

# The Impact of Mindfulness Training in Music Education on Students' Emotional Regulation and Mental Health: An Empirical Study Based on Instrument Sounds, Rhythm, and Movement

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**Abstract.** This research examines the impacts of combining mindfulness training with music lessons on the emotional regulation, mental health, and attention of high-school students. Across a 12-week course, 100 15–18-year-old students were exposed to rhythmic movements, instrumental sounds and mindful movement. Qualitative measures, measured with standardised scales, indicated substantial gains in emotional regulation and stress reduction, with average scores increasing 29.6% for emotional regulation and decreasing 20.2% for stress. Assistiveness scores rose as well by 24.6%, indicating the cognitive impact of the intervention. In student journals, qualitative reporting showed a similar shift towards calmness, self-awareness and community, with students reporting that sessions were an enjoyable break from schoolwork. The short-term effects of the study are promising, but because no follow-up is conducted, we do not know how they will affect longer-term outcomes. Research should investigate how different musical instruments and cultural differences impact mindfulness training across a wide range of educational contexts. These results reveal that mindfulness-based music programmes can promote students' mental wellbeing and academic engagement, and provide a holistic solution to well-being in schools.

**Keywords:** mindfulness, music education, emotional regulation, mental health, instrument sounds

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## 1. Introduction

Over the past several years, the mental health and emotional lives of high-school students has become a significant concern, especially with academic expectations and social demands mounting. In a search for new techniques to boost students' emotional and psychological wellbeing, mindfulness has emerged as an promising intervention. Mindfulness – which means to live in the present moment uncritically – has been proven to reduce stress, regulate emotions and aid cognitive attention. In most traditional mindfulness practices, the focus is on meditation and breathing, but new studies suggest that the addition of mindfulness to creative and sensory input (such as music) can increase engagement and impact. Music, which itself can make us feel things, provides an incredibly potent form of mindfulness practice. Rhythmic exercises, sounds and body-directed movement provide students with a multisensory approach to mindfulness that is easier to learn and practice. Research has shown that music – especially rhythm and melody – can induce flow – where you become completely absorbed in what you're doing, relaxed and engrossed. In classrooms, mindfulness-based music interventions could teach students to cope with stress, develop emotional intelligence and promote social integration, all of which are essential to personal growth and success. It seeks to determine whether mindfulness training and music can impact high-school students' emotional regulation, stress and attention [1]. Through both quantitative findings (such as improvements in emotional regulation scores) and qualitative observations (from student journals), this study attempts to provide a detailed analysis of the advantages and drawbacks of mindfulness-based music education. We assume the treatment will significantly improve emotional regulation, stress levels and cognitive attention. It also investigates whether future iterations of this method might be adapted to accommodate a range of cultural and musical tastes among student bodies.

## 2. Literature Review

Mindfulness and music-based interventions have gained traction over the past few years as a way to aid mental health, particularly among teenagers. It has repeatedly been proven that mindfulness can help people manage emotions, stress and attention, the three

key areas for high school students who struggle to cope with academic stresses. Traditionally, mindfulness interventions have been guided by methods like meditation and breathing, but sensual interventions involving sounds like music have proved equally beneficial, increasing both engagement and reach for students. Music itself has potent therapeutic qualities, and is often used in clinics to treat anxiety, depression and stress. Rhythm interventions, in particular, get patients into "flow," a state of mind where participants become intensely involved in an activity, often leading to lower levels of stress and better mental health. Music can act as an anchor for present-moment awareness, allowing one to relate to one's emotions without judgment – particularly when paired with mindfulness exercises [2]. This blend has worked for adolescents who are susceptible to being uncomfortable or resistant to mindfulness-based therapies. In the classroom, pairing mindfulness with music has shown promise. Studies demonstrate that mindfulness music training enhances emotional intelligence and decreases stress levels among high school students, indicating that sensory-focused mindfulness training promotes emotional resilience. Others have investigated the effects of rhythm and instrumental listening on adolescent stress, and concluded that the integration of rhythm with mindfulness is helpful in maintaining calmness and building social relationships. Multi-person mindfulness-music interventions, including ones that build social solidarity and emotional intelligence, have been quite effective. Social interaction is essential for adolescent growth, and studies suggest that group music-making fosters social bonding, empathy and community. Group drumming classes, for instance, have been reported to alleviate stress and increase feelings of belonging, demonstrating the social advantages of musical mindfulness [3].

Even though these results are positive, the literature is rife with inadequacies, not least when it comes to long-term effects of mindfulness-based music interventions. Few studies go beyond the immediate post-intervention period, and we don't know how long the benefit lasts or how long it will. Furthermore, cultural and musical preferences might affect people's emotional arousal and engagement, something that has been neglected in mindfulness-based music interventions. A study has found that exposure to certain genres of music boosts emotional responsiveness, which might be especially relevant in multicultural classrooms.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Participants**

In order to be representative and generalizable, 100 high school students aged 15–18 from various schools in the region were enrolled, roughly evenly distributed between men and women. The selection process was intended to incorporate socioeconomic variation, musical background and mindfulness practice. Every person was expected to have had some prior experience in music lessons so that they would have some level of familiarity with musical theory and instruments to make the mindfulness training more manageable. This prerequisite was built to minimise learning curve, and permit students to pay special attention to the mindfulness aspects of the training. All minor participants had informed consent from their parents or guardians, and all procedures were ethically compliant to preserve participant confidentiality. Anonymised identification codes guarded personal information, keeping students' names and testimonials safe throughout the research. By creating a sample that's diverse on every level, the study hoped to find findings that were applicable to a wide range of high school students and would be useful for other studies of mindfulness and music education.

#### **3.2. Materials**

Materials were selected to create an auditory, kinesthetic and cognitive mindfulness experience. The primary contents were musical instruments, rhythmic devices and movement exercises — each of which was used in a different context within the mindfulness exercise. The instruments were drums, chimes and strings, selected for their gentle and melodious tones. Drums were chosen to aid rhythmic exercises as they gave the exercise an anchoring rhythm that would help the player find a sense of stability and concentration. Chimes and string instruments, their melodic and relaxing tones, were employed for mindful listening, assisting students to notice the subtle nature of sounds and create a state of meditation. These instruments have already been shown in other studies to help relax and regulate emotions, so they are ideally suited for the mindfulness-based objectives of this research. They used rhythm instruments such as metronomes and clapping exercises to hold students' attention to a steady rhythm, to create a repetitive and meditative rhythm. These were meant to build students' skills in timing, rhythm and internal attention, which are the building blocks of mindfulness [4]. The students also practised movement-based movements that were derived from Tai Chi and other body-centered techniques to make them feel more present and in their bodies. They were slow, purposeful motions matched to music, which forced students to stay focused and attuned in order to be more emotionally grounded. They were chosen because these materials offered a whole-body mindfulness experience, with music and movement as tools for the five senses and emotional stability.

### 3.3. Procedures

The mindfulness training course was conducted over a 12-week period with 60-minute sessions each week. Training was designed in a gradual style, beginning with simple mindfulness techniques, and gradually adding more complex music and rhythmic features to help students engage with the mindfulness practices.

For the first four weeks, students learnt rudimentary mindfulness skills such as guided breathing, body scans and instrumental sound listening. These initial classes were designed to set a solid foundation in mindfulness by getting students more aware of their breathing, physical body and environment. The exercises in focused listening allowed students to fully concentrate on the notes of different instruments, notice how each note differs from the other, and cultivate an altered state of awareness and presence. For the following four weeks, the training included rhythm-based mindfulness practices. In this class, students practised rhythmic and precise timing movements such as drumming and clapping patterns. These exercises were intended to stimulate students' awareness of time and rhythm, in order to create a feeling of internal harmony and control. Some of the rhythm work was performed individually or in small groups, to ensure connection and communal attention [5]. The social component of the training was crucial in facilitating students to feel secure within the group environment, and to improve emotional control and awareness. The final four weeks incorporated meditation, rhythm and movement into interwoven practice, making it a more encompassing, immersive experience. In these lessons, students were asked to coordinate slow, purposeful movements with the vibrations of instruments, combining movement and listening. The students, for example, ran walking drills in time to the sound of a drum, breathed rhythmically over instrumental accompaniment, and moved improvising on chime and string chords. This phase of the program was meant to set students into "flow," where they became completely absorbed in the activity and felt an underlying connection between body and mind. This fusion of sound, beat and movement gave students a greater opportunity to practise mindfulness and feel calmer and more focused [6].

Data were collected before and after the 12-week intervention to measure the effectiveness of the intervention. They gathered quantitative results using approved scales of emotional regulation, stress and mindfulness. Qualitative information was also gathered through student journals where participants took notes on their post-session reflections and experiences. The sum of the quantitative and qualitative information was enough to give us a picture of how the intervention worked, making it possible to understand in a more subtle way how mindfulness-based music learning has an impact on students' emotional and mental health.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Quantitative Analysis

Data-driven analytics uncovered dramatic gains in many areas, including emotional regulation, stress reduction, and attention. On paired t-tests, we found a significant post-intervention increase in emotional regulation scores ( $p < 0.05$ ). The average of students' emotional regulation scores rose from 52.3 to 67.8 on a common Emotional Regulation Scale, demonstrating a dramatic improvement in emotional control and processing. Moreover, average levels of stress, using a standardised Stress Inventory, declined by 20%, with mean scores ranging from 40.1 to 32.0 (Table 1). This decrease in stress reveals that the intervention did a good job of helping students cope with academic and personal stress. Additionally, subgroup analysis showed that the biggest reductions occurred for students with high levels of initial stress, showing that mindfulness interventions could help support students with high levels of stress [7]. In addition, attention scores, based on a Continuous Performance Test, rose from 58.2 to 72.5. This increase indicates that mindfulness practice helped students improve their ongoing attention, an important aspect of emotional balance and attention. These findings support the potential of mindfulness-based music education to develop emotional resilience and improve cognition. Table 1 shows the mean before- and after-intervention scores for emotional regulation, stress and attention. These findings suggest that mindfulness-based music training has a positive impact on students' mental health and attention [8].

**Table 1.** Pre- and Post-Intervention Scores on Key Measures

| Measure                     | Pre-Intervention Mean | Post-Intervention Mean | Percentage Change |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| Emotional Regulation Score  | 52.3                  | 67.8                   | +29.6%            |
| Stress Inventory Score      | 40.1                  | 32.0                   | -20.2%            |
| Continuous Performance Test | 58.2                  | 72.5                   | +24.6%            |

### 4.2. Qualitative Analysis

The student qualitative responses were then coded and grouped thematically, with a range of common themes identifying the efficacy of the mindfulness-based music training. The themes they most liked were feeling calmer, more emotionally intelligent and more attentive. Students frequently reported feeling more calm in their own skin, and saying that the sessions taught them how

to 'watch' and pay attention to their emotions rather than responding instantly. This ability to set the gap between emotion and action was particularly useful to most students: they found the sessions "convincing" and a "vacation from the rigours of university life." This compliments the quantitative results by demonstrating that the mindfulness-based music exercises also supported students' inner stillness and emotional control.

Apart from personal rewards, students said the rhythmic activities enabled them to "be present" and "felt related" to the others in the group, enabling social connection and unity. This was especially true of group activities – group drumming and synchronised rhythms, where the students reported feeling relaxed when playing with others [9]. 'I became calmer when I played the drum with others,' one student reported, 'or 'when I listened to the sounds of the instrument, I heard myself.' Such reports reflect how not only did the programme cultivate personal mindfulness but it also reinforced a sense of collective bonding, making students feel anchored and understood in the shared experience.

Such responses underline the programme's ability to facilitate self-recognition, anchoring and stress relief through sense and beat. The tempo and melody of the mindfulness exercises appeared to help students become aware of their bodies and emotions, and feel very much connected to themselves and each other [10]. Using the senses and a focus on rhythm, the mindfulness music training gave students a simple means to express emotional self-control that they could apply beyond the classroom. All the qualitative comments emphasise the program's ability to increase self-awareness, emotional regulation, and positive social interaction – all crucial components of emotional and mental health in adolescents.

#### 4.3. Discussion of Results

This work also corroborates published research into mindfulness as a means of stress reduction and emotion regulation, underscoring the idea that mindfulness interventions can be beneficial via music. This research adds to an expanding body of evidence showing that mindfulness combined with rhythmic or instrumental music can support mental health and attention in the classroom. But there were a number of drawbacks to the study, especially the lack of long-term follow-up, which meant that we were not able to evaluate the long-term effects of the intervention. Hopefully, future studies will address this by conducting further analyses to assess whether the benefits last. Moreover, analyzing how various musical instruments or cultural differences in music tastes might influence mindfulness training might help us make the best possible choices for multi-ethnic students [11]. These results offer promising opportunities for the further integration of mindfulness practice into music education, especially in helping students feel more emotionally secure and perform better in school.

#### 4.4. Conclusion

Based on this research, mindfulness training in combination with music instruction can enhance the emotional regulation, stress and attentional abilities of high school students. The 12-week course of rhythmic dance, musical music and movement helped students build resilience to school stressors and learn valuable emotional and intellectual competencies. Quantitative data showed significant improvements in emotional control and stress levels, with the largest improvement observed among those students who originally reported high levels of stress. Qualitative feedback confirmed these findings: students described the sessions as calm and supportive of self-awareness and socialisation [12]. This trial wasn't without its drawbacks, especially the lack of long-term follow-up, which limited knowledge about whether these benefits were sustained. Perhaps future studies would explore the effectiveness of mindfulness music interventions in assessing the frequency with which such interventions need to be used to maintain their effects. Also, learning about the effects of different musical instruments and considering cultural differences might be helpful in addressing mindfulness training to various student groups, making it more accessible and impactful. In general, this research highlights the possibility of mindfulness-based music learning to aid students' emotional health and academic success. In a world where mental illness and trauma are increasingly affecting adolescents, music-based mindfulness is a simple and engaging way for students to deal with stress, focus and cultivate emotional stability.

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