Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences

Using music activities to develop music skills, behavior and personality of the elderly in the Thonburi District of Thailand

Natsarun Tissadikun*, Panus Tongkarnpanich†, Warinthorn Srisiadngam†

College of Music, Bansomdejchaopraya Rajabhat University, Bangkok 10600, Thailand

Article Info

Abstract

This study aims to design and create music activities by applying the guidelines for children education to develop the music skills, behavior, and personality of the elderly in the Thonburi district of Thailand and to determine the effectiveness of such activities. It also focuses on achievement among the elderly following these activities The results showed that participants' achievement during and after participation in behavioral and personality activities which encompasses emotions and feelings, participation in the activities, assertiveness, muscle function, sight, and memory resulted in an average assessment score of 86.99 percent out of 95 percent , and their average assessment score for music skills which includes listening, singing, and movement skill; improvisation; and music expression development was 83.62 percent out of 92.33 percent. The mean score of behavior, personality, and music skills averaged 85.32 percent out of 93.66 percent, and the average achievement assessment score was 87.99 percent The results obtained from the use of music activities, which involved applying the music teaching technique for children into the different activities, showed achievement for the participants. The music teaching technique for the elderly involves teaching from an easier to harder level. Physical and mental movement is also utilized to develop the individual's behavior and personality. Furthermore, the contents from the activities lead participants to develop their basic music skills, which also leads to the achievement of music skills. The participants could continue to improve their music skills after reaching a higher level.

© 2022 Kasetsart University.

---

* Corresponding author.
  E-mail address: hornbn@gmail.com (N. Tissadikun).
† Co-first authors.
  E-mail address: Gump_Exotic@hotmail.com (P. Tongkarnpanich).
  E-mail address: yingyiizzsi@gmail.com (W. Srisiadngam).

Introduction

Currently, Thailand is experiencing dramatic changes in society, politics, economy, and demographics. The heavily reduced fertility and birth rates have led to an aging society, and the number of middle-aged citizens—the majority in the labor market—is decreasing. The change in Thailand's demographic patterns reflects the data provided by (the Foundation for Older Persons' Development [FOPDEV], 2015), and is also supported by data from (The United Nations [UN], 2017). These reports revealed that after 2009, there were more senior citizens than any other groups, and in 2017, for the first time in history, the number of younger citizens was less than that of senior citizens. Ratirita (2018) mentioned that according to the National Statistical Office, Thailand will become a completely aging society by 2021, with an expected increase of over 20 percent in the following years.

Thailand's current trend has led many organizations to prepare and plan their policies to best support society and the entire nation. Activities to support and develop Thai citizens' quality of life in this aging society are also expected to be implemented. Many researchers of aging societies have already conducted studies on this matter locally and abroad, especially with regard to the development of senior citizens' quality of life. A study by a marketing master's student from the College of Management of Mahidol University showed that from a sample of 615 elderly Thai people aged 50–85, 90 percent see themselves as younger than their real age, 8 percent suit their real age, and only 2 percent feel older than their real age (Phaksrikulkumthon, 2018). The study further revealed that apart from physical changes, these elderly people also experience mental changes, including becoming disheartened and lacking self-confidence; such feelings may stem from having neither work to do nor the potential and ability to work, as opposed to the past.

For these reasons, as persons involved in music education management at a higher education level, instructors for future musicians and music teachers, and as members of an institute working toward social development, we aim to implement the skills and knowledge of music teaching to support and develop the behavior, personality, and music skills of senior citizens who live in the Thonburi district of Bangkok, Thailand, based on methods that are conventionally applied to children education. The aforementioned methods involve generating conversations among the sample group concerning their music preferences and skills. The information obtained is then utilized to design and create music activities for the sample group based on different contexts and preferences. Various music elements, such as listening, singing, improvising, and moving, are added to the planned activities because they are fundamental elements found in the songs of children's activities. However, in contrast to the sample's music contexts and preferences, songs used in children's music activities are usually Western songs, which are not suitable for use in this research, as they could result in decreased interest and motivation for the sample group. Therefore, the sample group's contexts and preferences, especially with regard to their life in the Thonburi district, are considered before blending these children's music elements into the activities. The sample group's cultural context, music preference, music experience, and singing ability in both Thai and other songs are then highlighted (Creech et al., 2013). We first interview the focus group to explore their individual physical and mental readiness and various music preferences; then, with the obtained data, we plan and create music activities suitable for the sample group. Suitability leads to the sample group's motivation and positive participation. Carefect (2013) and Cohen et al. (2002) highlighted that when a sample group listens to, sing, moves along to, and improvises the songs they like, the positive impact on their mental health and enjoyment leads to their physical development and improved behavior, personality, and music skills. The entire process, which includes designing and implementing activities and gaining results on the sample's development from them, is aimed at developing music skills, behavior, and personality using creative music activities. This approach will ultimately lead to the elderly developing their singing and playing musical instruments skills, the realization of their self-worthiness, and self-confidence in music skills, which could then lead to skill- and knowledge-sharing within the community and finally result in a strengthened aging society.

Thus, the research objective of this study is to design and create music activities based on methods of teaching music to children to enhance the music skills, behavior, and personality of elderly people living in the Thonburi district and to evaluate the efficiency of these designed activities.

Methodology

This is an experimental research, and the detailed methodology employed is described as follows. The study sample comprised elderly people living in the Thonburi district of Bangkok, Thailand, who volunteered to participate in different music activities. A total of 20

people were selected based on the following criteria: (1) aged between 60–70 years; (2) male or female; (3) living in the Thonburi district; and (4) has the potential and the ability to join music activities, including sufficient body movement and ability to perform daily routines. The sample's potential and ability were assessed and categorized into groups based on the Barthel Activities of Daily Living (ADL) scale. Only individuals who met the criteria were selected to participate in the study, which lasted for 18 hours over six weeks (3 hours a week between January–February 2020)

The study was conducted at the College of Music of the Bansomdejchaopraya Rajabhat University in Bangkok. A six-week trial (18 hours) was conducted that consisted of eight activities. The researchers carried out these activities by themselves and recruited volunteers within the Thonburi district who were qualified according to the study criteria via the online social media platform Facebook and a publication letter. Using the research instruments, we assessed the sample both before and after their participation in the activities (i.e., pre-test and post-test) to evaluate their development. When comparing the sample's assessment results during and after participation (E_1/E_2) to determine the usefulness of music activities in improving their music skills, behavior, and personality, the mean should not be less than 80 percent, which is the minimum level to confirm the effect of such activities.

Results

The results from the Barthel ADL assessment showed that the sample of 20 people were independent enough to participate in the music activities. They also showed that 50 percent of the sample had no music experience, while the other 50 percent had some experience, including social dancing, singing (amateur singers), and playing musical instruments such as the alto fiddle, harmonica, flute, and drums. Regarding their music preference, the sample group mentioned various types of music, including compositions from His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, Suntaraporn's Thai songs, Thai folk music, classical music, and other modern music. After obtaining the data on the focus group's music preference and experience, a list for preferred music was carefully drafted for use in the music activities. General health information from the Barthel ADL assessment and the sample's blood pressure values were collected for use in the music activities design process for the elderly. This process of designing and creating music activities adopted the methods used for teaching music to children to help improve the music skills, behaviors, and personalities of the sample group. Each planned activity was designed using the music teaching methods developed by Dalcroze (Dalcroze eurhythmics), Orff (Orff Schulwerk), and Kodály. We divided the activities into eight parts for eight categories as follows.

Part 1 and 2: "Different Rubber Ring" and "Changing Ball" (2 hours)

These activities were developed based on the music teaching methods for children proposed by Dalcroze eurhythmics, by using equipment to help improve the sample group's skills of adapting to rhythm, listening, moving, exercising creativity, and developing emotional expression from listening to the songs. The activities also allowed the sample group to move their body freely, using various muscles to express their emotions following a song's rhythm and melody. Both Part 1 and 2 activities were used as introductory activities for the sample group's first assessment of their behavior, personality, and music skills

Figure 1   Different Rubber Ring

Figure 2   Changing Ball

In the "Different Rubber Ring" activity, the procedure was as follows: (1) everyone held a woven rubber robe while standing in a circle; (2) a song was played once, and participants were instructed to walk freely on tiptoes following the song and according to their personal feelings, holding on to the rubber robe tightly and loosely; and (3) after finishing the first round of activity, new instructions were given to match the song's rhythm by participants bending their knees, bending down, turning around, and bending their head.

The "Changing Ball" activity required a big ball as equipment. The procedure was as follows: (1) everyone had to stand in a circle; (2) a song would be played once; (3) participants threw the ball to the person on their right side following the song's rhythm, which was repeated five times; and (4) after the participants had become accustomed to throwing the ball to their right, they were instructed to throw it to their left. They could then decide whether they wished to throw the ball to their right or their left. The person next to the one holding the ball had to concentrate on the rhythm, waiting for the ball to be thrown over. The songs were changed five times with five different rhythms.

Part 3: "Sounds from Your Body" (2 hours)

This activity was developed based on Orff Schulwerk's method. Examples of this method are body percussion and the use of a colorful cloth, which is the main equipment adopted by the Orff Schulwerk method to stimulate the participants' creativity in moving their body. This activity aimed to explain and provide examples of how to use one's body to make sounds instead of chopsticks, which included snapping fingers, clapping hands, touching the shoulder, and stepping.

Part 4: "Sounds from Hand Signals" (2 hours)

This activity was developed following the Kodály Method and focused on listening and singing skills. The activity aimed to practice listening to and reading basic hand signs in music notes according to such method. The procedure was as follows: (1) participants had to study and practice listening and singing minor third interval notes, and were tested by exposure to both higher and lower vocal notes; (2) practice was complicated through the addition of a rhythmic pattern between two notes; (3) imagination was boosted through the elders' own improvised note design; (4) different vocal notes were added until participants could fill up the whole pentatonic scale; (5) different vocal notes were further

added until participants could fill up the major scale; and (6) participants then practiced cannon singing.

Part 5: "Do Re Mi Game" (2 hours)

This activity was a continuation of the previous one and was also based on the Kodály Method. Hand signs and content of the song were deliberately connected to help the sample group remember the song, leading to easier opportunities to practice listening to it and singing along during the game.

Part 6: "Melodious Xylophone" (2 hours)

This activity was based on the Orff Schulwerk method of teaching music to children. The sample group was expected to practice playing the Orff xylophone, which is especially designed for Orff's teaching methods. The procedure was as follows: (1) during their first time playing an Orff instrument with two notes, the participants could not remember the notes nor control their hands while playing well, and after further practice, they improved and became more precise in hitting the notes; (2) while pairing, participants were confused by singing and playing the instrument base on two notes; and (3) when asked to improvise, the participants were mostly creative, generating new melodies that matched the beats. Some of the participants, however, were missing notes as they were not able to play the instrument in the right position (i.e., skipping the beat). After practicing for two to three more times, they started to improve.

Part 7: "Group Rhythm" (2 hours)

This activity was designed based on both Orff's and Kodály's methods of teaching music to children, with the focus being on studying the rhythm and using interesting percussion instruments and various types of drums to make the entire activity more stimulating. The details of the sound, such as various degrees of volume and rhythm and the different movements they communicated, were also included in the activity's instructions, together with the use of a rubber ring.

Part 8: "Group Singing" (6 hours)

This last activity was implemented to assess the results from participating in the activities in Parts 3–7, which had built and strengthened the sample group's foundation for group singing. The songs used in this part were "Jub-Mue-Wai-Leaw-Pai-Duay-Kan" ("Holding

Hands and Going Together") and "Phon-Phee-Mai" ("New Year's Blessing"), which are in simple time. They were added to the activity to prepare the sample group for the target and enable them to acquire listening and singing skills in groups and in a choir. This approach would help them understand one another and strengthen their skills in interpreting songs, communicating, and expressing their emotions naturally and freely. They were also expected to sing rhythmically and correctly. As for the sample group's behavior and personality changes after participating in these eight activities, regarding their thoughts and feelings, it was found that they participated when singing familiar and preferred songs. They could listen to the song and dance along well, even when repetitive practice was required. Overall, the sample experienced a desirable development of their behavior and personality. They were seen as more assertive, cheerful, and bolder when participating; they were also less worried and helped one another when joining a group where most of them could further develop their leadership qualities.

Regarding the effectiveness of the designed and created activities, the average figures from the assessments of the sample's music skills, behavior, and personality development are as indicated in Table 1.

According to Table 2, regarding the eight activities, during participation (E_1) for Part 3–7 and after participation for Part 8 (E_2), the elderly who participated in the activities showed achievement in behavior and personality, which consists of emotions and feelings, participation in the activities, assertiveness, muscle function, vision, and memory; the average assessment score for participants' behavior and personality during participation was 86.99 percent, while that for after participation was 95 percent. The average assessment score for participants' music skills, which consisted of their listening, singing, and movement skills, improvisation, and music expression, was 83.62 percent during participation and 92.33 percent after participation for Part 8. In conclusion, the average assessment score for the participants' behavior, personality, and music skills during and after participation was 85.32 percent/93.66 percent (E1/E2), which is in accordance with research that has stipulated a score of at least 80 percent/80 percent to be considered as achievement in music skills, behavior, and personality.

The average figures for the behavior and personality assessments were 59.99 percent /95 percent for the pre-test and post-test, with the music skill assessment scoring 45 percent and 92.33 percent, respectively. The results after the participants joined the activities reveal that the average figures of the participants' music skill, behavior, and personality increased, reaching an average of 93.66 percent, which is higher than the expected figure of 80 percent. We consider this outcome successful.

However, evaluations before participation, during participation, and after participation were applied with various activities since the researcher had designed and prioritized the activities into 3 three parts. The pre-test, i.e., the activities covered in Parts 1 to 2, completely covered individuals' music skills, behavior, and personality. Regarding the activities covered in Parts 3 to 7, the lessons were categorized into specific skills; hence, these activities were used to evaluate the learner during participation for efficiency with regard to each activity. The activities covered in Part 8 were used to evaluate the sample group after participation (i.e., the post-test) and also completely covered the participants' music skills, behavior, and personality. The resulting score obtained through the activities was summarized as the mean of music performance or any activity that shows individuals' achievement. Thus, the different activities were designed and could evaluate the objectives for each activity performed.

Table 1 Assessment Results During and After Participation (E_1/E_2)

Type of Assessment	During Participation E_1 (Percentage) (Parts 3–7)	After Participation E_2 (Percentage) (Part 8)
Behavior and Personality	86.99	95.00
Music Skill	83.62	92.33
Average (Percent)	85.32	93.66
Total	87.99	

Table 2 Assessment Results Before and After Participation (Percentage)

Type of Assessment	Before Participation (Percentage) Pre-test (Parts 1–2)	After Participation (Percentage) Post-test (Part 8)
Behavior and Personality	59.99	95.00
Music Skill	45.00	92.33
Average Percentage	52.50	93.66
Average SD	3.65	

Discussion

To design and create music activities for the elderly, we divided the entire process into eight parts for eight different activities, with a focus on group activities and on an environment that was built to support the elderly's learning process. We conducted interviews through group conversations to find the necessary data to best support the design and creation of such activities. The process echoed the study by RatanaUbol (2016), who had previously proposed the details of the planned activities used in the first stage, including activities focusing on the group and each individual, planning to accumulate learning resources, a continuous strategy and structure, teaching, and the whole knowledge assessment, as mentioned above. In Parts 1–2, the activities aimed at making the participants move along with music to express their emotions through movement and other equipment such as a colorful cloth and balls. This approach is supported by Lehmberg and Fung (2010) and Anderson (2012), who explained the activity through Dalcroze eurhythmics. While the practice of improvisation, that is, moving the body along to music based on tempo and duration, was performed by throwing and receiving a ball in the Part 1 "Changing Balls" activity, the practice of dynamic movement was performed by pulling and holding rubber rings together. These movements showed the sample group's synchronized thoughts and body movements, reflecting how their body responded to the sound they heard, which was the last step in transforming the body's inner thought into outer body movement and resulted in their music experiences. The process was also replicated in the "Different Rubber Ring" activity, in which the participants listened to the song and were allowed to creatively express their feelings ignited it; they then pushed and pulled the rubber ring in the way that they thought would best fit their feelings.

In Part 3–4 "Sound from Your Body" and Part 7 "Group Rhythm" activities, static body movements such as hand clapping, turning around, giving signals, speaking, singing, and bending one's body, together with dynamic body movements such as walking and sliding, were implemented in the form of movement that followed the rhythm of the song. This approach could be considered as reflecting the method used in Dalcroze eurhythmics and is further supported by the work of Sutthajit (2001), in which Dalcroze eurhythmics is used to explain how to teach music to children. In Part 4 "Sounds from Hand Signals" and Part 5 "Do Re Mi" activities, the sample group was required to practice reading, listening to, and singing notes, starting from familiarizing themselves with Kodály's hand signals to learn the different sound levels (high–low) for remembering both hand signals and notes concurrently. The participants were then asked to create their own motifs, reinforcing their ability to improvise from their creativity and rhythmic patterns and the skills gained from previous activities. This practice trained the participants for their group singing in the latter activities. From the "Do Re Mi" Activity, they were required to practice group singing skills by using the melody from "The Sound of Music," which has rhyming lyrics in Thai, to perform the call and response game. Furthermore, "The Sound of Music" can be applied to practice canon singing and is supported by the Kodály Method, in which speech patterns are rearranged for more complicated tasks such as speech canons (Nakwong, 2004).

In Part 6 "Melodious Xylophone" and Part 7 "Group Rhythm" activities, the Orff xylophone and percussion—the instruments of the Orff Schulwerk method—were applied to help the sample group develop their music playing skills, including their ability to use their muscles to play various types of instruments, to use imagination in identifying different tones (high–low), and increase confidence in their rhythm and imagination. Speech was used to represent a beating sound to tell the difference between high and low tones in the song they were performing. The exploration of melody and dynamics was conducted through the activity with a hula hoop representing the sound level for the sample to follow and beat. This approach is supported by Nakwong (2004) and Salmon (2012), who added that based on Orff's methods, musical instruments are used in the process of teaching music to children mainly to mark the rhythm of the songs that the students are singing. Orff's process starts from teaching children to use their own body parts to mark rhythm, which includes actions such as hand clapping, finger snapping, feet stamping, and leg clapping, before swapping to use musical instruments such as rattle, maracas, clever, large and small cymbals, triangle, and various types of drums. These procedures echo the approaches used in humanistic psychology. Boyarsky (2009) and Sutthajit (1998) explained that humanistic psychology highlights relationship-building between instructors and learners, which allows learners to explore their own interests in a positive way. It also includes instructors who are expected to guide, encourage, and pay attention to every learner equally. Regarding the practicality of the activities that lead to music acknowledgment based on Jerome S. Bruner's method,

Sutthajit (1998) cited Bruner's work as follows. For Parts 1–3 activities, the focus was on developing listening skills and rhythm. The learning process lay in moving the body along to music rhythmically, using balls to mark the beats instead of clapping hands, and acting out the song instead of clapping hands. These actions are linked to the idea of enactive representation and the process of learning through actions.

Overall, the eight activities were based on psychological procedures and approaches and especially on relevant methods for teaching music to children by Dalcroze, Kodály, and Orff. They were carefully crafted to build learners' music skills and knowledge from easier to more difficult parts, and all the skills gained from the first activities could also be used in the later ones. The accumulated skills from each activity would lead to the learners' positive mental, physical, and personal changes, such as improved cognition, eyesight, body muscles, agility, self-confidence, and social skills—all of which are clearly seen in the results of this study.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The results obtained from using music activities, which involved applying the music teaching technique for children into the activities, showed achievement for the participants. The music teaching technique for the elderly involves teaching from an easier level to a harder level. Physical and mental movement is also utilized to develop individuals' behavior and personality. Furthermore, the contents from the activities could lead participants to develop their basic music skills, thereby leading to achievement in their music skills. The participants could continue to improve their music skills to a higher level. Based on the participants' achievement in the study activities in which we focused on music skills, consisting of listening, singing, note reading, body movement, and improvisation the participants' averaged an evaluation score of 83.62 percent during the activities (E1) and averaged a score of 92.33 percent for the post-test evaluation. Regarding the participants' behavior and personality consisting of emotional and feeling expression, participation, muscular system, eyesight, vision, and memorability they obtained an average score of 86.99 percent during the activities (E1) and averaged a score of 95 percent for the post-test evaluation.

In terms of the limitations of this research, there was the lack of time due to the fact that engaging in such music activities requires practicing regularly. Therefore, the duration of the activities should be extended, or the

scope of the activities should be expanded. The activities should be carried out continuously with evaluations being carried out for another 12–18 weeks, considering that practice is needed to improve one's musical skills and rehearsal for achievement in a higher level. This is in accordance with the teaching music for children method that requires experience or repetitive practice for one to be skillful. A lesson might be the same as one previously given, but the activity design should vary for the learner to enjoy and practice regularly for them to improve their skills.

Future studies should explore and compare the results regarding behavior, personality, and music skills from two sets of samples using methods designed especially for the elderly who live in urban areas or in Bangkok as well as for those living in various provincial areas. The elements used are expected to be the same, while the activity patterns could differ. It is also advised to explore health limitations such as bone arthritis for further studies on developing music activities, with a focus on the health benefits of body exercises that follow music for the participants.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest.

Acknowledgments

References

Anderson, W. T. (2012). The Dalcroze approach to music education: Theory and applications. *General Music Today*, *26*(1), 27–33. https://doi.org/10.1177/1048371311428979

Boyarsky, T. (2009). Dalcroze eurhythmics and the quick reaction exercises. *The Orff Echo*, *41*(2), 15–11. https://terryboyarsky.files.wordpress.com/2012/08/quickreactionecho09.pdf

Carefect. (2013). *Musical activities for seniors and elderly.* http://www.care-fecthomecareservices.com/blog/musical-activities-for-seniors-elder/@@

Cohen, A., Bailey, B., & Nilsson, T. (2002). The importance of music to seniors. *Psychomusicology*, *18*(1–2), 89–102. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0094049

Creech, A., Hallam, S., McQueen, H., & Varvarigou, M. (2013). The power of music in the lives of older adults. *Research Studies in Music Education*, *35*(1), 87–102. https://doi.org/10.1177/1321103X13478862

Foundation for Older Persons' Development [FOPDEV]. (2015). *Completely aging society.* https://fopdev.or.th/

Lehmberg, L. J., & Fung, C. (2010). Benefits of music participation for senior citizens: A review of the literature. *Music Education Research International*, *4*, 19–30. https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/ Benefits-of-Music-Participation-for-Senior-A-Review-Lehmberg-Fu ng/707aebfeffdaef67f6c4b8ce1b4880565689c43a

Nakwong, T. (2004). *Orff-Schulwerk* (2nd ed.). Kasetsart University Press.

Phaksrikulkumthon, N., (2018). *Insight into how senior Marketing has captured the aging market*. https://brandinside.asia/insight-aging-society/

Ratana-Ubol, A. (2016)**.** *Learning of adults and the elderly in Thai society.* Chulalongkorn University Press.

Salmon, S. (2012). Inclusion and Orff Schulwerk. *The Orff Echo*, *45*(1), 12–17. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/257736498_ Inclusion_and_Orff-Schulwerk

Sutthajit, N. (1998). *Music teaching psychology* (4th ed.). Chulalongkorn University Press.

Sutthajit, N. (2001). *Music teaching behavior*. Chulalongkorn University Press.

United Nations [UN]. (2017). *World population ageing 2017*: *Highlights.* http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/ pdf/ageing/WPA2017_Highlights.pdf