

PSYCHOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF SUCCESS IN LEARNING MUSIC AT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AGE

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Background

The paper presents results from a large Belgrade Institute of Psychology five-year longitudinal research project, which examined the role of personal and environmental variables in student success during the early stages of formal instrumental study.

Aims

The purpose of the study was to investigate relationships between relevant psychological characteristics, some attributes of family background and main components of music success in order to increase our understanding of music competence determinants at the beginning of individual instrumental tuition.

Method

The participants were 993 students (664 girls and 349 boys) aged 6-12, across five specialist music schools in Belgrade. Parents' sample included 512 males and 506 females. Numerous instruments were administered to gather the information about personal and socio-psychological characteristics of the subjects. Music aptitude, cognitive and psychomotor measures, motivational and personality attributes were included, along with family indicators of musical stimulation, music study encouragement and parental involvement while learning music. The criteria for musical

success covered a) aspects of scholastic achievement (instrumental and solfeggio mark, examination assessments, teachers' ratings of students' progress and program mastering) and b) performance success (public performances and competitions).

Results

The hypothesis of qualitatively different, yet mutually associated aspects of musical success is confirmed. It has been found that within ability domain, musical ones are most influential and related primarily to school achievement. Support given by mothers and fathers is different, but encouragement and involvement of both parents are closely associated with performance success. Motivational components are also strongly linked with music achievement, as well as with some students' personality traits relevant for achieving high levels of competence.

Conclusions

Together the results demonstrate that for higher levels of performance achievement the child's family background is crucial, followed by motivational aspects. Musical abilities are the third most necessary factor, but not sufficiently so. To turn music potential into efficacy, adequate motivation provided by the family and encouraging parents are critical.