



# Current Situation and Development of Community Music Therapy in China

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**Abstract.** Community music therapy was first developed in western countries and has been spread all over the world. With the deepening of China's urbanization process, more and more attention has been paid to the collective with the community as the unit. In recent years, community music therapy in China has also gradually risen and developed. Based on the analysis of the development of community music therapy in China, this paper finds out the problems in the development of community music therapy in China. By comparing with the relatively mature community music therapy system in western countries, this paper enumerates some successful cases and summarizes important experiences, expounds on the practical significance of promoting the development of community music therapy in China, and provides new ideas and new paths for the promotion of community music therapy in China according to the development process of western countries.

**Keywords:** community music therapy · community music · Chinese community · Alzheimer's disease

## 1 Introduction

Community music therapy (CoMT) does not belong to the model and method of music therapy, and its concept is relatively new. Bruscia defines it as "included are any effects to form, build, or sustain communities through music therapy" [1]. Community music therapy is different from the single-person and private therapy modes advocated by traditional music therapy. It is a method for people to communicate through music in the community. Through CoMT, everyone can learn, contact, make and enjoy music. At the same time, people's mental health problems are obtained through music [2].

With the rapid growth of China's economy, modern social civilization has also developed. As a comprehensive basic mass organization, the community plays an increasingly important role in people's life. Continuously improving people's happiness has become the focus of modern community work in China in recent years. It is imperative to promote community music therapy in China. On the one hand, it meets the needs of community work, and on the other hand, it provides a new development mode for the music therapy industry - cooperation with communities [3]. Based on the analysis of the current situation of community music therapy in China, this paper will describe the problems

encountered in the development of community music therapy in China. At the same time, through the analysis of successful cases of community music therapy in western countries, this paper also provides solutions and lessons for the development of community music in China. It is hoped that through this research, community music therapy will have further development in China, and the life of people affected by mental diseases will be improved to a certain extent.

## 2 Current Situation of Community Music Therapy in China

Looking back on the development history of Chinese communities, community development originated from the folk group activities in the past dynasties. From the founding of new China to the early stage of reform and opening up, community development is a nationwide and large-scale development mode and aims to narrow the gap between various regions. Then, from the late 1980s to the early 21st century, the Chinese government carried out new community construction to adapt to the social and economic transformation after China's reform and opening up. The Chinese government put forward the concept of community service for the first time and began to promote it nationwide. Since the new century, China's community development is no longer only dependent on the government. The spontaneous community activities of the people have become diversified, and the development of the community presents a diversified development pattern [3]. According to Hu's research, China's future community development will be closer to that of western countries and move towards social autonomy. Western countries have an early industrialization, and community development has a history of more than 100 years. In modern times, a relatively complete community autonomy mechanism has been formed. However, community development in China has just started in this respect [4]. Therefore, the development direction of Chinese communities and Western communities is the same, and there is no essential difference.

Nowadays, the responsibility of the community in China is becoming more and more important, followed by a more comprehensive demand for community services. The current community service content in China mainly focuses on the elderly, the disabled, and the youth, which is also the main service groups of community music therapy [5]. When it comes to Chinese community music therapy, Chinese community music should be mentioned first. Community music therapy is different from traditional music therapy and is closely related to community music. Community music is an activity that allows everyone to participate in music production. Community music therapy turns the practice object of music therapy into a community rather than an individual, which is in line with the idea that music is not designed for privacy but to connect people [6]. Community music has been developed in western countries for a long time, and its related research and teaching have developed more mature. However, there is no research related to community music in China. Community music in China generally refers to music or dance activities spontaneously organized by the masses, which mainly reflects the spiritual civilization of community residents [5].

Community music therapy in China is just emerging and developing slowly [7]. In countries and regions with better welfare social systems in Europe and America, many community music therapists are equipped with special music therapists. In Hong Kong,

China, community music therapy is carried out in the form of workshops. Relevant community music therapy programs have been set up in cities with rapid economic development along the coast of China, such as Guangzhou, Shanghai, and Shenzhen [5]. Meanwhile, there are also successful cases of community music therapy in China, such as the research activity on autistic children treated with community music therapy (CoMT) in Ningbo community, the research on adult mentally handicapped people treated with community music in Nanjing community, and the experiment on improving the quality of life of chronic lung disease patients by using CoMT in four communities in Xi'an. The results of these studies and experiments reflect the feasibility and necessity of community music therapy in China. At the same time, the significance and function of community music therapy were recognized. Nonetheless, some problems are found in the development of community music therapy in China through these practices.

### **3 Problems in the Development of Community Music Therapy in China**

First of all, the research on music therapy started late in China, and the public did not understand this emerging field and did not have an accurate understanding of its function [7]. According to Yang and Wang, community music therapy can provide curved rehabilitation treatment for the disabled, including physical, psychological, and social integration [7]. Secondly, the resources of community music therapists are scarce, and the technical strength is weak. There is a large number of disabled people in China, including congenital disabilities and disabilities caused by diseases. According to statistics, the number of community music therapists in China in 2010 was 35000–69000, while the total number of various rehabilitation technicians in China in 2016 was less than 20000, of which the number of music therapists was even less [7]. Under the background of such a lack of technical personnel resources, it is difficult to effectively promote community music therapy in various communities in China. Third, insufficient funds make it impossible to continuously support the implementation of community music therapy projects. At this stage, Chinese community music therapy relies on state financial allocation, but due to the limited financial resources of local governments, it is difficult to ensure the smooth development of community music therapy [7]. For example, the study on the use of community music therapy in four communities in Xi'an to improve the quality of life of chronic lung patients lasted only six months, which would make it impossible to judge whether the existing good treatment effect achieved by using community music therapy can be maintained [8].

Fourth, the contempt and ignorance of mental illness in Chinese culture have hindered the development of community music therapy [9]. For one thing, China has not done enough to popularize education on some mental diseases. For other things, in China, people will despise the treatment of mental diseases and refuse to receive treatment out of the idea of protecting their families. For example, the incidence rate of childhood autism in China is also very high, and one child in every 25 children may suffer from childhood autism. According to Mastnak et al., the reason for such a high unknown incidence rate is that, on the one hand, Chinese parents and teachers do not fully understand the symptoms of autism, which leads to the failure to find out the children's problems in time; on the

other hand, affected by Chinese culture, parents tend to hide their children's abnormal behaviors [9]. Fifth, the utilization efficiency of community resources is low. Due to the lagging social information and other reasons, students studying music therapy have encountered employment difficulties after graduation. According to China's epidemiological survey data, the total prevalence of various psychological diseases among the Chinese population over the age of 15 is as high as 15%, and about 30 million children and adolescents are troubled by emotional disorders and psychological and behavioral problems [10]. However, in the face of the community's need for a large number of community music therapy resources, the inefficient use of resources by the community and local governments can not absorb talents in time, which hinders the development of community music therapy in China.

#### **4 Successful Examples and Experiences of Western Countries**

The development of community music therapy in western countries is earlier than that in China, and there are many fields involved in community music therapy, so there are many successful examples and experiences worth learning from in China. The first is how to establish community music therapy. Through the participation of one patient, other people are attracted to participate, and they establish contact and communication through music which is the way to develop from individual music therapy to the whole community music therapy. Take the successful application of community music therapy in patients with Alzheimer's disease as an example. Alzheimer's disease is a brain disease involving many symptoms. Patients with Alzheimer's disease will become emotional and aggressive, more unable to take care of themselves, and eventually lead to death [11]. According to the research of Dennis et al., community music therapy is beneficial to improve the recovery of language and communication ability of patients with Alzheimer's disease and improve their relationship with their families and the community [12]. Their research object is an 82-year-old Alzheimer's patient named Jack. They encourage him to participate in the community music activities of percussion music he likes. The participants involve Jack's family, nursing staff, and community personnel. During the ten-month music therapy, Dennis and others changed the content of music activities according to the development of his illness. Although Jack died in the end, some of his symptoms were relieved during the music therapy, he began to actively communicate with others and eventually attracted others to join his band. This is the change brought by community music therapy [12].

Then, set up a variety of music activities. In addition to the band music activities mentioned above, the activities carried out by the community music therapy can also include basic music class guidance, chorus, musical instrument performance, music creation, etc., so that community personnel of different ages and groups can have a variety of choices to increase their enthusiasm for participation. According to the research of Kraus et al., community music therapy is carried out for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, and children are allowed to participate in community music courses, which improves their language ability and physical and mental health [13]. According to the research of Rimmer and Mark, the successful community music therapy program of music creation and performance in English communities for three years has increased

the interest of teenagers in music and their self-confidence. The success of these projects demonstrates how to choose different kinds of music activities according to different groups and living backgrounds to apply to community music therapy [14].

What's more, establish an organization to integrate community music therapy talent resources, which can improve the utilization efficiency of community music therapy resources. According to Pavlicevic et al., a non-profit organization MTCC was established in South Africa in 2003. It mainly carries out music therapy and music life projects, involving traditional music therapy and community music therapy. MTCC not only provides relevant music therapy and music activities for local people but also ensures the safety of work for local music therapists. People recognize and respect their work. In addition, the music therapists in the organization also act as practitioners and promoters of community music therapy. They provide help to people and also teach people about community music therapy [15].

Finally, using culture as the starting point of community music therapy. In the process of establishing community music therapy, people with different cultural backgrounds can use their familiar culture to get in touch with them and increase their participation. According to Liu's research on Chinese elderly with Alzheimer's disease who immigrated to the United States to receive community music therapy, American music therapists need to understand Chinese culture before performing music therapy with Chinese elderly immigrants according to their characteristics [16], including not knowing English and having Chinese traditional beliefs [16]. For another example, in a tuberculosis hospital in South Africa, because the patients came from other places and did not adapt to the local living environment, the music therapist invited the patients to participate in community music activities and asked them to sing or play the songs of their hometown according to their hometown culture in order to appease their anxiety [15].

## 5 Recommendation

Because of the above-mentioned development status and problems of community music therapy in China and the analysis of successful examples and experiences of western countries, this article lists the following suggestions for the development of community music therapy in China.

To begin with, local governments, communities, and schools should promote the popularization of music therapy, let the people understand the functions of community music therapy, and encourage them to actively participate in community music therapy projects. At the same time, as music therapists, they also have the obligation and responsibility to be propagandists of community music therapy, including propaganda to government officials and the community. In addition, the Chinese government should pay attention to the training of music therapy and other related professionals. For example, many schools in China have started to offer related majors, such as the music therapy specialty of Shanghai Conservatory of music and the music therapy specialty of Nanjing Normal College of special education [10]. Moreover, local governments need to establish effective financing mechanisms and establish organizations to integrate community music therapy talent resources [7]. On the one hand, In China, the purchase of public services by the government is already a part of government procurement, which is also a

direction of the development of community music therapy projects as government public services [5]. Besides, the government can organize social forces to make donations to ensure the funding source of community music therapy projects. On the other hand, the establishment of relevant organizations integrating resources can improve the utilization efficiency of community resources and ensure the employment rate of graduates of music therapy in Colleges and universities while ensuring the smooth implementation of community music therapy projects. Eventually, Chinese community music therapists can learn from the experience of western countries in establishing community music therapists. For example, the method of establishing community music therapy from individuals to groups is used to attract more participants with their personal experiences. For example, when the community music therapists are faced with the complex composition of Chinese community personnel, the service objects cover the whole community and also include special groups such as the disabled, the elderly, and children, they can consider carrying out different community music activities for different groups and can also set up distinctive community music activities according to local cultural characteristics.

## 6 Conclusion

In conclusion, the development of community music therapy in China has just begun, but this treatment method has been recognized, especially by the participants and the participating communities. It is effective in regulating the patient's mood, improving the symptoms of Alzheimer's disease, improving the self-confidence of vulnerable children, and alleviating the symptoms of autistic children. In the field of community music therapy, China will have more opportunities and space to develop. No matter from the government, the community, the masses, or the community music therapists, they all need to contribute their part to the development of community music therapy. In addition, while learning from the experience of western countries, China should also establish community music therapy suitable for Chinese people according to the actual situation of Chinese communities. It is hoped that the development of community music therapy in China will be further improved. It is believed that community music therapy, a new therapeutic method, will shine on the stage of rehabilitation therapy in the future.

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