

The Importance of Preventive Pedagogy for Coping with MPA

~Attention to Moderation of Maladaptive Perfectionism~

Introduction

Music Performance anxiety (MPA) is a major problem that plagues many musicians. Given the professional nature of musicians, who must perform better under the gaze of an audience and in situations that cannot be corrected, which is unique to the performing arts, it is hard to avoid having anxiety about performing. In fact, musicians are reported to suffer more from anxiety than the general workforce (Vaag et al., 2016a), and more reported receiving psychotherapy (Vaag et al., 2016b). Some degree of performance anxiety can have positive effects, such as excitement and exhilaration in performance (Kenny, 2011), while severe MPA can lead to a decline in performance quality due to excessive tension (Kenny, 2011; Yoshie et al., 2009). Furthermore, in addition to such problems related to their careers as musicians, MPA can also threaten their well-being, and there is an urgent need for methods to deal with MPA. However, despite this situation, research on MPA logics and coping strategies is still in its formative stages (Kenny, 2011), and more research is needed.

This paper aims to discuss the importance of MPA prevention in educational settings, paying attention to the developmental mitigation of extrinsic perfectionism in students from childhood to adolescence. Furthermore, this paper also aims to provide suggestions for music education for MPA prevention and future research direction based on the limitations of this paper.

MPA Prevention

MPA can be treated with psychological approaches such as behavioural therapy, cognitive therapy, cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), pharmacological approaches, yoga, music therapy, and the Alexander technique treatment (Kenny & Ackermann, 2009). And these have been shown to be effective to some extent by research (Kenny et al., 2014). Reviews suggested that CBT (Brugués, 2011; Kenny, 2005) and cognitive and behavioural therapy (McGinnis & Milling, 2005) may be particularly effective, but methodological flaws in the research have not led to robust conclusions (Brugués, 2011; Kenny, 2005; McGinnis & Milling, 2005). While the effectiveness of various treatments has been studied to date, albeit still inadequately, addressing MPA is beginning to point out its limitations. First, MPA treatment has been only moderately effective (Kenny & Osborne, 2006). Also, even in other well-researched areas other than MPA, which is in

its formative stages, anxiety is rarely cured (Kenny, 2011). For these reasons, it has been suggested that prevention is the best way to deal with MPA (Brugués, 2011; Kenny & Ackermann, 2009; Kenny & Osborne, 2006) and studies showed that it should be done early on (Fehm & Schmidt, 2006).

Although performance anxiety in children has been overlooked, Ryan (2005) shows that children also experience it. Moreover, the symptoms tend to be more severe in young musicians than in older musicians (Biasutti & Concina, 2014; Butković et al., 2022; Kenny et al., 2014), with adolescent students already at the level of music students and professionals in terms of distress (Fehm & Schmidt, 2006) and their quality is similar (Kenny & Osborne, 2006). In other words, MPA tends to begin in childhood, and around adolescence, young musicians begin to have symptoms similar to those of adults, with younger musicians tending to have the most severe symptoms. Kenny (2011) also considers prevention and pedagogy as a set and points out that they are necessary for all young musicians and students. In light of the above, prevention is a very important way to deal with MPA and prevention should take place in early childhood or, at the latest, before adolescence.

Perfectionism

Focusing on perfectionism as a way to prevent MPA until around adolescence may be effective because while many studies have shown that perfectionism is a factor in MPA (Kenny, 2011; Kenny et al., 2014; McNeil et al., 2022; Sarikaya & Kurtaslan, 2018), one study reported that MPA symptoms and perfectionism are strongly correlated in adolescent students as well (Patston & Osborne, 2016). This study suggests that perfectionism is a major factor in MPA in adolescents, and it can be inferred that interventions for perfectionism are effective in preventing MPA through adolescence (Patston & Osborne, 2016). However, perfectionism is not necessarily a problem for musicians because it is multidimensional, and there are elements of perfectionism that work adaptively for musicians and elements that work maladaptively (Stoeber & Eismann, 2007). In fact, it has been said that maladaptive perfectionism leads to abandonment of coping and more severe MPA, while adaptive perfectionism encourages musicians to strive for, which can lead to better performance (Stoeber & Eismann, 2007; Stoeber & Otto, 2006). Thus, concentrating on the maladaptive aspects of perfectionism is probably more effective in managing MPA (Butković et al., 2022).

Perfectionism can also be categorised as personal standards perfectionism (PSP) and evaluative concerns perfectionism (ESP), which occurs due to pressure from others and the environment (Frost et al., 1990; McNeil et al., 2022). PSP refers to striving to

better oneself and setting higher goals, and has been found to have a positive impact, involving functional coping that leads to more effort and higher achievement (Kobori et al., 2011; McNeil et al., 2022; Stoeber & Eismann, 2007; Stoeber & Otto, 2006). On the other hand, ESP involves external factors such as expectations and evaluations from others (Frost et al., 1990; McNeil et al., 2022), and individuals with high ECP are more likely to engage in avoidant coping (McNeil et al., 2022). Although avoidance coping was found to moderate the link between ECP and distress (O'Connor & O'Connor, 2003), it did not moderate the relationship between ESP and symptoms in the MPA study (McNeil et al., 2022). Whether or not avoidance coping mitigates ESP needs to be tested by further research. However, in the long run, avoiding practice and challenge, and the low tendency to engage in problem-focused coping may not be a positive function for musicians who need to practice daily in order to deliver better performances. In conclusion, a certain degree of internal perfectionism is adaptive and has a positive function that contributes to performance improvement, while extrinsic perfectionism is dysfunctional, and avoidance coping has a significant negative impact. These tendencies seem to be similar for young musicians, Stoeber & Eismann (2007) reported that perfectionistic striving has positive effects, while external motivation is associated with negative reactions to not being perfect. Therefore, it seems that

moderating the development of extrinsic perfectionism, among other aspects of perfectionism, may lead to effective MPA prevention.

Pedagogy

The fact that external factors of MPA in children to adolescents mainly refer to teachers and parents, raises the possibility that educational policies and processes are cultivating perfectionism and associated MPA in children. In addition, MPA tends to increase with the length of musical experience (Patston & Osborne, 2016), which may suggest that current music education is fostering MPA. It has also been suggested that the accumulation of practice due to poor teaching methods can be a factor in MPA (Patston, 2014). It was reported that the performance environment and setting can influence students' anxiety, and that they are most nervous in front of teachers and professors (Fehm & Schmidt, 2006). Based on these facts, it is likely undeniable that for children, the educational environment and methods of teaching are external pressures that generate anxiety in the students.

To avoid cultivating perfectionism in students, it is first necessary to change the idea that a perfect performance is the only success in music (Jeong & Ryan, 2022). Specifically, a measure other than perfection could be established by emphasising expression, not just technique (Ryan, 2004), process, not just results (Patston & Waters,

2015). Establishing realistic goals for each individual (Patston, 2014) would prevent children from feeling undue pressure for unrealistic goals. In addition, more proactive MPA interventions, such as fostering metacognition in educational settings (Biasutti & Concina, 2014) and by cultivating self-efficacy (McPherson & McCormick, 2006; Sarikaya & Kurtaslan, 2018) has been proposed to promote adaptability to performance anxiety. Furthermore, many music teachers focus on teaching performance skills, but should also teach students how to deal with actual performance anxiety (Biasutti & Concina, 2014; Patston, 2014; Patston & Osborne, 2016; Stoeber & Eismann, 2007).

Under these educational policies, children should be given many opportunities to present their work in a secure, tension and criticism-free environment (Kenny & Ackermann, 2009). Specifically, it can be suggested that children be given opportunities to perform in public on a daily basis, either in the form of regular pair lessons or by presenting to other students at the end of a lesson. This is because, unlike other performing arts (drama and dance), music lessons are mostly one-on-one, and students usually have only a very limited number of people, such as teachers and parents, to listen to their performances. By providing these daily opportunities to perform to other students, they will gain the experience of enjoying playing in a tension-free environment.

In summary, it is important to keep in mind that music education should not be a place that puts external pressure on children. Specifically, it is important to establish an educational policy based on realistic goals that are not solely oriented toward perfection, to teach students how to cope with anxiety before and after performances, and to enhance a comfortable, low-tension performance environment. Such music education can be expected to reduce the student's sense of external pressures that give rise to maladaptive perfectionism, and this will help limit the development of non-functional perfectionism. Thus, by removing the dysfunctional aspect of perfectionism, which has been strongly correlated with MPA in adolescents, it may be possible to prevent MPA in adolescents.

Limitations

The first limitation of this study is that there is little literature available on perfectionism experienced by children, and further research is needed before firm conclusions can be drawn. While research suggests that external pressure has a more negative effect on the mental state of musicians, Jeong & Ryan (2022) suggest that intrinsic perfectionism may put more pressure on young musicians. At the same time, however, Jeong & Ryan (2022) also suggest that this internal pressure may be due to

internalisation of external pressure Thus, further research is needed to confirm this point.

A second limitation is that even if perfectionism in childhood and adolescence is alleviated, it does not necessarily mean that perfectionism will be alleviated in the future when one becomes a musician. This is because the elements implied by perfectionism may differ between professionals and amateurs because of the different concerns (Kenny, 2011) and required performance levels between professionals and students. In particular, this paper focused on perfectionism within the context of the student's educational environment. In the case of professionals however, the external factors are more critical, competitive, and public, and they also include the more significant factor of their own lives being affected by their evaluations. Therefore, even if one can mitigate extrinsic perfectionism during the growth process, it does not necessarily prevent extrinsic perfectionism or MPA in adulthood. Considering that perfectionism is multifaceted, there is a need for investigating the mindset about perfectionism by age groups, such as childhood (Jeong & Ryan, 2022), adolescence, college students, and professionals.

Finally, there is a need to examine the musical genres (Papageorgi et al., 2013), performance forms (Fehm & Schmidt, 2006), gender (Butković et al., 2022; Kenny et

al., 2014; Sarikaya & Kurtaslan, 2018), and their cultural background (Perdomo-Guevara, 2014) in order to make an informed conclusion, and this paper does not include those categories in its discussion. In addition, the seriousness of MPA in childhood to adolescence differed by musical genre (Nusseck et al., 2015). Therefore, MPA research that takes into account the impact of these distinctions on children and adolescent music students, and research on MPA and perfectionism is needed to consider MPA prevention.

Conclusion

The present paper argues that MPA prevention through educational interventions that pay attention to mitigating extrinsic perfectionism development during the pre-adolescent period is effective in dealing with MPA. As the rationale for this, first, this paper presented that MPA prevention from an early age is currently considered the most effective way to cope with MPA, as current treatments are not very effective and are difficult to treat once the disease has developed. Secondly, this paper focused on the factor of perfectionism, which was strongly correlated with MPA in adolescence, and discussed the possibility that the externalising aspect may have a negative impact on MPA, especially in the educational setting as a major external factor among students.

The discussion then focused on education as the main source of external pressure for students, and a proposal was made on the necessity of education that takes MPA prevention into consideration and what it should be, since the way music education is conducted may put external pressure on children. In addition, considering the closed, one-on-one lessons in music education, this paper suggested that creating opportunities for students to hear other students perform from their regular lessons may lead to the reduction of MPA. The degree of effectiveness of this approach should be verified through future research.

However, limitations exist in the present paper. As a premise, it is difficult to draw confident conclusions given the paucity of studies focusing on children. Also, while the present paper interpreted perfectionism due to extrinsic pressure as dysfunctional, there are studies that suggest the opposite, that self-initiated perfectionism is dysfunctional. However, since that study points to the possibility of internalisation of extrinsic pressure as a factor for self-induced pressure, future research on these points is needed to verify this. Furthermore, this paper discusses MPA without considering the factors of gender, cultural background, musical genre, and performance form, which are believed to influence MPA. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct a review that takes note of the differences after studies comparing these classifications have been conducted.

The present paper sheds light on the importance of discussing the nature of education for MPA prevention, which will contribute to further research on music education methods. In this way, it will contribute to the development of music students who will be more adaptable to performance anxiety in the future. This paper will also serve to reaffirm the importance of prevention, perfectionism, and music education elements within the larger theme of dealing with MPA and will contribute to improving the problem of MPA that plagues many musicians.

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