Extracurricular Music Activities in School and School Engagement: Students' and Teachers' Perspectives

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Abstract

Music and the arts are of growing interest in promoting success in school and psychological development of young people in general. However, there are few studies focused on the relationship between music and, more specifically on school engagement of vulnerable students. Thus, this exploratory study aims to understand the perceived impact of student participation in a school percussion group on school engagement. The research followed a qualitative methodology through individual semi-structured interviews. Six pupils aged between eleven and fifteen, two teachers of these pupils and two of the percussion group facilitators took part in the study. The results reveal a positive impact perceived by the participants arising from participation in the percussion group, with emphasis on the behavioural dimension of school engagement. Considering the relation between school engagement and learning processes, promoting school engagement through musical activities could be an innovative strategy to promote school success.

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Actividades Musicales Extracurriculares en la Escuela y Compromiso Escolar: Perspectivas de Estudiantes y Docentes

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Resumen

La música y las artes son de creciente interés para promover el éxito escolar y el desarrollo psicológico de los jóvenes en general. Sin embargo, son escasos los estudios centrados en la relación entre la música y más concretamente en la implicación escolar de estudiantes vulnerables. Por lo tanto, este estudio exploratorio tiene como objetivo comprender el impacto percibido de la participación de los estudiantes en un grupo de percusión escolar en el compromiso escolar. La investigación siguió una metodología cualitativa a través de entrevistas individuales semiestructuradas. Participaron en el estudio seis alumnos de entre once y quince años, dos profesores de estos alumnos y dos de los facilitadores del grupo de percusión. Los resultados revelan un impacto positivo percibido por los participantes derivado de la participación en el grupo de percusión, con énfasis en la dimensión comportamental del compromiso escolar. Teniendo en cuenta la relación entre la participación escolar y los procesos de aprendizaje, promover la participación escolar a través de actividades musicales podría ser una estrategia innovadora para promover el éxito escolar.

Palabras clave: compromiso escolar, éxito escolar, actividades musicales extraescolares, metodología cualitativa

Music is a fundamental element in everyday life, present in people's daily lives (Justo & Freitas, 2016; Rentfrow, 2012). It is an art form that allows the sharing of emotions and facilitates human relationships, strengthening empathy and pleasure in interpersonal relationships (Areias, 2016), presenting itself as a means of communication and expression (Calicchio & do Prado, 2017). Specifically, in the case of children and adolescents, music learners, music improves the relationship between young people, allowing the discussion of ideas and points of view, and raising awareness of the importance of teamwork (Finger et al., 2016).

However, despite these advantages of music education, it is important to recognize that some music students can experience negative effects such as disappointments and conflicts in music-making process (MacGregor, 2022). This reinforces the importance of recognizing the musical vulnerability, defined as music pupils' "inherent and situational openness to being affected by the semantic and somatic properties of music" (MacGregor, 2022, p. 24). By one hand, musical vulnerability can lead to a positive receptivity to alternative musical interpretations, a greater sensitivity to others' ideas, new ways of thinking and a greater availability and willingness to step out of the comfort zone. On the other hand, musical vulnerability can also lead to experience anxiety or perfectionism (MacGregor, 2022), since music production requires a balance between self and others and a careful balance between personal aspirations and social ambitions. Thus, music production can be a highly rewarding activity and contribute to a sense of personal fulfillment and social affiliation but can also quickly turn into frustrating and unsatisfactory experience when there is no careful management and understanding of the paradox between individual contributions and collective interests (MacGregor, 2022). This paradoxical dynamic - paradox of belonging, causes a conflict between self-expression and collective affiliation (Smith & Lewis, 2011). However, by having the opportunity to explore the possibilities of solving this type of conflict, individuals also develop creativity and flexibility, necessary to stimulate group and community cooperation and cohesion (MacGregor, 2020; Smith & Lewis 2011). One of the contexts that provide opportunities to overcome this kind of paradox is in extracurricular music activities.

Extracurricular activities in general are shown to be enhancers of positive youth development (Oberle et al., 2019) as they enable opportunities for identity expression and exploration and promote opportunities for positive

and healthy social relationships with peers (Billingsley & Hurd, 2019; Feldman & Matjasko, 2005; Oberle et al., 2019).

The participation of young people in extracurricular activities in school outside of regular class hours is also associated with a greater sense of belonging and school involvement (e.g., Bouchard & Berg, 2017; Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Knifsend & Graham, 2012). Specifically in relation to the artistic area, activities such as dance, music or theatre constitute a favourable space for the management and expression of feelings, fears and expectations (Mendes, 2017). In this sense, the participation of students in extracurricular music activities promotes the development of skills such as critical thinking and creativity (Vidulin, 2020). There is also evidence that participation in musical groups, extra-curricular rehearsals and performing in a school show provides increased self-confidence (Hallam, 2010; Pitts, 2007; Rodrigues & Rosin, 2011). Furthermore, participation in artistic activities, namely in the field of music, is positively related to a high level of self-esteem (Mak & Fancourt, 2019), communication, establishing positive interpersonal relationships and teamwork, assuming an important role in promoting social interaction and increasing social skills (Blandford & Duarte, 2004; Hallam, 2010; Pitts, 2007; Rodrigues & Rosin, 2011; Vidulin, 2020).

School Engagement

School engagement has been conceptualised in the literature as the degree of students' commitment towards school and academic learning (Festas et al., 2018; Simons-Morton & Chen, 2009; Veiga et al., 2012a). There is consensus regarding its multidimensional nature, and, in this sense, school engagement can be understood as the student's attachment to school, based on four dimensions: affective, cognitive, agency and behavioural (Festas et al., 2018; Fredricks et al., 2004; Reeve & Tseng, 2011; Veiga, 2013, 2016). Greater school engagement is associated with higher student interest, higher academic achievement, fewer disruptive behaviours, positive interpersonal relationships, resilience and prevention of drop-out and delinquency (Fernandes et al., 2016; Festas et al., 2018; Fredricks et al., 2004; Jimerson et al., 2003; Malveiro & Veiga, 2016; Melo & Guerra, 2020; Sanches, 2016; Silva et al., 2017). Two types of factors that facilitate students' involvement can be distinguished (Skinner & Pitzer, 2012). On the one hand, personal factors, which concern students' self-perceptions, more specifically the sense

of self-efficacy, the feeling of belonging to the school (Skinner & Pitzer, 2012) and the self-concept (Veiga et al., 2012b). On the other hand, contextual factors are distinguished, which refer to the interaction between the student and the various contexts in which he/she is included (peer group, school and family) (Veiga et al., 2012b). School engagement is thus a multidimensional construct that results from the interaction between the individual and the contextual factors, helping to better understand students' complex experiences at school and to design more targeted and differentiated interventions (Fredricks et al., 2004) to improve academic achievement

Music and School Engagement

Several authors argue for the potential of music to engage uninterested students in academic activities (e.g., Bokiev et al., 2018; Hallam & Council, 2015; McFerran et al., 2017; Rusinek, 2008). Moura and colleagues (2014) found that students involved in the extracurricular activity "*Music Club*" showed a significantly higher sense of enjoyment and identification with school than students who did not attend any type of extracurricular activity. Other studies (e.g., Martinez et al., 2016; Rusinek, 2008), have also identified a greater sense of belonging to school in students participating in artistic activities, including music. Evidence shows that joining a musical group allows students to obtain better grades, a greater interest in school and subjects, as well as greater compliance with tasks requested by the teacher and better performance in completing assignments (Campos, 2014; Moura et al., 2014). The disciplined and organised environment within an orchestra can increase the school engagement once it helps in the establishment of new, more positive and structuring routines (Penna, 2017). According to a study conducted by Penna (2017), students' participation in orchestra activities allows better time management, greater motivation for study, and greater focus of effort and attention. Programmes including the arts component in school have been shown to be particularly effective in re-engaging students in learning (Kinder & Harland, 2004). Dunlap and Lowenthal (2010) highlighted the potential of music to personalise and energise the learning environment or experience and engage students in the construction of knowledge. Also, composing and performing music provides a way to promote students' interest and engage them with the content, increasing their interaction with learning (Dunlap & Lowenthal, 2010). This is particulary

important with students from vunerable contexts with many risk factors, such as poverty or family disfunctions. As Bull (2021) referred, music educators can influence inequalities through their pedagogies and including young people's voices. Bull (2021) also suggests changes in the public funding in order to allows that every child have an opportunity to learn an instrument. The author emphasizes the importance of "sustain and develop more representative, cross-cultural, and innovative musical cultures" (p. 191), supporting the development of the "creative musician with a wide set of competencies" (p. 192).

The present study was conducted as part of a broad community-based socio-educational research and intervention project implemented in the school years 2019/20 and 2020/21, aiming at preventing and reducing early school leaving and absenteeism, promoting positive behaviors and academic success for all students. The main goal of this study is to assess the impacts of the participation in an extracurricular percussion group in the school engagment of students from a high-risk context. There is some evidence on the impact of participation in music activities on school engagement. However, the literature is still scarce about the understanding of this impact with vulnerable youth/students at risk, including their own perspectives and the perspectives from other educational agents, and focused on non-typical music education such as collaborative music creation. This study aims to fill those gaps.

Methodology

Research Design and Research Questions

Following the Community-Based Participatory Research assumptions (Leavy, 2017), and focused the aforementioned purpose of the main project, the needs of the target group, the topic (music and extracurrilar activities) and the sampling, the qualitative methodology was adopted to the current study. It will allow to better understand the reality and the educational phenomena that is being investigated. Several educational actors (e.g., students, teachers, and music teachers/facilitators) were valued and collectively identified the issues, problems and solutions to research intervention.

This qualitative option is justified by the fact that this type of approach is related to the in-depth understanding of a particular problem or issue, focusing on the interpretative analysis and understanding of individuals' subjective experience, by studying how people understand, create and interpret their particular experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Gonçalves & Gonçalves, 2021; Leavy, 2017).

The main objective of this exploratory study is to understand the perceived impact of students' participation in the school percussion group. In the present exploratory study, it was very important to explore this perceived impact through the perspective of students, teachers and music facilitators. Thus, the study was conducted according to the following research questions:

1. What motivates students to participate in the school percussion group and what made them commit to the activity over time?
2. What is the perceived impact of participation in the school percussion group on high- risk students' school engagement?
3. What changes at the individual and interpersonal level can be distinguished in the students as a result of their participation in the percussion group through their own perspective and the perspective of their teachers and facilitators?

Current Study

The school

The research context in which the present study was developed is a medium-sized public-school cluster. This school cluster is inserted in an urban territory marked by strong socio-economic asymmetries and social stigmatisation, in which poverty, low educational qualifications, unemployment, drug trafficking and delinquency predominate (Serôdio et al., 2018). The specificities of this social context are reflected to a large extent in the school context, which is marked by a low valuation of school by students and families, high levels of absenteeism and behavior problems, as well as low levels of academic achievement, with persistent learning difficulties at all levels of education (Veríssimo et al., 2021).

The percussion group

The present study focused on the school percussion group, one of the activities promoted by the aforementioned project with a view to fostering students' motivation and involvement with the school. The school percussion group was an extracurricular activity aimed at students from grades 6 to 9 (from 11 to 15 years-old) and was implemented on a bi-weekly basis. This initiative had interconnected artistic and social objectives, namely through the creation of original musical themes (mostly using simple percussion instruments and video support) from the combination of the contributions of all participants, whether in the form of idea, sound, rhythm or image, without the need to master the musical language or the ability to play an instrument. In this way it aimed to contribute to the creation of a new sense of community in the school context, promoting positive relationships between pupils and with reference adults, the sense of belonging and involvement with the school, as well as the pupils' sense of personal fulfilment.

Participants

The participants of this study include six students that participate in the percussion group, two teachers from school of these students (with no music education or training) and two of the facilitators of the activity (musicians who dynamizes the percussion group). Since it was intended to obtain a sample of students with greater experience of participation in the percussion group, the participants were selected through a process of convenience purposive sampling. Thus, the criteria for the inclusion of the students in the sample were as follows: i) long-term participation in the percussion group (during at least one school year); ii) assiduity in the sessions and iii) participation in the preparation phase of musical outputs and public performances. Table 1 presents socioacademic information about the students participating in the study.

Table 1
Socio-demographic characterisation - students

Participants	Gender	Age	Year of schooling	Repetitions	Previous music experience
A1	F	13	6th grade	One year	Music lessons at school
A2	F	14	6th grade	Two years	Music lessons at school
A3	F	12	6th grade	No reprovals	Did not have
A4	F	13	6th grade	One year	Music lessons at school
A5	F	11	6th grade	No reprovals	Informal/ family contact
A6	M	15	7th grade	Two years	Did not have

Regarding the two teachers who participated in the study, they are both male and are class directors of the percussion group students since the school year 2019/2020. Regarding the subject area, teacher P1 teaches Physical Education and Citizenship Education and teacher P2, teaches Portuguese and English.

Regarding the two percussion group facilitators, both are male and were present in the team that facilitated the activity during the two school years. Their paths are differentiated, with the facilitator D1 having a background in Music Education and currently working as a creator in areas related to music (music for community projects, shows, dance, theatre and composition). In turn, facilitator D2 has a background in Civil Engineering and works in activities focused on the area of music for children and communities.

Data Collection Procedures

Informed consent was obtained from the teachers and facilitators of the activity and from the students' parents or carers. After obtaining this consent, the interviews were conducted individually, in the school context in a face-to-face format and using audio recording. The average duration of these interviews was approximately 40 minutes, with the longest lasting one hour.

   Three semi-structured interview scripts were developed particularly for this study, considering the research questions, aimed at the three different groups of participants: students, teachers and percussion group conductors. The interview script for the students included the dimensions: (a) socio-demographic data; (b) the perception of the overall percussion group experience; (c) the influence of the percussion group experience on their individual and interpersonal development; (d) the perception of the impact of participating in the percussion group on their engagement and interest in school; (e) the influence of the percussion group experience on the students' academic learning and on the consolidation of new learning in general. The script for the percussion group facilitators included the dimensions: (a) socio-demographic and professional data; (b) objectives and functioning of the percussion group; (c) perspective on learning from the percussion group and possible changes perceived in the students; and (d) main contributions of the percussion group for the students. The interview script for teachers included the dimensions: (a) socio-demographic and professional data; (b) the perception of the students' experience in the percussion group, at individual and interpersonal level; (c) the perception of the influence of the percussion group on students' engagement and interest in school; (d) the influence of the percussion group experience on the students' school learning.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was organised according to the following stages: pre-analysis, organisation of the material and data treatment and interpretation (Gondim & Bendassolli, 2014). Thus, in a first stage, the interviews were entirely transcribed and then read through, with the aim of contacting with the content of the enterviews (Cavalcante et al., 2014). In a second stage, a tree of categories and subsequent coding was created based on the thematic analysis of the interviews, with the aim of finding repeated patterns of meaning, a

method that allows data to be represented in a rich, detailed and complex way (Brandão et al., 2021). The process of creating categories was carried out through a semi-inductive analysis, in the sense that some of the categories were created from the previous interview script and based on the theoretical framework of the study, while others emerged from the thematic analysis of the data (Saldaña, 2013). The analysis was carried out using NVIVO software version 1.5, facilitating the organisation of the information up to the extraction of the information for the creation of reports and graphs (Lage, 2011; Nodari et al., 2014).

The design, data collection and subsequent analysis followed the assumptions of validaty and reliability as recommended by Cresswell & Miller (2000) and Whittemore et. al., (2001). Whittemore et. al. (2001) sistematized a set of strategies to achieve validity and reliability that were followed, namely the triangulation of data with the participation of different informants (students, teachers and facilitators), whose perceptions were valued and included in the analysis, without constrictions. Before the interviews, the researchers observed several sessions of the percussion group and attended some public musical performances. The analysis, as described above, were conducted in a specific software and we subject to peer review (by other researchers), mainly on the topics/dimensions more ambiguous. Literature review was part of all the project and on the following presentation of the results.

Presentation and Discussion of Results

This section will describe the results obtained and discuss them in light with the literature. However, it is important to consider that this is an exploratory study that focuses on a percussion group with collaborative musical creation and not on a classical musical activity (e.g., orchestra). The results obtained can be related to the way the activities were conducted and not only related to the fact that it is a musical activity. Whenever appropriate, the results will be complemented and substantiated with examples of excerpts from the interviews, ensuring the confidentiality and anonymity of the different participants.

Topic 1: Students' Motivations for Participating in the Percussion Group

According to the perception of the facilitators, there was an evolution related to the motivation and resilience of students:

> D2: "the resilience because this process is not easy (...) I can say that those who have stayed are the ones who have this competence and they stay, and if they can't come for a week or two, they come back again and motivate themselves to come".

Based on the students' perceptions, the motivation to participate in the percussion group was mainly related to leisure time and peer influence. It should also be noted that two students mentioned the possibility of achieving a long-term goal:

> A5: "(...) many of my friends said "oh I go to the percussion group, it's really cool and you like dancing and singing, it's really cool"... And I tried it, I liked it and now I come all the percussion group sessions".

> A5: "That if I follow the percussion group even more, I will achieve my dream, which is to be a professional singer and dancer".

Apart from the students, the facilitators and one teacher also mentioned reasons for the students' participation related to the features and value of the activity, such as the prominence given to the students' ideas and its difference compared to other current activities.

> D1: "there are students who come because this is the space where they can sometimes play a leading role and give ideas, the ideas are heard and... these ideas are worked on".

> P1: "(...) [the percussion group] is also an activity that is a little different from what they usually do, so it's not from the classes".

Similarly, the facilitators also highlight motivations related to those "*who like music*" (D2) and the fact that students "*like the team [of facilitators]*" (D1).

According to the interviewees, initially there seem to be external motivational factors for participating in the percussion group (e.g., peer influence and occupation of free time). However, with the gradual increase of students' engagement in the activity there seems to be a predominance of intrinsic motivations (e.g., enjoyment of the activity and relationship with the team). Hence, these seem to be important indicators insofar, as intrinsic motivation is associated with high levels of cognitive engagement, which refers to students with greater ability to monitor learning, persistence in the face of challenging tasks, management of working time, among other aspects (Lemos, 2015).

Topic 2: Perceived Changes through Participation in the Percussion Group in Terms of School Engagement

In order to understand the students, percussion group facilitators and teachers' perceptions about the impact of participation in the percussion group on school engagement, it is pertinent to explore the speeches based on the behavioural, affective, cognitive and agency dimensions of school engagement.

Regarding the behavioural dimension, and specifically with regard to learning-oriented behaviours, a positive impact on behaviour and participation in class was highlighted, as recognised in the discourse of students and teachers.

> A5: "Yes, because when you get out of bed thinking you're going to have percussion group today, you're going to be on your best behaviour so that the lessons will soon be over, and you can go to percussion group".

> P2: "I now see them more comfortable to raise their hands and ask a question because they didn't understand, which they didn't used to do".

In addition, facilitators and students highlighted improvements in attention and concentration, as they are able to have "*much longer focus times on a task*" (D1) and "*participate a little more in class*" (A4).

These aspects are consistent with evidence in the literature (e.g., Penna, 2017), in the sense that students who have had regular contact with music showed improvements in effort, attention and concentration behaviours, as it helps them focus on study.

In the same vein, regarding the affective dimension, the tendency for students involved in the percussion group to show more interest in school was identified by both facilitators and students:

> D1: "I'll give a concrete example (...) like M. (...) clearly he's a kid more interested in school because he's in the percussion group (...) it's quite obvious".

> A3: "before I came to the percussion group, I was always angry with someone, but now I'm not, I'm always in a good mood, I always come to school".

> D1: "we were told that some pupils (...) designated, in a very specific way, the percussion group as one of the good things that made them come to school".

This perception of a greater sense of pleasure and interest in school is in line with the study of Moura and colleagues (2014), according to which it was possible to verify that students involved in the "*Music Club*" expressed positive feelings towards school, and subsequently tended to display a more positive view about it, when compared to students who did not integrate the club. It is important to emphasize that the participants of the study also had the opportunity to demonstrate the work developed in percussion group through the making of video clips shared on social networks and public shows, that could contribute to positive feelings about school. Furthermore, it is argued by several authors (Bokiev et al., 2018; Hallam & Council, 2015; McFerran et al., 2017; Rusinek, 2008) that music has the potential to engage students with reduced interest in academic activities.

In this sense, for the integration in the school community and the feeling of belonging, both teachers highlighted the important contribution that the percussion group can constitute, insofar as "[percussion group] *helps them a*

lot in the integration of the school itself" (P1), as "*They finally began to realise that the school has a function*" (P2).

Also in the study by Martinez and collaborators (2016) a greater sense of belonging to the school was found in students who attend artistic activities, where music was included. Several authors (Bouchard & Berg, 2017; Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Knifsend & Graham, 2012) have conducted studies that support the awareness that participation in extracurricular activities is associated with a greater sense of belonging and engagement towards school.

In the cognitive dimension of school involvement, it was found through the speeches of students, teachers and facilitators changes in relation to students' beliefs about themselves. In this sense, two students expressed a reinforcement of self-confidence and sense of competence by recognising that "*I'm not ashamed of things and face* (...) *stage fright*" (A2) and "*in the percussion group I learned not to be afraid of going on stage*" (A3).

Similarly, the facilitators and teachers corroborated positive changes at the level of self-esteem, self-confidence and sense of competence, as can be seen in the following excerpts:

> P2: "the issues of self-esteem I think have improved a lot (...) feeling that they are capable which was something that I think they were not used to feeling".

> D1: "there are some visible results, for example in the students' self-esteem (...) it's a fairly obvious matter (...) there are students who were totally embarrassed to play at the beginning (...) and today they feel a totally different confidence".

These changes perceived by the interviewees are in line with evidence from other studies, which show that participation in extracurricular activities is associated with the positive development of variables associated with psychosocial development, particularly at the level of self-esteem (Feldman & Matjasko, 2005). The participation in extracurricular activities also enables the experience of time structure, promotes the socioemotional skills development and can contribute as an important protective factor (Feldman & Matjasko, 2005). Notably, the study by Mak and Fancourt (2019) specifically refers to music as promoting high levels of self-esteem. Other

studies (Hallam, 2010; Pitts, 2007; Rodrigues & Rosin, 2011), in turn, report that participation in musical groups and involvement in the preparation and performance of a school performance enhances increased self-confidence.

The agency dimension of school engagement is related to the intervention and influence of students in the school environment, with improvements reported at the level of student autonomy and proactivity by a teacher and one of the facilitators, as shown in the following excerpts:

> D1: "they can propose an idea without fear of being censored (...) and, therefore, there is... this space that somehow is won …"
>
> P2: "I can already see that they are more resourceful in that sense that they can already understand that the notebook is theirs, (...) so as far as autonomy is concerned, I think this has stirred something in these girls, considering the characteristics they have …"

Although the interviewees' speeches have focused less on this dimension, the slight changes perceived in the students at this level can be discussed since they constitute a good starting point for a greater intervention of these students in the school context. In fact, the importance of integrating this fourth aspect in the concept of school engagement relates to the fact that it allows students not only to react to learning tasks, but also to act on them, changing them and transforming them into something more personal, which is relevant according to their interests and/or challenging, contributing to the enrichment of the learning process (Reeve & Tseng, 2011). Thus, the agency dimension facilitates the path to academic success, as well as a more motivating learning environment (Reeve, 2013).

Topic 3: Perceived Changes through Participation in the Percussion Group on an Individual and Interpersonal Level

From the analysis of the participants' perceptions, the results tend to point to a more significant positive impact on the ability to relate to others. As a result of participation in the percussion group, there was a tendency for positive development in the students with regard to cooperation, availability and comfort in relating to others. Most of those interviewed (six students and both

facilitators) agreed that the changes at these levels are very noticeable in terms of helping each other and relational dynamics:

> A6: "I think I help my classmates more now... sometimes we do group activities, one doesn't understand, and I think in the old days we went on without him and now I think we go back just to help him".

> A4: "Before at the beginning I was very shy, but now I'm not anymore, I'm much more friendly".

> D2: "(…) the way we relate in that space at that moment (...) which is different from the others, we try to make it different from the others and there are moments when we succeed, and they recognise this".

Specifically, at the level of new social relationships with peers, three students and one of the facilitators mentioned that the extracurricular music activities promoted the growth of their circle of friends and, directly or directly, the level of trust in others:

> A4: "Before I had few friends, now I have more".

> D1: "of trust even in ourselves, that there is a... there is a very big change in that sense".

Finally, the contribution of the percussion group to the students' feeling of being appreciated by other people was also highlighted by one of teachers, "*to be seen and to be appreciated"* (P2).

Also, at the interpersonal level, four of the interviewees highlighted improvements at the communication level, namely one of the facilitators pointed out changes in active listening and two students mentioned that the percussion group helped them to better communicate to an audience. One of the teachers reinforced this change, as he notes the pupils "*much more communicative than what they really were*," and attributes it to "*music (which) has advantages, a great deal, and I don't know to what extent it hasn't led to them relaxing because I felt they were very tense in the 5th grade*" (P2). Also, as empathy is an aspect that contributes to communication, one of the

facilitators mentioned improvements in the "*ability to listen to the other (...)
and then empathy"* (D2). These perceptions are in line with the empirical
evidence, namely at the level of collaboration with others, communication
and development of trust, facilitating the promotion of social interaction
(Blandford & Duarte, 2004; Hallam, 2010; Vidulin, 2020). Other studies in
the educational context also advocate that participation in extracurricular
activities, in which music can be included, means a crucial development
opportunity for children and adolescents, since they promote the positive
development of social relationships with peers (Billingsley & Hurd, 2019;
Feldman & Matjasko, 2005; Oberle et al., 2019).

Also, the results show improvement on an individual level, taking into
account the participation in the percussion group activity. Firstly, in terms of
engagement with the activity, four students and two teachers highlighted the
students' enthusiasm and pride in the activity and, in this sense, one of the
teachers mentioned that *"they really talk about this issue of the percussion
group being ready and when they talk about it they talk about it in a positive
way and with enthusiasm."* (P1).

Secondly, two students and two teachers highlighted the possibility that
the percussion group might have helped in the development of greater
extroversion, as mentioned by a f student and a teacher:

> A5: "Because when I meet someone, I'm very shy, but as the days
> go by I get used to it and make the whole show".

> P2: "Yes, yes they did from the moment they started to loosen up
> because I think the percussion group did this to them".

It should also be noted that two students reported that their intensive use
of technology (e.g., mobile phones) decreased with their participation in the
percussion group, stating that *"we learn a lot of things (...) we have more time
to stay here at school, we can leave our mobile phones behind a bit"* (A4).
This involvement with technologies is also reported in the study by Penna
(2017), who found that participation in an orchestra allowed students to
spend less time watching television or on the internet.

Conclusions

This exploratory study sought to identify the potential of music in school as an extracurricular activity to involvement in school. The strength of this study was to integrate and explore the different perspectives of the participating students, the facilitators of the percussion group's activities, as well as the teachers with a closer relationship with these students. In addition, this is an exploratory study that seeks to understand the impact of a collective musical creation activity on the school engagement of students with low academic achievement and high risk of dropping out of school.

Overall results show a positive influence of participation in the percussion group on the interest in the school, and in the way, it promoted the relationship with peers. Despite the small number of interviewees, this data is encouraging, as they are in line with few empirical evidences, showing that music is an activity to invest in, especially in educational communities with economic and educational vulnerabilities, such as low levels of school motivation or academic achievement.

Regarding school engagement, there is a tendency towards a positive influence in all its dimensions, but in some dimensions the influence on students was reported as more expressive. The one in which participants report the most significant improvements is the behavioural dimension, namely positive behaviour and participation and high levels of attention and concentration. The affective dimension was also prominent in the discourse of more than half of the participants, who reported an increase in interest towards school and a better integration in the school context and with classmates. Regarding the cognitive dimension, half of the participants report improvements in self-confidence, self-esteem and sense of competence. Through the discourse of the participants, other relevant dimensions were also captured related to the promotion of a more positive school experience, namely in terms of interpersonal relationships. In this way, it can be seen that this positive manifestation in the interpersonal dimension is in line with the social objectives of the activity, namely at the level of group cohesion.

Finally, the agency dimension is the one in which there is a lower expression of the percussion group's impact. However, the existence of a more active participation in contributing with new ideas is denoted, as well as a greater autonomy on the part of the students. This exploratory study thus emphasises the value of extracurricular activities in the field of music for

school engagement, but also in other areas that, together with the involvement of students at school, contribute to the prevention of early school leaving and promotion of academic success. Considering the evidence of this study, the relevance of this type of educational intervention based on collective musical creation activities is reinforced, especially in economically and socially disadvantaged school contexts. Furthermore, this corroborates evidence already found in other similar studies which, in a school environment, highlight the impact of involvement with music on the experience of moments of emotion, creativity, communication and joy to the students. Consequently, it is possible to conclude that music may constitute an artistic language that is crucial for the education and training of children and young people (Oliveira et al., 2020), as it can contribute to a more positive involvement in school and, consequently, greater success at school.

Despite the exploratory results presented, this study has some limitations. First, the small number of participants, which made it impossible to obtain theoretical saturation in data analysis (Gonçalves & Gonçalves, 2021). Another limitation, resulting from the pandemic situation, is related to the interruption of the percussion group sessions, which had a negative impact on the development of the activity, since it limited the regularity of the work already developed with the students. This interruption of the face-to-face dynamic for a considerable period of time reinforces the need to read the results of this study with caution, as the interviewees' perceptions of the influence of the activity on the students could have been more in-depth. Due to the limitations imposed by the pandemic, we suggest the replication of this study in a context where regularity of the work developed in extracurricular activities and face-to-face format is feasible.

Further research of this domain would be pertinent given the scarcity of studies that relate artistic activities, especially music, with school engagement. With the aim of deepening the dimensions under study and their influence on academic success, it is suggested that studies be carried out using a mixed methodology, a larger sample of participants collected from different school contexts and including some objective measures of school attendance and academic achievement.

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