizing across contexts; differences in research design, measurement, and participant characteristics lead to different conclusions. Nevertheless, a convergent theme is that extracurricular music engagement, when framed within supportive educational practices, can contribute to a broad range of educational and developmental goals beyond musical proficiency.

Extracurricular music lessons are multifaceted learning experiences that go beyond the acquisition of musical skills. The body of evidence converges on several key themes: extracurricular music fosters social interaction and prosocial behavior; sustained engagement can support executive function and, in some cases, academic achievement; psychological factors such as motivation, self-efficacy, and metacognition mediate these effects; and high-quality pedagogy and program design are essential to realizing the broad developmental potential of these activities. Although empirical results vary depending on the context and methodology, the main conclusion is that well-structured extracurricular music programs, supported by qualified teachers and aligned with broad educational goals, can contribute to the all-round development of a child and a lifelong engagement with the arts.

Extracurricular music classes are the most convenient and natural pedagogical space for effective music therapy activities in the process of working with students of the “Music Education” direction in higher education institutions. Because extracurricular activities create a wide range of opportunities for freer communication, voluntary participation, creative experimentation and reflection; these factors are directly compatible with the mechanisms of action of music therapy. The following is a detailed description of the role of extracurricular music classes in music therapy work.

⁸ Ільчук, Л., et al. "Contents Of Methodical Training Of Future Teachers-Musicians For The Use Of Bell Ringing Means In Professional Activity". The Scientific Issues of Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University Series Pedagogy, no. 2, 2021, p. 60-69. <https://doi.org/10.25128/2415-3605.20.2.9>

⁹ Carmona, Jazmín, et al. "Teacher Perception about Excessive Amounts of Extracurricular Activities that Interfere with Regular Classes". Revista Educación, 2019, p. 21. <https://doi.org/10.15517/revedu.v44i1.34531>

¹⁰ Wetter, Olive, et al. "Does musical training improve school performance?". Instructional Science, vol. 37, no. 4, 2008, p. 365-374. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11251-008-9052-y>

One of the most important conditions in music therapy is that the participant feels safe, free and in a non-judgmental environment. Extracurricular activities (clubs, studios, circles, creative laboratories) create just such an environment: here the student feels less pressure from “exams” or “ratings”, and expresses his feelings more freely through musical expression. As a result, therapeutic results such as emotional relaxation, reduction of internal tension, and enhancement of positive mood appear more quickly.

In higher education, students face many stressors: academic workload, stage performances, performance demands, personal problems, and adaptation processes. When elements of music therapy are used within extracurricular music classes, students develop emotional balance, stress tolerance, and self-management skills. This has a positive effect not only on personal well-being, but also on academic performance.

Music therapy often helps to express feelings that are “hard to express” through musical images. In extracurricular classes, the student:

describes his experiences from the work he has listened to;

through improvisation, he transforms his internal state into “sound”;

through musical dialogue (question-answer improvisation), he feels himself and others.

All this enhances reflection: the student learns to find internal answers to questions such as “how am I feeling right now?”, “what is bothering me?”, “how did music calm me down?” As a result, music therapy becomes a tool for personal growth. Ensemble or choir activities are often found in extracurricular activities, and this is a very powerful resource in music therapy. Singing/playing in a group: through “breathing together” and “being in the same rhythm”, increases emotional synchrony, enhances the feeling of social support, reduces feelings of loneliness and social anxiety. This is especially effective for first-year students or those with adaptation problems, as well as students with low self-confidence.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the organization of music therapy work in extracurricular activities has an important theoretical and pedagogical value in stabilizing the psycho-emotional state of students, developing their aesthetic taste and revealing their creative potential. The educational and psychological impact of music serves to form a positive mood in students, reduce stress and emotional tension, and increase their social activity.

The use of music therapy elements in extracurricular activities helps to develop students' independent creative activity, form teamwork skills, and expand their artistic and aesthetic outlook. Therefore, the theoretically based organization of music therapy work is of great importance as an effective pedagogical tool that enriches the educational process and ensures the comprehensive development of students.

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