Article:
Caffull, Samantha and Waddington-Jones, Caroline (2025) Understanding the achievement goals of adolescent instrumental learners. Music education research. pp. 260-271. ISSN: 1461-3808

https://doi.org/10.1080/14613808.2025.2509972

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Music Education Research

Understanding the achievement goals of adolescent instrumental learners.

Submission ID	237355093
Article Type	Research Article
Keywords	Achievement goals, motivation, identity, adolescents, instrumental learning
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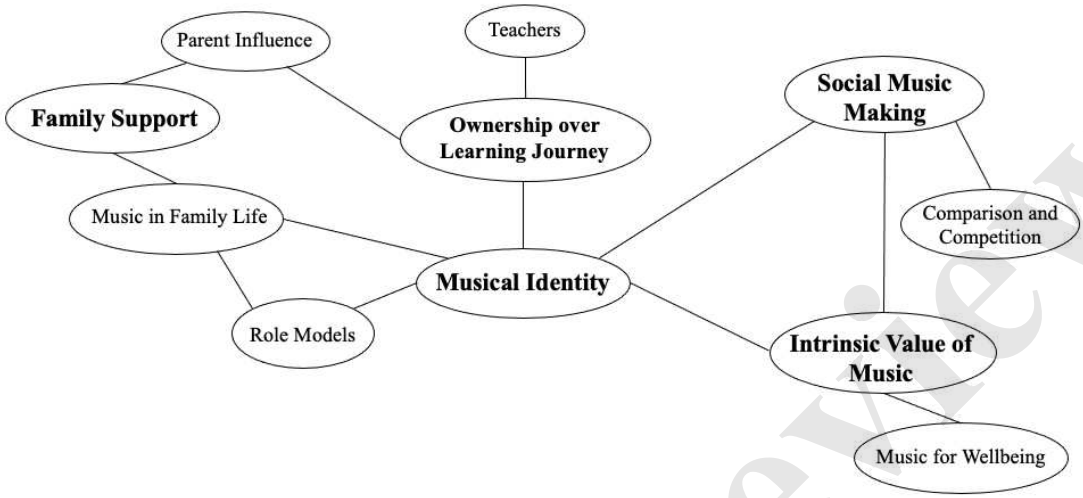
Figure 1. Thematic map based on inductive analysis, showing influences on motivation.



List of Figure Captions.

Figure 1. Thematic map based on inductive analysis, showing influences on motivation.

Table 1. 3 x 2 Achievement goal model (table adapted from Elliot, Murayama and Pekrun, 2011).

Mastery		***Performance***
Task-approach *Expand knowledge or skill.*	**Self-approach** *Improve performance in relation to self.*	**Other-approach** *Impress others or outperform peers.*
Task-avoidance *Avoid the loss of knowledge or skill.*	**Self-avoidance** *Avoid performing worse than past performance.*	**Other-avoidance** *Avoid disappointing or performing poorly compared to others.*

Table 2. Table of Participants.

Pseudonym	Year Groups[a]	Gender[b]	Lesson Type	Principal Study Instrument	Approximate standard on first instrument[c]	Other instruments played
Ellie	7	Female	Individual	Violin	Grade 1	No
James	8	Male	Individual	Drum Kit	Pre-Grade 1	Yes
Lucy	8	Female	Individual	Clarinet	Pre-Grade 1	No
Lewis	9	Male	Individual	Horn	Grade 5	Yes
Jane	9	Female	Pair	Trumpet	Grade 1	No
Ben	11	Male	Individual	Guitar	Grade 5	Yes
Faye	11	Female	Individual	Clarinet	Grade 5	Yes
Rebecca	12	Female	Individual	Violin	Grade 5	Yes
Tom	12	Male	Individual	Drum Kit	Grade 4	Yes

Note. [a] Age ranges for each year group in English schools are as follows: Year 7 (11-12); Year 8 (12-13); Year 9 (13-14); Year 10 (14-15); Year 11 (Year 15-16); Year 12 (16-17). [b] No pupils in this sample reported that they identified as non-binary. [c]Indicated as ABRSM grades.

Understanding the achievement goals of adolescent instrumental learners.

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Understanding the achievement goals of adolescent instrumental learners

Abstract

Instilling positive motivational beliefs in musical learners is vital to promoting long term engagement with music beyond the school years. This qualitative interview study explores the motivation of nine adolescent instrumental learners in an English school through the lens of achievement goal theory. Participants discussed experiences aligning with self-approach, other-approach, other-avoidance and task-approach goals. Thematic analysis identified a number of influences on achievement goals not yet fully explored in the achievement goal literature, namely family influence, peer influence, musical identity, ownership over learning and the intrinsic value of music. As well as illuminating the lived experiences of adolescent musicians, the findings of this study also provide new insights in achievement goal theory research by applying the 3 x 2 achievement goal model to adolescent instrumental learners. Implications for music educators seeking to promote longer-term musical engagement are recommended, notably in the provision of broad musical experiences to promote positive musical identities.

Key Words: Achievement goals, motivation, identity, adolescents, instrumental learning

Introduction

A common goal of many music educators is to develop a passion for music that will last beyond children's school years. In England, the opportunity to learn a musical instrument is recommended as a feature of every primary school pupil's music education (Department for Education 2022), but longer-term participation in instrumental learning has become less common during and beyond adolescence (Ruth and Müllensiefen 2021). Whilst learning an instrument is only one way in which children may engage with music education, this is an important aspect of the wider context of the concerning decline in the number of children studying music in English secondary schools (Bath et al. 2020). Various reasons have been proposed for this decline that are beyond music educators' control, including funding, school accountability measures, and the impact of Covid-19 (Underhill 2022). Many adolescents do, however, continue to learn an instrument through their teenage years, and music educators

may benefit from a fuller understanding of what motivates these instrumental learners, as they seek to sustain instrumental learning and promote long-term musical engagement and enjoyment among this population.

Understanding adolescents' motivations for instrumental learning

Over the last few decades, researchers have applied various theories of motivation to examine why pupils may persist with instrumental learning. Self-determination theory research has suggested that the satisfaction of basic psychological needs (autonomy, relatedness, and competence) positively impacts intrinsic motivation, practice time, intentions to continue learning, and musical achievement (Evans, McPherson and Davidson 2013; Evans 2015; Evans and Liu 2019; Freer and Evans 2019). Elsewhere, studies have proposed a relationship between self-efficacy, performance achievement and practice behaviours (McCormick and McPherson 2003; Clark 2010). Value beliefs about music can also influence motivation: a longitudinal study by Evans and McPherson (2014) found that children's initial intentions for how long they wanted to play an instrument predicted length of time learning. Parents can also impact motivational outcomes such as practice behaviours and persistence by providing behavioural and cognitive support (Creech 2010; 2014; Howe and Sloboda 1991).

One theory of motivation which has so far received less attention in research on musical learning is achievement goal theory. Achievement goal theory is centred around learners' perceptions of what defines future success, in contrast to other motivational theories which are more concerned with past experiences and how they impact motivation. Achievement goal theory therefore adds a broader perspective in understanding the motivations of instrumental learners. Dweck (1986) and Elliot (1999) originally conceived achievement goal theory as dichotomous, with learners motivated towards either performance or mastery goals. Learners with performance goals strive to appear successful in relation to others, whereas learners with mastery goals are task focused. Later revisions of the

achievement goal model have included approach and avoidance dimensions, and task and self dimensions of the mastery goal (Elliot, Murayama and Pekrun 2011). Table 1 shows the 3 x 2 achievement goal model.

[Table 1. 3 x 2 Achievement goal model (table adapted from Elliot, Murayama and Pekrun, 2011).]

Achievement goals and instrumental learning

The achievement goal a musician adopts may shape their music learning behaviours. Musicians who adopt a mastery goal are more likely to use strategies such as metacognition (Nielsen 2008; Miksza 2009), repetition and mental practice (Smith 2005), and practise for longer (Schmidt 2005). Mastery goals have also been more positively associated with performance achievement in some studies (Schmidt 2005; Lacaille, Whipple and Koestner 2005; Miksza 2009). Importantly, learners who hold mastery goals are also more likely to report longer-term commitment to musical learning than those with performance goals (Ng 2017; Miksza, Tan and Dye 2016; Tan and Miksza 2018).

Achievement goals can be influenced by a range of factors. Ng (2017) found that young musicians' enjoyment of music and experience of parental support were linked more closely with mastery than performance-approach goals. The role of the music teacher is also likely to influence achievement goals, based on research in other educational contexts (Lüftenegger et al. 2014; O'Keefe, Ben-Eliyahu and Linnenbrink-Garcia 2013), though this has yet to be measured empirically in music education settings. Enjoyment of music, parent support and teaching style might therefore be important factors influencing achievement goals, though further research is needed to understand these influences more fully. The 3 x 2 achievement goal model has not yet been applied to instrumental learning, and previous

research on the achievement goals of instrumental learners has predominantly focused on younger children or university music students. Understanding the achievement goals of adolescent instrumental learners in more depth could provide valuable insights for music educators as they seek to sustain and enhance the motivation of young musicians.

The present study explores the achievement goals of nine adolescent instrumental learners in England through the lens of the 3 x 2 achievement goal model. There were two research questions:

1) What are the achievement goals of adolescent instrumental learners?
2) What may influence the achievement goals of adolescent instrumental learners?

Achievement goal research in music education has so far primarily used quantitative self-report Likert-scale methods such as the 2 x 2 Achievement Goal Questionnaire (e.g. Miksza 2009) and the Patterns of Adaptive Learning Scales (Smith 2005). For this study a qualitative approach was used to explore adolescent musicians' experiences in depth.

Materials and Methods

Participants were nine pupils from a state-funded secondary school in the North-East of England. A purposive sampling method was used, with 15 pupils aged 11-17, currently receiving instrumental lessons, invited to take part. The final sample consisted of nine pupils representing a range of different instruments and ability levels (see Table 2). Participants were interviewed by the first author, who is a classroom music teacher at the school but not involved directly in instrumental teaching.

For context, music education is compulsory for all children up to the age of 14 in state-funded secondary schools in England and is optional thereafter for those who wish to sit music qualifications (Department for Education 2022). Curriculum music lessons are usually

delivered weekly by classroom teachers, and consist of general music instruction including performing, listening and composing. In most schools, children can also choose to undertake additional instrumental or vocal tuition, delivered by specialist visiting instrumental tutors. The participants in this study represent a small proportion of these pupils who had opted to learn instruments alongside their curriculum music lessons.

[Table 2. Table of Participants.]

A semi-structured interview process was used, with questions designed to prompt participants to discuss various aspects of and influences on their musical learning journey. Questions were derived from theory and previous research, although direct references to specific achievement goals were avoided so as not to lead participants. The final list of questions, refined following a pilot interview, is provided in Appendix 1.

Interviews took place in person at school and were recorded using a voice recorder app, apart from one interview which took place via telephone during the Covid-19 pandemic. Participants were reassured that their responses would be treated anonymously and would not affect their academic progress. Interviews were transcribed using NVivo, with transcripts sent to participants to allow them to modify any answers. No modifications were requested. Ethical approval was obtained from the University of York and consent was provided by parents/guardians and participants prior to the interviews.

Analysis

We adopted the six-phase approach to thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2022), with continual reviewing and refining of themes until there was a coherent thematic overview of the data. To reduce potential bias in this data analysis process given that the first author is a classroom music teacher at the school, both authors coded transcripts independently before

discussing and agreeing on areas of thematic overlap and divergence, ensuring that intercoder consistency was achieved (Cofie, Braund and Dalgarno 2022). The second author is a lecturer in music education at a university in England with no connection to the school or to the participants in the study. Following the inductive analysis, the data and the thematic map were also considered deductively in relation to the 3 x 2 achievement goal model.

Results

The thematic map is presented in Figure 1. Each of the themes will be presented in turn, then considered together in relation to the research questions.

[**Figure 1.** Thematic map based on inductive analysis, showing influences on motivation.]

Family Support

Family members were referred to frequently in the interviews, suggesting the theme of family support was particularly important to these participants' experiences of instrumental learning. All nine participants described some form of family involvement in their musical development, and eight participants had family members who played an instrument. Five participants recalled playing their instruments alongside family members, for example:

> My [mum's] always been interested to hear what I've been up to, and my dad and my brother as I say they both play guitar so we'll just try and find something funky to do. I'll maybe make up a groove and he'll try and work along with that. (Tom)

It seems likely that having musically engaged parents influenced these children to start learning an instrument. Similarly, four participants decided to begin instrumental lessons after seeing an older sibling do the same, for example, 'The reason I started to play the trumpet was because [my sister] started in Year 4' (Lewis). Whilst musical influences from older siblings were often positive, a more competitive sibling relationship was also described

by Lucy: 'My brother, he's doing Grade 3 trumpet and he's like teasing me, so I'm like, well I'm going to do Grade 1 so you can't tease me.'

Family members also influenced the amount and quality of practice undertaken in some cases, providing extrinsic motivation. Five participants described being reminded to practise by parents, and three participants were given musical coaching from family members. For example, to the question, 'Why do you practise?', Lucy responded:

> I don't know, because really my mum makes me, she considers it a homework so she'll be like, 'have you played your clarinet?', and I'm like 'no', and she'll be like 'go do it', and I'm like 'ok'. (Lucy)

For these participants, family members were influential both at the outset of their instrumental learning journeys as well as in their ongoing musical motivation.

Social Music Making

Music formed an important aspect of the social lives of many participants, with all but one participant (Lucy) describing instances of performing music with peers. Formal and informal music making opportunities seemed crucial to the musical progress and forging of social bonds for these young musicians:

> Because of the ensembles like the wind band and orchestra I've got a lot of friends who also play instruments and are at a similar level to me really. (Faye)

> With that group specifically, you can't avoid it because they live and breathe off music but it's quite fun to have a group of people you can just talk about music with and we all like the same styles of music so it's fun to talk about. (Tom)

The dominance of social music making in the lives of these participants suggests the influence of peers was a key factor in their desire to continue learning an instrument. Indeed, the opportunity to play in ensembles was possibly more important for these learners than the specific instrument they played. Ben and Tom were primarily motivated to learn different

instruments to open up further ensemble opportunities, for example: 'I'd actually started playing bass guitar especially for jazz band, and I've improved a lot I think from where I started because of it, and that's let me play in the school shows and things' (Ben).

Social music making was also linked to perceptions of comparison and competition amongst those interviewed. Eight participants recalled instances of peer comparison, though these participants generally found this to be a positive motivational stimulus, for example:

> I think it's seeing people around me my age who also play instruments, and it's not necessarily just violin it's all instruments, if they're improving, if they're doing well it kind of motivates me to do well to catch up to them, or progress with them. (Rebecca)

However, Rebecca and Jane also reported more negative experiences of peer comparison during their early years in secondary school:

> If I wasn't as good as my friends who played…it stopped me from practising and it made me less motivated to practise 'cause I just thought: 'well, there's not really much point cause there's other people who are better than me'. (Rebecca)

> It's kind of like if you're behind them but you learnt an instrument at the same time, it's irritating, 'cause you want to be at the same level as them if you started at the same time. (Jane)

These young musicians may not have developed the resilience to cope with peer comparison until their later teenage years, perhaps after reaching a higher standard of ability. This was particularly apparent in the conversation with Rebecca who was in the penultimate year of secondary school and had ambitions to study music at university. She described her decreasing emphasis on peer comparison as she progressed through secondary school. Social music making appears to have important implications for adolescent instrumental learners' motivation to practise, and it is likely that peer comparison plays an important role in this relationship.

Musical Identity

The theme of musical identity was represented in participants' discussion of long-term musical aspirations and the importance of music to their sense of self. For example, Ben stated, 'music is my biggest thing in life I think'. Age appeared to be closely associated with musical identity; the participants in Years 11 and 12 had stronger musical identities than those in Years 7 to 9 who were at lower levels of ability and tended to value music as a shorter-term hobby. Rebecca (Year 12) noted that music had become more important to her over time:

> I don't really think I had any ambitions when I started playing just because I feel like…I only did it because my sister did it, but yeah, I think I've got more of an understanding of what music is and what it means to me than when I was like 10, 11. (Rebecca)

One exception to this age-related trend was James, who was much younger (Year 8), and felt his peers would 'know' him by watching him perform. However, he also expressed a desire to 'be a musician by the end of school.' This suggests James felt that to be considered as a musician, one might have to be a certain age or ability level.

Role models were integral to the aspiration to and adoption of musical identities for seven participants, who identified a range of musical role models, from family members (three participants) to famous musicians (five participants):

> My dad likes to do his research and so he shares lots of facts about famous musicians…he likes to tell me about how The Beatles started playing banjo chords on a guitar and then came to where they were but it took like hours and hours of practice, so that's a big motivator. (Ben)

> There's lots of other drummers…that could have been where I would be, doing Grade 1 or something like that and it kind of makes me think that, yep if they can do it I can probably do it. (James)

> Probably my dad most of all 'cause I mean when he does the guitar he kind of rearranges and tells me what to do and yeah he's really good at guitar, and…he's kind of my idol in a way. (James)

Role models in the lives of these young instrumental learners appeared to be important in the development of personal musical identity, and likely also influenced the adoption of specific musical goals and aspirations. Interestingly, these role models were more common for participants who played more contemporary instruments such as guitar and drum kit. Some participants who played orchestral instruments did mention role models; Faye described a family member who was affiliated with a professional orchestra, and Rebecca enjoyed watching classical performers on YouTube. However, this experience was not common to all participants who played orchestral instruments, thus raising a question as to whether role models might be more important, or perhaps just more widely accessible, for young musicians playing in popular music genres.

Ownership over the Learning Journey

Participants conveyed different levels of autonomy when discussing their musical development. Ben had a clear sense of volition over his musical journey: 'My future I feel is very oriented around music, not just about work and stuff but home life and what goals I have to do with where I get my instruments.' In contrast, younger participants often struggled to articulate any clear goals. When asked about future musical goals, Ellie (Year 7) responded, 'I'm not sure right now.' She seemed to be directed more by her teacher in the setting of goals, a theme shared by three of the five participants in Years 7-9 (Ellie, Jane and Lucy).

Age might play a role in young musicians' abilities to articulate goals and take ownership over their musical journeys, as well as their musical identity.

The practice routines of participants also portrayed differing degrees of autonomy. Seven participants appeared to be mainly self-motivated, whilst two participants mostly had their practice monitored by parents. This contrast can be seen in the experiences of Tom and Faye:

> And I'm not being forced to do it 'cause I don't have a time limit on when I need to sit an exam or anything so I can just sit down and play when I want to play. (Tom)

> My mum being a clarinet player, if I need help she'll often help me, she'll often take over but yeah *(laughs.)* (Faye)

Participants also conveyed differing perceptions of autonomy in relation to their instrumental lessons. Faye described joint decision making in her clarinet lessons: 'I usually warm up and then I'll play through a piece and then *we'll* identify what needs working on and go through that.'

All nine learners considered graded instrumental examinations as an important goal, often encouraged by their instrumental teachers. However, whilst Lewis explained he wanted to achieve Grade 8 by the time he finished school, he also wanted more autonomy over the lesson content, and the technical demands of these examinations were less appealing: 'I don't have an issue doing the exams and stuff, but I do just…want to play more, than have to focus on learning loads of scales and all that kind of thing.' The emphasis placed on graded instrumental examinations by this young musician and his teacher may have reduced the intrinsic appeal of playing an instrument.

The experiences of these participants highlight the important role of teachers and family members in promoting autonomy, and their potential to influence the achievement goals set by adolescent instrumental learners.

Intrinsic Value of Music Making

Whilst Lucy conveyed little enthusiasm for instrumental learning, each of the other eight participants conveyed some level of intrinsic enjoyment of music-making. Experiencing the music itself was the most important aspect of playing an instrument for James: 'Yeah it's good fun just bashing the drum… Probably kind of like when you hit a drum it…sets off a chain reaction that feels really good for some reason.'

For both classical and popular musicians the music itself was a key motivator, and three participants described their enjoyment of playing classical repertoire either for its expressive potential or the potential to further their knowledge, for example:

> I get to expand my knowledge a lot more by playing like classical stuff and things, in orchestra as well I learn a lot more about music by playing things like Beethoven and stuff. (Ben)

> I like really dynamically dramatic pieces 'cause I feel like it's quite easy to put like character into it. (Faye)

For Jane, the repertoire itself was more important than specific goals such as graded examinations: 'It's always the piece that matters, if it's a piece that you don't like then you're not going to do it.'

Formative performance experiences also fed into participants' intrinsic appreciation of music-making. For Ben, 'playing at The Sage…that's a very different feeling to all the others… mostly exhilarated. It's a crazy feeling playing at The Sage.' This experience was

less about comparison or musical progress, than the sheer enjoyment of performing in a world-class concert venue.

Four participants also discussed the benefits of music-making for mental health and emotional regulation, for example:

> I use guitar more as a stress relief instrument, so say if I need a break from revision or something I'll go and pick up my guitar. (Ben)

> I struggle to get my emotions out, talking to people and things like that. I struggle with that kind of stuff and I just let it build up, but when I play violin it's a way for me to forget about those and to release my emotions. (Rebecca)

For these participants, the motivation to spend time practising an instrument came from the power of music itself, rather than other external influences or normative measures of progress.

Discussion

1) What are the achievement goals of adolescents learning an instrument?

Our first research question sought to understand which achievement goals instrumental learners most closely identified with, and whether each of the six goals in the 3 x 2 model were relevant to this population of adolescent instrumental learners in England. Four of the six achievement goals were apparent in the interviews: other-approach, other-avoidance, self-approach and task-approach.

Other-approach and avoidance goals were mostly framed by the discussions around social music making and family influence:

> Just showing an improvement the quickest, I think the whole competitive element it doesn't take away from the fun of it but it makes it more interesting. (Ben)

> If it's someone who maybe I feel like I'm on the same level with I might think I'm going to prove them wrong. (Tom)

Participants seemed to fluctuate between performance-approach and performance-avoidance goals, portraying a desire to outperform their peers, as well as not wanting to fall behind. Both goal dimensions encouraged participants to practise more often. Whilst previous research has suggested there is no relationship between performance goals and self-reported practice time (Schmidt 2005), the present findings indicate other-approach and avoidance goals might have positive implications for adolescents' motivation to practice their instruments.

Self-approach goals were evident throughout the interviews, with eight participants indicating a desire to improve for their own sense of achievement, for example: 'I think for me I know I need to practise to improve and I've got a motivation there because I want to go on and carry on doing music when I'm older' (Rebecca).

Task goals were occasionally identified when participants were focusing purely on the music ('It's that the piece itself encourages me' – Jane), but they were less frequent and more often linked to self-approach goals, in the selection of repertoire that would allow participants to progress through the graded examination system. This link between knowledge-based task goals and progression-focused self goals was acknowledged in the refined 3 x 2 achievement goal model (Elliot, Murayama and Pekrun 2011). The present study suggests that any possible distinction between self and task goals may be limited to certain domains or levels of expertise, and was not relevant to the adolescent instrumental learners in this school context.

There was no indication that participants in this study adopted self-avoidance or task-avoidance goals, that is, participants were not concerned about performing worse than previously or losing musical skills. Elliot and colleagues (2011) do not recommend using the full 3 x 2 model in every piece of achievement goal research, and it seems reasonable to suggest that task-avoidance and self-avoidance goals are not relevant to this population of adolescent instrumental learners.

Importantly, the young musicians in this study communicated different achievement goals depending on the context of the discussion. Some participants conveyed a self-approach goal yet later identified comparison with others as a key motivator. Whilst the majority of studies in achievement goal theory have captured the goals of learners at one specific time point using quantitative methods, the use of qualitative interview methods in the present study allowed for richer insights into participants' fluctuating achievement goal beliefs. This finding supports Ng's (2017) view that multiple goal profiles consisting of both mastery and performance goals may be more powerful motivators than singular goals.

2) What may influence the achievement goals of adolescent musicians?

For the participants in this study, achievement goals were influenced by family and peer relationships, musical identity and age. Parents were often involved in participants' instrumental practice, encouraging the adoption of other-approach or avoidance goals. Family influence is undoubtedly a prominent factor in the motivation of young musicians, with evidence to suggest this is one of the main reasons why children both begin and continue learning an instrument (Howe and Sloboda 1991; McPherson 2009). In other educational contexts, controlling parental involvement in homework was found to be significantly correlated with the adoption of performance goals for children aged 10-14 (Gonida and Cortina 2014). Similarly, for instrumental learners, too much parental involvement might lessen tendencies towards more intrinsic task- and self-approach goals. This view is supported by the work of Creech (2010, 2014), who recommends that parents adopt an autonomy-supportive approach to their children's instrumental practice.

Relationships with musical peers influenced the adoption of other-approach and avoidance goals for many participants in this study. Whilst competitive friendships were mostly perceived positively, leading to other-approach goals, for some participants peer comparison may have led to other-avoidance goals, or a desire to stop learning altogether.

Social aspects of music-making have previously been acknowledged as an important factor in continued motivation for young musicians (e.g. Holster 2023; Symonds et al. 2017). This trend was generally supported by the interviews in the present study, however this influence may not always be positive, particularly when peer comparison plays a role in stimulating other-avoidance goals.

The influence of peer comparison on other-approach and avoidance goals was possibly moderated by the formation of a musical identity for some participants in this study. One participant described a turning point when their increasing sense of musical identity began to outweigh their concern over comparison with others. Other researchers have also described the gradual formation of musical identities as learners progress through childhood and adolescence (Evans and McPherson 2017; Manturzewska 1990). It seems reasonable to suggest that a conscious commitment to pursue a musical identity is likely to result in more self-based rather than other-based achievement goals, indicated by some of the older participants in this small-scale study (Rebecca, Faye and Ben, who were all over the age of 16). For these participants, a stronger musical identity appeared to be linked to self-approach goals, in their aspirations towards the highest levels of graded examinations, or a future musical career in the case of Rebecca.

Conclusions

This study provides new insights into adolescents' motivations for instrumental learning through the lens of achievement goal theory. Other-approach, other-avoidance and self-approach goals were the most prevalent amongst the adolescent instrumental learners in this context, whilst task-approach, task-avoidance and self-avoidance were less relevant to these young musicians. Based on the interview findings, a range of potential influences on achievement goals is proposed, including family, peers, musical identity and age. These

findings are important, as specific research into the influences on adolescent instrumental learners' achievement goals has not yet been conducted in a UK context, so useful further insights are provided for music educators as they reflect on and seek to address the falling number of pupils choosing to continue learning instruments in secondary school.

Limitations

This research was conducted with a small sample of adolescent instrumental learners from one state-funded secondary school in the North-East of England. Whilst deep insights were gained into the learning experiences of these particular young musicians, they are not generalisable beyond this specific sample. Different schools and areas across England have varying funding and educational priorities as well as cohorts of pupils from different cultural, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. Future research should involve learners from different places, socio-economic backgrounds, and musical learning contexts to further develop our understanding of achievement goals in relation to musical learning.

Implications for Practice and Further Research

Several recommendations for music educators working in similar settings can be made on the basis of this study. Participants with a stronger sense of musical identity were inclined towards self-approach goals and had increased motivation for making music in later life, and this should be a focus for music educators. Music educators should highlight musical role models in all genres by exposing young instrumentalists to a wide variety of music and musicians. Opportunities to experience high-quality live music are powerful, and local music hubs are a possible mechanism to build links with musicians beyond the school context.[1] Family musical involvement should be promoted by inviting family members to concerts and

[1] Local music hubs in England are partnerships responsible for delivering music education for children within a geographical area.

building links with external community ensembles. Both formal and informal social music making opportunities should be made accessible to younger musicians in the beginning stages of their musical journey. For example, space and equipment could be provided for young learners to rehearse in bands with friends, where they might not be able to access this equipment outside the school context.

The young musicians in this study referred to peer comparison from both positive and negative standpoints. Negative experiences could lead to the adoption of other-approach and avoidance goals, or the desire to stop playing altogether. To minimise peer comparison and promote self-approach goals, music educators should avoid comparing learners to one another, give praise for musical progress, no matter how small, and provide opportunities for learners to perform with musicians of a diverse range of abilities and ages.

Finally, there was evidence in this study to show that participants were moved to learn and play instruments for the pure enjoyment of the music itself, as well as for stress-relief and to foster emotional wellbeing. These benefits should be highlighted to education policy makers and school leaders, by whom academic measures of progress are frequently prioritised above both participation in the arts and adolescent wellbeing.

To deepen our understanding of adolescent instrumental learners' motivations, future research should be broader in scope to include a wider range of young people from different social backgrounds, including musicians who are self-taught or learn in less formal settings outside of school. There was some indication in the present study that the adoption of different achievement goals might be related to age, so longitudinal research examining changes in achievement goal orientations throughout the school years would also be valuable.

Participants in this study reported a clear passion for music making and the difference it has made in their lives. Many saw music as a core part of their identity and envisioned continuing to make music in the future. Whilst the reduction in the number of pupils learning

an instrument in UK schools is concerning and external factors such as policies and funding are beyond music educators' immediate control, music teachers still play an important role in sustaining instrumental learning and music making among this population. Nurturing musical identities and providing social music making opportunities may lead to approach-oriented achievement goals and, ultimately, longer-term musical motivation.

Disclosure Statement

The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

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Appendix: Interview Questions

1. Can you describe your last instrument lesson to me?
2. Why did you decide to start learning your instrument?
3. What do you enjoy about learning your instrument?
4. Why do you practise?
5. What are you working towards on your instrument?
6. What is your biggest musical ambition?
7. Do you think your ambitions have changed since you started playing?
8. Do your parents/guardians get involved much in your instrument playing?
9. Do you have friends that also play instruments?
10. You mentioned you were working towards _____ (Q5). If you had to rate yourself on a scale of 1-10, how confident do you feel about doing well in that? Why?
11. Can you tell me about the last time you gave a performance or did an exam?
12. Who encourages you with your instrument playing?
13. Is there anything else you want to tell me about your musical influences?
14. Do you have any questions for me?