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Musical Activities of Primary School Students and Parents' Engagement in Remote Music Learning during the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract: The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the learning process of music in primary school determined the topicality of the paper. The aim of the study is to define the musical activities of primary school students and parental engagement in remote music learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. Previous studies on students' motivation to learn music remotely, teachers' readiness to teach music online and parental engagement in musical activities of students were analysed, as well as an empirical study was carried out to achieve the study aim. The empirical study involved 162 (N=162) students aged eight to nine. A questionnaire was conducted to determine students' musical activities and parental engagement. The statements in the questionnaire were grouped into four study scales: parental engagement in students' musical activities; students' independent musical activities; music genres that students prefer; the language in which students sing or listen to music. Descriptive statistics, ANOVA, Cronbach's alpha, and Pearson coefficient were used to analyse the study results. The study found that the parents watch musical shows and listen to music with their children more than sing or play a musical instrument. By analysing the students' independent musical activities during remote music learning, it is determined that the dominant type of musical activity that both boys and girls prefer is listening to music. Primary school students use different types of music: folk music, classical music, and popular music. The study found that girls like folk music, while boys choose popular music genres. Students whose native language is not the official state language prefer to sing in both languages. However, they listen to compositions and dance to the music written in their native language. The study concluded that boys spend less time doing musical activities than girls, and that parental engagement in musical activities is essential for primary school students during remote music learning.

Keywords: musical activities, primary school student, remote music learning, music learning in Covid-19 pandemic.

Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has made remote music lessons an integral part of the pedagogical process. At the beginning of the pandemic, when schools were closed for several months in several countries, including Latvia, the teachers mostly kept in touch with students by organizing the music learning process remotely. The intensive acquisition of educational technology could ensure an effective music learning process online during the second wave of the pandemic. Remote music lessons require more student independence and greater parental engagement in the learning process than face-to-face lessons. Active participation in online music lessons and the ability and willingness to engage in musical activities can show the attitude toward music even without the teacher's encouragement and involvement in remote learning.

Primary school students need parental support to learn music remotely and online. A previous study also revealed that students in primary education are not yet fully prepared to learn music independently and remotely (Stramkale, 2021). A situation in which a child needs almost always learning support causes frustration among parents. Researchers, Lau, Li & Lee, found out that parents' dissatisfaction is related to the length of online learning and the number of tasks assigned. The student's ability to learn independently would increase the parental satisfaction scales (Lau et al., 2021). Similar data were obtained in Italy as researchers found that two-thirds of parents were dissatisfied with remote learning because they had to replace a teacher and put in an extra effort (Scarpellini et al., 2021).

The students, who are exposed only to online and remote learning opportunities due to the global pandemic, miss the traditional sources of motivation. A study conducted by Hadjikoou also shows that

students' motivation to learn music remotely decreased during the year (Hadjikou, 2021). Therefore, it is necessary to look for other opportunities that help motivate students in the primary education stage to learn music remotely. For example, to develop an interest in music. Tossavainess's & Juvonen's study revealed that the interest in music can be generated by the joy associated with the learning process of music subject and by explaining the importance and usefulness of music to the students (Tossavainess & Juvonen, 2015). It means that the teacher should think about what musical activities could make primary school students happy and help to understand the importance of music subject. Besides, the musical activities implemented in the music learning process has to be close to the activities that students prefer outside school. Several researchers also believe that music has faced significant challenges to bridge the gap between music in students' life and what happens at school (Hallam, Creech & McQueen, 2018). Therefore, the content of learning should be developed according to the student's individual musical needs (Mills, 2009) and the musical activities that seem personal and motivating to children should be implemented in the learning process (Dunn, 2014). A study conducted by De Vries revealed that students between the ages of 12 and 13 prefer contemporary popular music rather than other styles of music (De Vries, 2010). It is essential to think about new ways of teaching and learning to engage students in musical activities that are relevant to their life.

The Covid-19 pandemic has created not only challenges but also new opportunities for change. Implementing a new practice or change depends on the music teacher's ability to adapt to learning music remotely. Over the past year, several researchers have determined to study the readiness of music teachers to teach music remotely. In Spain, researchers Calderón-Garrido & Gustems-Carnicer interviewed 335 teachers to determine how they adapt to teaching music remotely. The study found that teachers prefer contemplative activities and communicate more with the students, and they believe there is a lack of methodological and material resources (Calderón-Garrido & Gustems-Carnicer, 2021). In turn, a study conducted in Hong Kong revealed that teachers experience stress, fear and anxiety when teaching music remotely. They are concerned about the effectiveness of music teaching, parental preferences, and the students' ability to adapt to learning (Cheng & Lam, 2021).

The aim of the study is to define the musical activities of primary school students and parental engagement in remote music learning during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Methodology

The study raised four research questions:

- RQ1: What is the involvement of parents in students' musical activities?
- RQ2: What musical activities do students engage in independently, and how often they do that?
- RQ3: What styles of music do students prefer when learning music remotely?
- RQ4: In what language do students listen to music and sing songs?

Participants. The study was carried out in Latvia between April 2020 and May 2021, when face-to-face classrooms often were replaced by remote learning because of the Covid-19 pandemic. The study involved 162 (N = 162) students (59% girls and 41% boys) aged eight to nine. The study sample has a common feature - the native language of the respondents is different from the official state language. The students who participate in this study attend a Latvian school that implement minority education programs.

Data Collection Instrument. A questionnaire was conducted to answer the research questions and achieve the aim of this study. The questionnaire contained 17 statements. The students were asked to rate each item on a four-point Likert scale as follows: 1 - never, 2 - rare, 3 - often, and 4 points - always. The internal validity of the study statements is high, as Cronbach's alpha factor scored 0.79. The items were structured on four study scales. The first scale identified students' musical activities that the parents were involved in. The parental engagement level in their children's musical activities is low if the score is from 1.00 to 2.00, middle if it is from 2.01 to 3.00 and high from 3.01 to 4.00. The second study scale described the students' musical activities that they participate in independently. The third one made it possible to define which style of music the primary school students prefer while learning music remotely. The fourth study scale identified the language in which the students listened to music and sang songs.

Data Collection Procedure. The participation in the questionnaire was voluntary and anonymous. Each student had the opportunity to refuse to participate in the study. Data were obtained frontally in small groups of 10-15 students each. There was no time limit to complete the questionnaire, and none of the students needed more than 15 minutes to complete it. The results obtained in the study were used in a summary form for study purposes only, which was presented to the respondents before completing the questionnaire.

Data Analysis. The study data were coded and entered into the SPSS 22 data processing program. The following descriptive statistics were calculated for the 17 statements and the four scales: mean value (M), standard deviation (SD) and standard error (SE). ANOVA was used to compare the differences between the two samples (girls and boys). The Pearson coefficient was calculated to determine the correlation between the established study scales.

Results and Discussion

The first study scale examined parents' engagement in the students' musical activities while learning remotely. There were no significant differences between the opinions of the boys and girls about the musical activities doing with their parents. Most parents with their children watch musical shows on TV ($M=2.39$, $SD=0.892$; $M=2.30$, $SD=1.074$) and listen to music ($M=2.70$, $SD=0.921$; $M=2.33$, $SD=1.163$). Both of these questionnaire items were rated by students at a middle level (Table 1). The correlation coefficient indicates that the students watch music on television with their parents if they enjoy listening to music ($r = 0.335$, $p < 0.01$) but attend musical events if they like singing ($r = 0.226$, $p < 0.01$). The students sing more with their parents when they enjoy dancing to the music ($r=0.301$, $p<0.01$). The study identified a link between joint parent-child listening to music and playing musical instruments ($r=0.326$, $p<0.01$). This is a positive sign, as making music with parents encourages students to involve in several musical activities during the music lessons. The children listen together with their parents to popular music more than other styles of music ($r=0.344$, $p<0.01$). Lum also, while studying the 1st-grade students' musical environment in the family, has concluded that children's songs are a small part of the repertoire, but popular music is the favourite (Lum, 2008).

Table 1

The engagement of parents in students' musical activities

Statements	Gender	M	SD	SE
We attend musical events together	Girls	2.08	0.918	0.132
	Boys	1.84	0.833	0.145
We watch music together on TV	Girls	2.39	0.892	0.128
	Boys	2.30	1.074	0.187
We sing together	Girls	1.91	1.007	0.145
	Boys	1.51	0.905	0.157
We listen to music together	Girls	2.70	0.921	0.133
	Boys	2.33	1.163	0.202
We play musical instruments together	Girls	1.75	1.021	0.147
	Boys	1.54	0.971	0.169

Both girls and boys assess activities that require music-making at a low level: singing ($M=1.91$, $SD=1.007$; $M=1.51$, $SD=0.905$) and playing musical instruments ($M=1.75$, $SD=1.021$; $M=1.54$, $SD=0.971$). If the students themselves do not play any musical instruments in their daily life, then the engagement of their parents in this activity is also low as well ($r=0.333$, $p<0.01$).

Primary school students need parental encouragement to start playing musical instruments. A Canadian music teacher also believes that teachers should encourage and motivate parents to participate in their children's musical education, as they do not have the skills needed to practice playing a musical instrument on their own at this age (Briscoe, 2016). Reeves has studied the reasons that encourage parents to support their children's desire to learn to play one of the musical instruments. The researcher concluded that parents do not associate music with the development of

valued character traits, the child's social or educational level. But the parents encourage children to play a musical instrument because they have talent, making music unite the family and forming a common cultural identity (Reeves, 2015).

Family involvement in the child's musical activities is needed when learning music happens remotely, as the student cannot meet face-to-face with classmates. A study conducted by Raschdorf, May & Searcy proved that the engagement of family members in the learning process promotes children's socio-emotional learning, self-confidence and social awareness competencies, responsible decision-making skills and positive relationship skills (Raschdorf, May, Searcy, 2021). Unfortunately, a study by Kreutz & Feldhaus revealed that parental engagement in musical activities decreased as their children became older and older, and it is determined not only by parents' income but also by the level of education. Only one third of parents were engaged with their children aged 7-8 in singing or playing musical instruments (Kreutz & Feldhaus, 2018). The data obtained in this study are also similar.

The second study scale found out what musical activities the primary school students engaged in independently while learning remotely. There was found a significant difference in the opinions of girls and boys about singing ($F = 13,659$, $p = 0.000$), about dancing to music ($F = 5.510$, $p = 0.021$), and how much time is devoted to doing musical activities by themselves ($F = 6.824$, $p = 0.011$). Girls sing ($M=3.06$, $SD=1.039$; $M=2.18$, $SD=1.073$) and dance to music ($M=2.68$, $SD=1.187$; $M=2.06$, $SD=1.170$) at home more independently than boys (Table 2). Furthermore, the boys are more interested in non-music activities, so they play musical instruments and listen to music in their daily life less than the girls ($M=1.54$, $SD=0.665$).

Table 2

Students' musical activities during remote music learning

Statements	Gender	M	SD	SE
I sing	Girls	3.06	1.039	0.150
	Boys	2.18	1.073	0.186
I listen to music	Girls	3.45	0.849	0.122
	Boys	3.12	0.892	0.155
I play one of the musical instruments	Girls	1.68	1.034	0.149
	Boys	1.60	0.863	0.150
I dance to the music	Girls	2.68	1.187	0.171
	Boys	2.06	1.170	0.203
I do musical activities every day	Girls	2.02	0.887	0.128
	Boys	1.54	0.665	0.115

The most form of musical activity that both boys and girls prefer to do during remote learning is listening to music ($M=3.45$, $SD=0.849$; $M=3.12$, $SD=0.892$), but the least one is playing any musical instruments ($M=1.68$, $SD=1.034$; $M=1.60$, $SD=0.863$). The study revealed that students who sing during remote learning also listening to music ($r=0.285$, $p<0.01$) and dance with musical accompaniment ($r=0.403$, $p<0.01$). The students are enrolled in music every day if they like folk music ($r = 0.313$, $p <0.01$), sing with their parents ($r = 0.344$, $p <0.01$) or attend musical events ($r = 0.386$, $p <0.01$).

Boys and girls prefer different musical activities. A study conducted by Ho found out that boys and girls often have a distinctive attitude towards learning music. Girls are more likely to interact with classical and popular music than boys (Ho, 2003). Listening to music as the most dominant type of musical activity is inherent in both boys and girls. Researchers from Israel figured out that the Covid-19 pandemic has not significantly impacted music listening habits, as most people still listen to music to adjust their mood (Ziv & Hollander-Shabtai, 2021). Listening to music is one of the most effective ways to regulate one's emotional state.

The third study scale identified the genres of music that students prefer while learning remotely. It was determined that there are no significant differences between the opinions of boys and girls about the

music genres they engaged in during remote learning. However, girls ($M=2.18$, $SD=1.084$) mostly like folk music, but boys ($M=1.93$, $SD=1.116$) prefer popular music (Table 3). It was figured out that children enjoy singing folk music in their native language ($r=0.233$, $p<0.01$), while they prefer to listen to folk music that is written in the official state language ($r=0.309$, $p<0.01$). If the students like folk music, they also like popular music ($r=0.378$, $p<0.01$), and parental engagements are more and more. There is a direct link between enjoying folk music and joint parent-child musical activities such as attending musical events ($r=0.329$, $p<0.01$), watching musical shows on TV ($r=0.351$, $p<0.01$) and listening to music ($r=0.296$, $p<0.01$).

Table 3

Music genres that students prefer during learning music remotely

Statements	Gender	M	SD	SE
I like folk music	Girls	2.18	1.084	0.156
	Boys	1.81	0.917	0.159
I like classical music	Girls	2.00	1.031	0.148
	Boys	1.66	0.889	0.154
I like popular music	Girls	1.87	1.044	0.150
	Boys	1.93	1.116	0.194

Which kind of music the students prefer is deeply determined by the music genres the teacher sings, plays and listens to together with children in the classroom. In primary school, music teachers use less popular music than classical and folk music. It is determined by the teacher's previous education and musical experience. These results are consistent with studies by several previous researchers, which indicate that the prospective music teachers primarily have the experience of playing and listening to classical music (Kruse, 2015), and their attitudes to popular music are defined by the musical experience of each teacher (Kim & Song, 2020). The researchers believe that popular music is more suitable for older students than younger students and is appropriate only in concrete classroom settings (Springer & Gooding, 2013). Furthermore, Han & Leung examined teachers' attitudes towards folk music and found that most are positive. The researchers think that the positive or negative attitude is closely associated with the personal musical preference of music teachers, their professional training, the responsibility of teaching and the labour market needs (Han & Leung, 2017).

The fourth scale determined the languages in which the students listened to music and sang songs. It was found that there is a significant difference in the views of girls and boys ($F = 12,339$, $p = 0.001$) about whether they like to sing songs in their mother tongue or prefer to sing songs written in the official state language. In general, the boys sing less than girls in both their mother tongue and the state language (Table 4).

Table 4

The language in which students listen to music and sing songs

Statements	Gender	M	SD	SE
I sing songs in my native language	Girls	3.62	0.703	0.101
	Boys	2.84	1.277	0.222
I sing songs in the state language	Girls	2.08	1.088	0.157
	Boys	1.75	1.118	0.194
I listen to music in my native language	Girls	3.68	0.624	0.090
	Boys	3.48	0.939	0.163
I listen to music in the state language	Girls	1.95	0.966	0.139
	Boys	1.81	1.130	0.196

On the one hand, those students who sing songs would sing in their mother tongue ($r = 0.342$, $p < 0.01$) and in the official state language ($r = 0.297$, $p < 0.01$), on the other hand, those who listen to music

prefer to do it in their native language ($r=0.354$, $p<0.01$). If the students enjoy dancing to music, they mostly choose music that is written in their mother tongue ($r=0.292$, $p<0.01$).

Conclusions

The first research question identified the parental engagement in students' musical activities as music lessons moved to remote learning due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Analysing the data obtained from the study, it is determined that parents often watch musical shows on TV and listen to music together with their children, but are rarely engaged in musical activities such as singing or playing a musical instrument. In daily life, the parents listen to popular music with their children more than other types of music and play a musical instrument together if the child has already learned the basics of playing the instrument.

The study concluded that the most dominant type of musical activity that boys and girls prefer to do independently during remote learning is listening to music. Both boys and girls spend little time playing any musical instruments. At the same time, it was found that there is a significant difference between boys and girls in the use of other types of musical activities. Girls sing and dance to the music independently more than boys. In general, the boys spend less time doing musical activities than girls.

The students use folks, classical and popular music while they learn music remotely. The study revealed that girls prefer folk music, while boys use more popular music genres. The study results indicate that the students like to sing songs in both native and official state languages. However, they prefer to listen to compositions and dancing to music that is written in their mother tongue rather than in their state language.

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