

## Music as a therapy to students' mental health

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**Abstract:** Our mental health is essential, affecting all aspects of our lives. If we struggle to overcome our stress, anxiety, and depression, we are likely distracted from doing well in our respective daily life activities. Relating mental health to education is essential, as most students nowadays are easily distracted by life problems. This study examines the beneficial effects of music therapy on the student's mental health, and knowing the root of such issues and investigating feasible remedies is essential. One cannot overlook the impact of music on educational environments. It is also one way to deal with the demands of other issues, anxiety, or despair. Apart from keeping concentration and control, music helps students do better academically. This study relied on data mining conducted from several studies across various countries and continents to investigate the effect of music on different psychological features of the students. The existing research studies shared typical results and led the researcher to conclude that music is an effective tool to cope with stress, anxiety, and depression and even helps improve students' academic achievement. Music is often used as a recreation method, but later, we know music is a potent tool to help someone cope with mental health problems like stress, anxiety, and depression. Choosing the right genre of music according to mood and feelings will help us to overcome such emotional issues. The genre of music is crucial since some genres, like techno and heavy metal, can worsen our emotional state rather than help us to become calm and relaxed. Music not only alleviates stress, anxiety, and depression. It also allows students to perform well in class and improve their academic performance, as music gives the brain a sense of focus and relaxation.

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## INTRODUCTION

Human beings have a mind-body connection. It means our mental, physical, and social health affect each other. Mental health is essential for students because it impacts their learning and participation in school. A student's mental health affects their academic performance. Good mental health prepares students for learning. Higher self-esteem and motivation to achieve educational goals are common among them (Marshall-Seslar, A. 2023). It is a leading factor in determining life satisfaction and quality. A complex and prevalent psychological issue among university undergraduate students in both developed and developing countries is poor mental health (Pedrelli, P. et al., 2015). An individual can be significantly impacted by the pressures of academic life, social expectations, and the demands of transitioning to maturity. Prioritizing mental health in the lives of students who experience academic and relationship difficulties is crucial (Konecctrella Team, 2024). Students with disorders like depression and anxiety are susceptible to experiencing academic challenges and resistance to school-related

activities. It involves a lack of interest in pursuing passions and planning for the future, poor relationships with peers and instructors, and minimal engagement in the classroom. It is also difficult for them to retain new information and recall previously learned information due to the impact of anxiety and depression on their working memory.

Consequently, their learning is also impacted. Anxiety and depression impede academic advancement and promote underachievement. IQ and achievement exams have lower scores for students who experience a higher level of anxiety than their peers (IBCCE, 2019). NYU conducted a study that revealed that 49% of students endure tension as a result of their academic responsibilities daily. Depression and anxiety are associated with an inability to manage stress (NYU, 2011). Social connections are frequently established during school, and although many of these relationships are beneficial, they can also lead to conflict and distress. Depression is commonly associated with bullying, rejection, and social isolation. Low self-esteem and lack of adequate social support are common predisposing risk factors among students. It is essential to identify that the efforts towards academic excellence lead to low self-esteem almost invariably, and low self-esteem is a risk factor for depression. Above all, depression can be influenced by a variety of exposures that include genetic predisposition, life events, other substance use disorders, and neurological changes, among others (Harris, L., 2023).

Music is a universal tongue that profoundly affects the human brain. It can be emotional, improve memory, or even soothe the brain. Studies show that listening to music and creating triggers signals that influence mood and cognitive processes, which alleviate anxiety and hopelessness (Chanda & Levitin, 2013). It is helpful for students as music is a coping mechanism during trying times, allowing them to work through emotions and deal with psychological stress (de Witte et al., 2020). Silverman (2020) highlights the therapeutic role of music in dealing with personal problems and developing resilience among students. This role concerns the environment and life. Music may also give students noninvasive ways of coping with stressors, such as academic pressure and peer influence, so that they can control their feelings appropriately. Some of its applications in the educational sector have resulted in positive research outputs, such as improved attention, increased motivation, and a more conducive learning environment. Indeed, research indicates that rhythmic music aids attention and improves academic performance, while lyrical and melodic music works as an emotional locker room (Rickard et al., 2018). These effects underscore the benefits of incorporating music therapy in educational environments for mental health. In connection, this study investigates addressing students' mental health by establishing the problem's pervasiveness, examining the impact on the lives and well-being of students, and identifying factors that impact their mental health through music. Music therapy has been considered an innovative modality for treatment and has been discovered as a valuable intervention for cognitive issues and strengthening students' emotional resilience.

Along with this, it concerns the symptom-reducing effects of stress, anxiety, and depression, but also for emotional well-being and resilience. By doing so, it seeks to contribute to the growing body of evidence supporting the integration of music as a therapeutic and educational tool in addressing the mental health needs of students. Ghetti (2022) notes that music therapy, an expanding discipline, uses music to address individual needs—physical, emotional, cognitive, and social—and has demonstrated the ability to enhance mood, reduce stress, and foster feelings of closeness.

The paper examines the concerns over student mental health as they face various difficulties, including academic pressure and social and personal issues, which, if not mitigated, will impact psychological health, educational performance, and interpersonal relationships, which have been increasing in prevalence among students over the last few years and have impaired their academic performance, interpersonal relationships, and overall

general well-being. Researchers have identified music therapy as a valuable and non-aggressive among the many suggested measures to tackle such problems. It is found that music therapy, defined as the systematic and empirically supported use of music to promote specific outcomes, decreases stress, increases self-soothing, and builds students' strengths (Silverman, 2020).

#### *Statement of the problem*

The study will investigate how music therapy influences the students' mental health in terms of personal and academic aspects.

Specifically, this study aims to answer the following objectives:

1) Examines the impact of music on improving one's emotional being.

It tackled how music helps students improve their emotional well-being from all their struggles.

2) Determine the effects of music on combating students' anxiety, stress, and depression.

3) It seeks to show how music alleviates anxiety, stress, and depression in students.

4) Explores the benefit of music to improve student's academic performance.

It examines the effects of music on helping the students to do better in their respective educational outcomes.

## METHODOLOGY

#### *Research design*

This study employs a data mining approach to synthesize and analyze existing studies and research conducted across various countries and continents. By systematically reviewing and integrating data, the research aims to understand the potential of music therapy in alleviating mental health issues among students. The study examines how music therapy, through active and receptive activities such as songwriting, playing instruments, and listening to music, affects students' ability to manage stress, anxiety, and depression. Additionally, the research seeks to explore the relationship between music therapy and academic performance by evaluating its impact on focus, emotional well-being, and overall mental resilience.

#### *Locale of the study and respondents*

The research does not focus on a specific geographical locale or set of respondents but rather integrates data from a wide range of studies conducted internationally. This global perspective provides a comprehensive understanding of how music therapy affects students' mental health and academic performance in various cultural and educational settings. The respondents in these studies include students from different age groups, educational levels, and cultural backgrounds, ensuring a diverse and inclusive exploration of the subject matter.

#### *Research instruments*

The study utilizes secondary data derived from existing research, including questionnaires, surveys, observation records, and case studies. These instruments provide insights into the effects of music therapy on students' emotional well-being, anxiety, stress, and academic performance. The data is categorized and analyzed to identify patterns and draw conclusions about the effectiveness of different types of music therapy and genres of music in addressing mental health challenges and enhancing educational outcomes.

### *Data analyses procedure*

The data analysis involves categorizing and synthesizing information into key themes: the effects of music on emotional well-being, its role in reducing anxiety and stress, and its impact on academic performance. Thematic analysis is applied to extract meaningful insights from the data, which are then interpreted to highlight the therapeutic potential of music. The findings are contextualized within the broader framework of educational and mental health interventions, providing evidence-based recommendations for integrating music therapy into academic settings to support student well-being and success.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### *Effects of music on the emotional being of the students*

Music has a unique way of helping us feel and talk about our thoughts without fear. Mindfully (lowering nervousness, worry, and restlessness) and physically (slowing down the heart rate, blood pressure, and stress hormones), it eases stress and anxiety. (Conti, G. & Sloan, A., 2024) say that it gives you energy and makes you stronger and more motivated. It makes students feel awful about themselves. It allows students to share their feelings, deal with stress, and improve their mood. Studies have shown that listening to soft music lowers cortisol levels in the body, which can help students deal with worry and anxiety better (Saarikallio & Erkkilä, 2007). Also, studies have shown that music therapy makes people stronger emotionally and helps students deal with complicated feelings in a safe space (Garrido et al., 2019).

In Western Cape, South Africa, music can help Western Cape students regulate their emotions because it gives them a safe way to express themselves, lowers stress, and makes them feel like they belong (Western Cape Government, 2024).

In Poland, polish students frequently cope with stress by listening to music, participating in physical activities, and interacting socially. Listening to music is a method through which students effectively control their tension levels because it offers an emotional release and helps them relax. Talking with close friends or family members is most relevant to the emotional well-being of students. It creates a strong support network that combats feelings of isolation and hopelessness. Also, endorphin release and general mood improvement were revealed as the most important strategies for combating suicidal ideation if students participate in sports such as cycling, running, and swimming (Grabowski et al., 2020).

In South California, writing songs is suitable for both parts of the brain, as it helps to understand and control emotions and brings up painful memories and feelings (Lowe, D.,2019).

In Argentina, students use avoidance-based emotion regulation to deal with their feelings by detaining their attention from upsetting feelings and events. Individuals can briefly escape negative emotions by engaging with music, which reduces emotional discomfort (Pérez-Aldeguer and Fiorito,2023).

In the United States of America, music is a great creative tool through which students express their emotions and ideas. It fosters self-expression, allows students to express feelings and thoughts that language cannot easily describe, and enhances creativity and individuality (Hallam, 2010).

### *Similar aspects*

Mental health can enhance social connections and relationships with family, colleagues, and peers (Konecctrella Team.,2024). Countries mentioned above have common findings that music can benefit individuals, especially students, by helping them control, understand, and regulate their emotions during difficult times. Music plays a familiar role in students' lives and is an effective coping mechanism for improving oneself.

### *Advantages*

The four countries (Western Cape, Poland, Southern California, Argentina, and the USA) showed similar aspects of music to students' emotional well-being and advantages, such as music helping students express their emotions and ideas. Music reduces emotional discomfort and escapes from negative emotions (Pérez-Aldeguer and Fiorito, 2023). Music also creates emotional release and relaxes students (Grabowski et al., 2020).

### *Effects of music on student's anxiety*

Music effectively relieves anxiety, especially for students bearing academic and social pressures. Thoma et al. (2013) say that music's rhythmic and melodic sounds help bring about a soothing sensation by reducing cortisol, a stress hormone while relaxing. De Witte et al. (2020) also demonstrated that participating actively in music therapy- playing instruments or actively engaging in group music-making - may develop better emotional regulation and decrease anxiety in schools and educational settings. Therefore, the students can engage more toward greater concentration, emotional equilibrium, and mental well-being.

In the United Kingdom, music has the potential to alleviate anxiety and promote a tranquil state of mind, which can be particularly beneficial for individuals who are afflicted with stress-related disorders or anxiety (Lincoln Jazz Cafe, 2023).

In the Western Cape, South Africa, music provides solace, particularly during periods of anxiety and isolation in the Western Cape region of South Africa (Engelbrecht, S.H.,2023)

In Turkey, listening to music and having a tranquil environment has had beneficial effects on students' anxiety levels (Aksoy, B., & Ozturk, L. 2024).

In Southern California, music can boost stress relief, help regulate emotions, and improve test anxiety among students. To this end, Linnemann et al. (2015) argue that music interventions have maximized cognitive functioning and enabled concentration among students to face exams with positive confidence and reduced anxiety levels. It can be put up from a more culturally diverse setting to incorporate music that speaks and reflects the backgrounds of most students in a culturally rich region, like Southern California, which can make its therapeutic effect even more impactful.

In Michigan, music dramatically minimizes stress and anxiety among students. It has been proven to help establish a soothing environment, promote an improved mood, and regulate emotions. Listening to relaxing music can lower physiological stress markers such as cortisol concentration and heart rate, thus being a stress management tool for individuals in educational institutions (Thoma et al., 2013).

In the United States of America, music can have a calming effect, helping students manage anxiety, depression, and emotional challenges. Listening to music can enhance mood, improve focus, and boost motivation, essential for academic success(Afterschool Music Academy,2023).

### *Similarity*

The two typical elements that have a significant impact on people's morale are stress and anxiety (Wang C. et al., 2021). These develop when individuals cannot control both their internal and external feelings. Long-term exposure to stress can damage the psychological health of a person as it may cause a variety of psychological disorders, like depression in the person (Schimelpfening N. 2021). Existing studies from countries like the UK, Western Cape, South Africa, Turkey, South California, Michigan, and the USA showed that music reduces and manages students' stress; this means that music can be an effective tool to combat anxiety and anxiety, especially if there's no one to talk to or share our problems and struggles. Mental health disorders, including anxiety and depression, are less likely to develop in students who prioritize their mental health and with the help of music as a coping mechanism (Konecctrella Team, 2024).

### *Advantages*

The data collected indicate that music reduces the levels of stress, anxiety, and depression among students. Additionally, it helps students prepare for their exams due to the sense of concentration and focus it creates. Music, therefore, reduces physiological symptoms of stress, such as cortisol levels and heart rates, and is thus helpful for stress management among people with educational backgrounds (Thoma et al., 2013). Music helps give a calming effect whenever someone is struggling, enhances mood, improves focus, and boosts motivation, which is essential for academic success (Afterschool Music Academy, 2023).

### *Music improves the academic performance of students*

Prioritizing one's mental health can result in improved academic performance by enabling students to more effectively manage stress, anxiety, and depression (Konecctrella Team, 2024). Music is essential as it allows students to stay mentally stable for longer for optimum results that benefit learning and academic attainment. It has a significant role to play in improving students' academic performance. Listening to music creates an ideal learning environment by making students less stressed and more focused on study tasks and examinations (de Witte et al., 2020). The most notable aspects are increased abilities like spatial-temporal Reasoning, language processing, and working memory, which strongly correlate to academic success, as observed in participation in musical activities involving instrument playing or singing (Schellenberg, 2006).

In Spain, music is excellent for controlling and reducing tension before tests and has also shown increases in academic achievements in Spain (Chen G. et al., 2019)

In India, listening to music while studying had a beneficial impact on student's academic performance and concentration (Indira et al., 2018)

In China, the psychological well-being of students is enhanced by music education, which in turn enhances their academic performance (Jiang, 2024)

In Finland, a school setting, the results indicate that the consumption of music that students have personally selected may be a cost-effective and efficient approach to improving their emotional well-being, motivation, and concentration (Vigl, J. et al., 2023)

### *Similarity*

Listening to music supports self-regulation, cognitive and intellectual development, literacy, and language. Regardless of age, students can continue to benefit from music to help their

academic performance (Schempp, T. 2024). It is proven that listening to music relieves students from stress and allows them to focus on their studies (Antony, M., 2018). The data above commonly finds that music not only helps to reduce stress, anxiety, and depression but also promotes concentration and focus to enhance students' academic performance.

#### *Advantages*

Interaction with the benefit of music increases the quality of attention and concentration. Universities like Stanford have conducted studies showing that brain regions related to attention, prediction, and updating memory are activated when listening to music. Stanford Medicine says these cognitive processes are essential to learning and success because they help people make sense of and remember information (Rumsey, A., 2024). The findings from the existing studies showed that music is compelling as it not only alleviates stress, anxiety, and depression but also helps students to be prepared in the learning process, grasp learning information from the teacher or source, and improve their academic performance.

#### *Distinct aspects*

In the Philippines, exploring diverse themes in contemporary songs enriches students in the Philippines' understanding of the multifaceted dimensions of mental health, as music resonates profoundly with their lived experiences and cultural context. In their academic and personal lives, students frequently encounter tension, self-worth, loneliness, and hope, addressed in contemporary songs (Garcia, L.P & Santos, A.M. 2022). In Ohio, USA, it is well established that hearing Mozart's music has led to a rise in cognition in young children and decreased psychological tension, especially in Ohio, United States. It parallels the so-called "Mozart Effect," which is well documented, where listening to classical music enhances problem-solving and spatial-temporal Reasoning (Rauscher et al., 1993).

In contrast, in Germany, listening to techno and heavy metal music often features unpredictable changes, high volumes, and fast tempos, which can cause the nervous system to become overstimulated. Increased heart rates, elevated tension levels, and, in severe cases, life-threatening arrhythmias may result from this overstimulation. By lining up, we have shown our natural bodily rhythms, and studies have shown that listening to classical and meditation music can help us concentrate and feel better. Chaotic types of music, on the other hand, can throw off these beats, which can be bad for your health (Trappe, H.-J., 2010). In Western Cape, South Africa, studies showed that music is a way to control emotions, with different types of music connecting with students in various ways depending on their feelings and circumstances. Pop music became popular across multiple moods, while classical music became more associated with activities that needed focus or relaxation. On the other hand, gospel music seemed to bring comfort, especially when people were feeling alone or anxious (Engelbrecht, S.H., 2023).

#### *Advantages*

Listening to specific genres of music, such as Mozart, classical, pop, gospel, and contemporary music, will likely help students improve their mental health and reduce the risk of anxiety and depression. According to Engelbrecht, 2023, the music genre has a significant impact on our mood and feelings, as gospel music is likely listened to by people who feel alone and anxious, pop music for those with multiple moods, and classical music is often chosen by people to be focus and relax.

### *Disadvantages*

The data gathered for the distinct points shared common findings about music. Thus, it also showed that music genre matters in improving our mental state. People who struggle must choose the right music to listen to ease the pain they are experiencing because some genres, like techno and heavy metal, which have unpredictable changes, high volumes, and fast tempos features, will cause the nervous system to become overstimulated. It increases heart rates, elevated tension levels, and, in severe cases, life-threatening arrhythmias may result from this overstimulation (Trappe, H.-J., 2010).

## CONCLUSIONS

Mental health is an aspect of our overall well-being, so various studies exist to seek information and strategies to combat mental health to help students and individuals. Students often experience stress, anxiety, depression, and lack of motivation to strive harder to achieve better academic performance due to life aspects like peer pressure, tension on educational responsibilities, rejection, isolation, social connection, academic pressure, and other internal and external factors. As educators, we should check our students' progress, especially those who are distracted and experiencing some trouble, and offer some help to them. In general, music does not only keep us feeling connected; it also impacts one's mental state and helps individuals and students improve their emotional well-being, cope with stress, anxiety, and depression, and even improve the cognitive state of the learners to improve their respective academic performances. Music is often used as a recreation method, but later, we know music is a potent tool to help someone cope with mental health problems like stress, anxiety, and depression. Choosing the right genre of music according to mood and feelings will help us to overcome such emotional issues. The genre of music is crucial since some genres, like techno and heavy metal, can worsen our emotional state rather than help us to become calm and relaxed. Music not only alleviates stress, anxiety, and depression. It also allows students to perform well in class and improve their academic performance, as music gives the brain a sense of focus and relaxation.

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