



Take the elderly as an example -- analyze the significance of the existence of music performance

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Abstract. "Aging" is an increasingly prominent global problem in the current society, especially in China, this phenomenon is becoming more and more intense. To cope with this challenge, we should actively explore effective solutions to gradually improve the happiness index of the elderly. As an important part of the life of the elderly, music activity has the function of regulating body and mind, and is one of the key factors to promote the healthy interaction of the elderly. Therefore, how to improve the quality of life of the elderly and alleviate their physical and mental diseases through music has become an important topic and mission of music researchers. Based on the analysis of relevant literature and existing research, this paper uses professional theories to verify the positive effects of music on the physical and mental health of the elderly. From the perspective of music performance, the author hopes to further explore how music can help the elderly in multi-angle treatment, improve their quality of life in their later years, improve their physical and psychological states, promote the application of music in the health of the elderly, and contribute theoretical support for the physical and mental health of the elderly.

Keywords: Aging; Music performance; Music therapy.

1 Introduction

The aging problem at home and abroad is becoming increasingly serious, and the rapid growth of the elderly population is becoming a global challenge. In China, for example, between 2014 and 2023, the elderly population aged 65 and above increased by 55.92%. By the end of 2023, China's population aged 65 and above has reached 216.76 million, accounting for 15.4 percent of the total population, which is far above the UN standard of 14 percent for deep aging. At the same time, the proportion of the global population aged 60 and over has also risen to 14.2%, and the number of people aged 65 and over is expected to increase to 2.2 billion by the end of the 2070s, surpassing the number of people under 18. Aging not only brings a huge population burden to society but also leads to social health imbalance, especially in the elderly group, where mental health problems are particularly prominent.[1]

With the growth of the elderly population, the needs of the elderly for emotional companionship, psychological equality, and life security are also increasing. However,

in reality, many elderly people face problems such as a lack of companionship and insufficient psychological support, leading to frequent psychological problems such as depression and anxiety. According to 2019 data from the World Health Organization (WHO), around 14% of adults aged 60 and over worldwide have mental disorders, with depression and anxiety being the most common. These mental health problems are often under addressed and undertreated. Especially as more elderly people choose to spend their old age in pension institutions, psychological problems are sometimes more serious because they are separated from the familiar living environment and away from relatives and friends. Research has shown that loneliness among older people in institutionalized care is twice as high as that of those living at home, exacerbating their mental health problems.

In this context, the effect of traditional drug therapy in alleviating the psychological problems of the elderly is limited, and psychological intervention methods other than drugs are gradually paid attention to. As an inductive and interactive therapeutic method, music performance plays an important role in improving the mental health problems of the elderly. Music performances can not only bring psychological comfort to the elderly through interaction and emotional exchange, but also mobilize their emotions and stimulate a positive attitude towards life. Studies have shown that older adults who participate in musical performances have more significant results in emotional regulation and mental health than those who receive medication alone. This non-drug treatment helps the elderly release emotional stress and relieve psychological burdens through the rhythm and melody of music, while also providing an opportunity for social interaction and alleviating loneliness.

2 The role of musical performance in therapy

Through musical performances, seniors are not just passive recipients but active participants, in which they can establish emotional connections, enhance social interactions, and improve their mental state with performers or other participants. Therefore, as an innovative psychological intervention, music performance has important social significance and wide application prospects, especially in the aging society, it provides an effective mental health support channel for the elderly.

The purpose of this study is to sort out the positive effects of music performance on the physical and mental health of the elderly and to provide a solid literature and theoretical basis for follow-up research. In the 21st century, the problem of aging is becoming more and more serious worldwide, and paying attention to the quality of life and health of the elderly group has become the key to realizing the comprehensive and healthy development of society. As an important part of the daily life of many elderly people, music has a significant effect on their physical and mental health, and the task of researchers is to further explore and expand this positive impact of music. Especially in the field of music therapy, music can not only effectively regulate the emotions of the elderly, but also bring motivation and hope to their lives. In specific music performances, performers interact with the elderly through performance. Compared with

traditional drug treatment or simple music appreciation, music performance can improve the psychological state of the elderly on a deeper level.

Music performances help the elderly vent their emotions through emotional resonance, achieve mental relaxation, and make them more optimistic and positive. Performers not only relieve anxiety for the elderly, but also make up for their lack of emotional expression and emotional release through this interactive process, thus promoting the effect of psychological treatment. This accompanying nature of musical performance, as well as the transmission and output of emotions, is of great significance for the recovery of mental health in the elderly.

However, although the potential of musical performance in the mental health of older adults is gradually being recognized, research on therapeutic approaches to musical performance forms is still relatively scarce. The existing literature mainly focuses on the passive acceptance of music by the elderly, while the research on interaction and resonance in music performance has not been in-depth. Therefore, by studying the feelings and reactions of the elderly to music and finding out its universal rules, it can not only promote the development of music performance therapy but also provide more effective mental health support for the elderly to help them get better physical and mental health and happiness in later life.

3 Development of music therapy in the world

In the early 1950s, the University of Kansas in the United States took the lead in setting up a music therapy specialty, initially involving doctors, and then musicians and psychologists began to get involved in this field in large numbers. In 1950, the International Association of Music Therapy was founded, marking the formal application of music therapy in the field of medicine. Since then, music therapy, as an interdisciplinary treatment, has rapidly expanded to many fields such as psychotherapy and physical therapy. China also established the Chinese Music Therapy Society in 1989 to provide organizational support for research and practice in this field. Nowadays, music therapy is widely used in many fields, and its forms are mainly divided into two categories: one is passive music therapy simply enjoying music, and the other is active music therapy through singing and playing Musical Instruments. Singing, in particular, has been shown to help maintain and maintain brain health and is a simple yet effective intervention.

The history of music therapy goes back even further. In 1918, Eva Augusta Veselius wrote in *Music Quarterly* that music therapy had been used to treat ear problems since 100 BC and that the origins of modern use of music vibration therapy date back 2,000 years. These early theories laid the foundation for modern music therapy. [2] Subsequently, in 1944, Doron K. Antrim, in an article published in *Music Quarterly*, further argued that music therapy had an important role to play in the treatment of disease. He pointed out that music can not only promote metabolism, but also regulate muscle energy, breathing, pulse, blood pressure, and other physiological indicators, and even affect the production of emotions. [3] These findings confirm the multifaceted impact

of music therapy, especially in the recovery of mental illness, where music plays an irreplaceable role.

In 2005, the book *Music as Therapy* further explored how the expression, performance, and understanding of music can help patients release emotions and achieve mental and emotional relaxation through psychological and emotional regulation. Leichter believes that music can connect human consciousness to mental states, and this connection provides a unique way to control and adjust mental states.[4] In 2017, Sara Aditya, in *Music City: Listening to Urban Design and Planning*, demonstrated that through musical performance forms such as beating, patients can reactivate damaged motor systems and restore a sense of movement and vitality in the body. [5] Even in 2021, GMT (Group Music Therapy) quizzes elderly patients, encouraging seniors to improvise or play instrumental music, sing, dance, listen and other performance activities. Through this series of research and improvement of music therapy, they have provided a key help to the research of music therapy for dementia patients.[6] And in 2022, "The promise of music therapy for Alzheimer's disease: In A review, Anna Maria Matziorinis and Stefan Koelsch also explain the feasibility of musical performances for people with Alzheimer's disease. Although these patients have severe memory deficits, some of their musical memories are preserved. They can learn new songs, encode new verbal messages and respond emotionally to music, potentially delaying Alzheimer's in individuals at high risk for the disease.[7] These studies show that music performance is not limited to the psychological level but can also have a positive impact on physical health. In 2021, Yarashev Jurabek Turayevich also showed in *Music Therapy* that music has three main factors affecting many aspects of human life: vibration, physiology, and spirit. It can change various body functions (breathing, movement, cardiovascular).[8]

Foreign empirical studies have further proved that music performance can improve the quality of life of the elderly. In numerous studies, scholars have conducted a comparative study on elderly people who participate in choral activities and those who do not through the Total Quality of Life Scale (WHOQOL-Bref), and the results show that elderly people who participate in choral activities show better health in terms of mental, physical and social environment (Uren, 2016). In addition, according to the *International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*, researchers at the University of Exeter in the UK have found that there is a strong link between the brain health of older people and the frequency of lifetime exposure to music. Playing an instrument, especially the piano, has been shown to improve memory. Continuous participation in music performance not only delays cognitive decline but also brings more psychological and physical benefits.

In the nursing of dementia, passive music therapy is widely used, which can effectively relieve the resistance emotion in the nursing process, while active music therapy has more diverse forms. Forms such as choral singing competitions and physical movements accompanied by music provide various ways for the elderly to participate. Regardless of the form, these music performances have a significant effect on the symptoms of elderly patients, especially for Alzheimer's disease, depression and anxiety patients, music therapy as an auxiliary treatment means to help them relieve symptoms and improve the quality of life.

The benefits of music therapy are undeniable. Especially in an aging society, music performance offers an effective and feasible treatment for the mental health of the elderly. Through music performances, the elderly can not only be comforted emotionally, but more importantly, they can find social pleasure in the interaction of music and renew their enthusiasm for life. This positive emotional feedback plays an important role in promoting their physical recovery and mental health. Therefore, future research should pay more attention to the therapeutic role of music performance and further explore its application in the elderly population, aiming to enhance their quality of life and provide better mental health support.

4 Development of music therapy in China

In China, although music therapy started relatively late in China, in recent years, it has gradually innovated treatment forms through traditional culture and carried out in-depth research in combination with traditional Chinese medicine techniques. In 2022, Zhai Zhen deeply explored the application of piano music therapy through the actual performance of piano volunteers in hospitals. Studies have shown that piano performance not only has wide social acceptance because of its musical charm but also occupies a unique advantage in music therapy, helping to improve the psychological state of elderly patients.[9] In 2023, Yao Yan and Qiu Chengyao proposed in "Intervention Suggestions for Elderly Mental Health Based on Music Healing Methods" that different forms of music therapy can regulate nervous system activities by stimulating sensory, cognitive, and emotional regions of the brain, thus producing relaxation and emotional regulation effects. These methods effectively help the elderly to relieve psychological stress and improve their emotional health. [10] By 2024, Yingjian He and Dandan Shi have published their vision for emerging music therapy methods in China, especially the five elements of traditional Chinese medicine. The therapy is rooted in the classical wisdom of Le Ji and Huangdi Neijing and is based on the philosophical framework of the unity of heaven and man and the five elements of Yin and Yang. Through the use of five tones (horn, character, palace, Shang, Yu) and the five viscera of the human body (liver, heart, spleen, lung, kidney) corresponding relationship, regulate the visceral function, balance the emotions and Yin and Yang, promote physical and mental health. [11] Wuxing music therapy is not only an innovative form of treatment but also a model of the combination of traditional culture and modern medicine, which shows the broad prospect of Chinese music therapy.

5 The specific analysis of music performance in therapy

China's reform and opening up greatly promoted the development of music therapy, especially in the field of self-intervention has made remarkable progress. However, the core strength of music therapy is still insufficient. In recent years, in terms of the combination of music performance and music therapy in China, most of the research focuses on how to relieve performers' stage anxiety, while the application of self-experience is relatively few. Although a large number of studies have proved that

music therapy has a positive effect on the elderly, the studies discussed from the perspective of music performance are relatively simple and general, and do not deeply explore the transformation of the mental state of the elderly during the treatment.

Medical scientists and psychologists often pay more attention to the results of music therapy, but ignore the emotional changes of patients and the psychological intervention process in the treatment process. In fact, music therapy not only has a significant impact on the physiological health of the elderly, especially in promoting the improvement of cardiovascular and cerebrovascular function but also helps the elderly to sleep through the form of music performance, reducing the negative effects of long-term dependence on drugs.

Music performance is unique in that it is not just a one-way form of therapy, but a highly interactive process of emotional exchange. Through playing and performing, a resonance is formed between the therapist and the patient, which is of great significance for psychological recovery. Music performances not only allow the elderly to express and release their emotions but also provide them with opportunities to socialize and help alleviate feelings of loneliness and anxiety. Especially when elderly patients can empathize with the emotions of the performer, the effect of music therapy will be more significant.

However, current research is weak in this area. The value of musical performance lies not only in the performance technique itself but also in how the performer interprets the emotional changes of the elderly through music. Performers serve not just as conveyors of music but also play a pivotal role in guiding emotions. They analyze the emotional changes of the elderly in the performance process, and timely adjust the rhythm of music and emotional expression, to promote the positive emotional response of the elderly. This deep emotional interaction is crucial to enhancing the effectiveness of music therapy.

Further, musical performance is no longer limited to simple applications on stage or in clinical Settings, but is seen more as a means of psychological healing. The spark between the performer and the patient through interactive music performance is a unique social activity, especially for elderly patients, this interaction can promote their emotional expression and stimulate their enthusiasm and positive attitude towards life.

6 Conclusion

Therefore, future studies should pay more attention to the role of music performers in music therapy, deeply explore how they have emotional resonance with elderly patients in the treatment process, and how the expression of music can help the elderly regulate their psychological state. This is not only vital for the mental health of older patients but also points to a new direction for the development of music therapy. By combining the existing research results in the field of music therapy, we explore the interaction between performers and the elderly and promote the wide application of music therapy in the aging society.

Through the above research, the author hopes to explore the importance of music performance in music therapy from the perspective of performers, and combine the

existing research results in the field of music education and music therapy to further promote the development of music therapy. In this way, not only improves the quality of life of the elderly but also provides a new development direction and practical basis for music therapy in the aging society.

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