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Motivation in Music Education: Students' Choices, Genre Preferences, and the Role of External Motivators Based on Self-Determination Theory

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION SUMMARY

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Music education plays a key role in personality development and the formation of social relationships. It is both a means of self-expression and a community-building force, closely linked to the cultural environment and individual motivation. The aim of this research is to provide a comprehensive picture of the factors influencing students' motivation to learn musical instruments and to explore students' attitudes and opinions towards different musical genres. Our research is the first national empirical study to investigate complex relationships: how parents, teachers and peers influence students' interest in learning musical instruments; and the genres they prefer; and how this can be interpreted within the framework of self-determination theory. A better understanding of motivational factors can help to make music education more effective and enjoyable for students.

In our quantitative research, we adapted the Motivation for Music Learning questionnaire (Comeau et al., 2019) in a pilot study, which was found reliable for the Hungarian sample. We supplemented the instrument with background questions, including whether students started learning an instrument on their own initiative or on the initiative of their parents. In our second quantitative measurement, we applied the MLM questionnaire to a larger sample. In addition, we used a self-developed questionnaire to compare the opinions of students (N=1159), both instrumental learners and non-learners, which helped reveal motivational differences. A novel feature of our questionnaire was the inclusion of pre-defined videos to explore students' attitudes towards musical genres. The qualitative phase of the study consisted of interviews with teachers, student teachers, parents and instrumental music students. The aim of the interviews was to gain a deeper understanding of the factors influencing motivation, such as teaching methods, family background and personal experiences. Interviews with experienced teachers and student teachers also covered career motivation.

In summary, our results show that parents, teachers and peers play a crucial role in maintaining motivation, but the proportion of incentives varies with age. Students who start to learn an instrument on their own initiative have stronger intrinsic motivation. However, intrinsic and extrinsic incentives interact. It is worth noting that intrinsic commitment to learning an instrument is not related to favoring the subject of vocal music, and no significant differences were found between boys' and girls' motivation. Pupils significantly preferred popular genres to classical or folk music, regardless of age group and gender. The interviews suggest that autonomy is achieved through choice. Competence is the second basic need where positive feedback is crucial. The final basic need is related to bonding and belonging, with communication being an essential element. Dropout can be attributed to a lack of support for these basic psychological needs. There are many factors behind the choice of teaching, instrumental learning and instrument choice, but one of the most important, apart from internal incentives, is the influence of family and parents. There is a difference between the career preferences of current teachers and those of future teachers.

Our complementary research approach enabled a complex investigation of the motivational background of instrumental learning, thereby yielding novel insights into the field of music learning motivation. Our findings may contribute to supporting music teachers and parents in motivating students, thus promoting long-term commitment to instrumental learning.