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Music Connect: Tracking Adolescent Mood Change Across a Five-Session Nordoff-Robbins-Inspired School Curriculum

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Abstract

Adolescent mental health is a global issue of concern in modern society: half of all mental health problems occur before age 14 and most of these conditions are not detected in school environments. The effect of a five-session Music Connect, a music curriculum inspired by Nordoff-Robbins, on the mood and feelings of adolescents was studied using a quasi-experimental, within-subjects, longitudinal design with 16 adolescents participating, and depressive symptoms assessed with the Moods and Feelings Questionnaire. Thirty children (M age $\approx 12 \pm 1$), approximately equally distributed among genders, were recruited by the convenience sampling method from a single non-government school in Mumbai, India. Results indicated there was a statistically significant decrease in MFQ scores between Session 1 ($M = 9.57$, $SD = 7.06$) and Session 5 ($M = 2.07$, $SD = 2.80$), with most of the difference in scores occurring within first three sessions of the intervention and leveling off thereafter. This trajectory was corroborated by a repeated-measures ANOVA, $F(4, 116) = 25.25$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_g = .289$, and a paired-samples t -test, $t(29) = 6.62$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.21$, where 83% of participants showed improvement overall. The findings here point to the possibility of providing a scalable and low-cost support to school wellbeing programs through a structured and group-based music curriculum. The findings do not provide evidence for causal claims as there was no control group, but they do provide some basis for further controlled, longitudinal research.

Keywords: music therapy, Nordoff-Robbins, school-based intervention, adolescent mental health, emotional regulation, social-emotional learning, positive psychology