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Gülten Cüceoğlu Önder

University of Mehmet Akif Ersoy, gulten_cuceoglu@yahoo.com

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Students' Attitudes towards Individual Musical Instrument Courses in Music Education Graduate Programs in Turkey

Gülten Cüceoğlu Önder
University of Mehmet Akif Ersoy
Turkey

Abstract: The Individual Musical Instrument course is a compulsory part of the curriculum, in the Music Education Departments of universities in Turkey. The main purpose of the course is to ensure that each student is able to play a musical instrument and, use the instrument once they become music teachers. This study aims to determine the attitudes of students enrolled in the Music Education Department towards the course within the program. Participants included 334 students studying Music Education at four different Universities in Turkey. The study adopted the "Attitudes towards Individual Musical Instrument Course Scale" (Topoğlu & Erden, 2012). No statistically significant difference in students' attitude towards the course was identified related to gender, the type of high schools they graduated and the total period of education they received. In contrast, a statistically significant difference in students' attitudes was identified related to grade levels, the types of instruments they learned, and the time allocated each day for practice.

Keywords: Music education, music teaching, individual musical instrument course, musical instrument, attitude

Introduction

The *Individual Musical Instrument* course aims to ensure that pre-service music teachers obtain the knowledge, skills, techniques and applications related to the musical instrument that they play throughout their professional lives. In this regard, it is important for a music teacher to be able to play a musical instrument to a high level of proficiency, given that they may be required to teach in schools that have limited music educational resources, including specialised rooms or equipment.

In Turkey, the *Individual Musical Instrument* course is a compulsory part of the curriculum for primary, secondary and high school music teachers, offered over a period of eight semesters in the Music Education Department graduate program. The first seven semesters are given over to *Individual Musical Instrument* instruction, while the final semester it is referred to as the *Individual Musical Instrument and its Education* course.

The content of the *Individual Musical Instrument* course helps students to gain the required knowledge, skills and techniques related to a musical instrument in a certain sequence, and to perform intra- and inter-cultural musical pieces in which the learned technical and musical skills are demonstrated appropriate for the various proficiency levels. The *Individual Musical Instrument and its Education* course involves the learning and application of various techniques appropriate to the level of proficiency, as well as the teaching of techniques for the playing of a musical instrument, practices relevant for the

teaching of how to play an instrument, the utilization of musical instruments in educational music and the performing of musical pieces that may be used in music education in schools.

The process of learning how to play an instrument involves the systematic development of specific skills that are necessary for properly using the instrument (Schleuter, 1996). Being knowledgeable about the instrument, understanding the basic approaches and skills necessary for playing the instrument, and displaying an organized and efficient attitude are all prerequisites for music education (Saraç, 1992). The process of learning to play an instrument varies from student to student. Accordingly, students and teachers work individually in one-to-one correspondence in the *Individual Musical Instrument* course. The time allocated for the course within the program is one hour per week, and involves education in the violin, viola, cello, contrabass, flute, guitar, bağlama and vocal training. Students can choose the instrument that they want to learn to play in the course even if they have had no previous experience with that instrument.

The attitudes of pre-service music teachers' towards the Individual Musical Instrument course are of considerable as attitude is one of the most important indicators of students' affective characteristics towards a certain subject (Bulut, 2009).

Attitude can be defined as the state of emotional and mental readiness that emerges as a result of life experiences, and has a dynamic or directing influence upon the behaviour of an individual towards all objects and situations with which they are related (Tavşancıl, 2005). According to Thurstone, known as one of the pioneers of attitude assessment, attitude is the intensity of negative or positive affections towards a psychological object (Muller, 1928). Social psychologists Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) define attitude as the learned tendencies towards certain individuals, groups, opinions or situations, which bring about continuous positive or negative reactions. Attitude also reflects the individual's tendency to seek or avoid certain objects, concepts and situations, as well as his/her inclination to behave towards them in a particular way (Karabulut, 2009). According to Kağıtçıbaşı (2005), attitude is not a displayed or observable behaviour, but rather a tendency that prepares an individual for a particular behaviour. Haddock and Maio (2005) suggest that attitudes are related to people's evaluations of objects. In other words, attitudes summarize how individuals generally think about everything (Crano & Prislın, 2008; Robbins, 1994).

Attitudes have certain characteristics, which may be listed as follows:

- Attitude is not a behaviour that can be observed directly, but it is a tendency to prepare the individual for the behaviour,
- Attitudes are personal,
- Attitudes are related to a psychological object,
- Attitudes have motivational powers,
- Attitudes are not inborn characteristics, but emerge through learning. Therefore they are not stable but are changeable,
- Attitudes involve evaluation,
- Attitudes are elements that involve cognitive, emotional and behavioural factors as they drive human behaviour,
- Attitudes are not temporary, in that they exist in an individual's life for a certain period (Sakallı, 2001; Öztöpalan, 2007; Günay, 2008; Kağıtçıbaşı, 2005; Zimbardo & Leippe, 1992; Feldman, 1996; Horowitz & Bordens, 1995; Ülgen, 1995; Pehlivan, 2010).

The object of an attitude may be a substance or a group for an individual, or even a profession or a course (Çapri & Çelikkaleli, 2008; Pehlivan, 2010). Understanding an individual's attitude towards an object or a stimulant may serve in the prediction of his/her behaviour towards the said stimulant (Üstüner, 2006). In this regard, this study aims to understand the students' attitudes (whether positive or negative) towards the *Individual*

Musical Instrument course in terms of a number of diverse variables. Having a positive attitude towards a profession or a course may lead to achievement in that field of interest (Önder, 2014). Also, willingness and love are also important factors dictating achievement in the course. For instance, if students don't like their instrument, their attitude scores may be low. In this regard, determining the attitudes of students towards the *Individual Musical Instrument* course is expected to contribute not only to the students' success, but also to the improvement of the Music Education field.

Purpose of the study

The current study aimed to determine the attitudes of students enrolled in the graduate program of music education towards the *Individual Musical Instrument* course in terms of a number of diverse variables. The development of positive and high levels of attitude by pre-service teachers depend on such diverse variables as personality traits or programs (Şenel *et al.*, 2004).

To this end, answers to the following questions were sought:

Do the attitudes of students differ according to:

1. Gender,
2. The type of high school from which they graduated,
3. Grade levels,
4. The types of music instruments they studied in the course,
5. The amount of time allotted daily to practice with the musical instrument,
6. The total period of musical instrument education?

Method

The study made use of the scanning model, which aims to describe an existing situation in the way it existed. The technique involves the description of a past or present situation or an event, individual or object that was subject to a research study in its current condition, in its own terms and in the way it exist (Karasar, 2004).

Sampling

The sampling of the study was composed of 334 (200 female, 134 male) students studying Music Education at Mehmet Akif Ersoy University, Inonu University, Pamukkale University, and Onsekiz Mart University. All of the students enrolled in the first, second, third and fourth years were included in the sampling.

Data collection

The *Attitudes towards the Individual Musical Instrument Course Scale*, which was developed by Topoğlu and Erden (2012), was used in the study, and aimed to determine the attitudes of students enrolled in the graduate program of music education department towards the *Individual Musical Instrument* course. This is a Likert-type scale with a single factor that

contains a total of 27 items (16 positive, 11 negative). The positive statements in the scale are scored as “strongly agree (5)”, “agree (4)”, “partly agree (3)”, “disagree (2)”, and “strongly disagree (1)”, while the negative statements are scored reversely. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of the current study was calculated to be 0.94. Above the coefficient of 0.70 or higher for a 5-Point Likert-type scale test that is deemed sufficient for the reliability of the test scores (Büyüköztürk, 2005).

Data Analysis

The data was analysed using SPSS 20 software. The analysis of the differences found among the groups through the normality test and the variables with irregular distribution in pairs were administered the Mann-Whitney U-Test. In addition, the Kruskal-Wallis H-Test with the Bonferroni correction was applied to the variables with abnormal distribution in groups of more than two. With respect to the differences between groups, the level of significance was considered 0.05 and, accordingly, a value of $p < 0.05$ was indicated as a significant difference between the groups, while a value of $p > 0.05$ indicated no significant difference.

Results

The findings of the study are presented following the sequence in the study. The first question to be analysed in the study was:

Do the attitudes of the students enrolled in the graduate program of music education towards the Individual Musical Instrument course differ according to their genders?

Table 1 shows that there was no statistically significant difference between the genders of students and their scores related to the attitudes towards the *Individual Musical Instrument* course ($p = 0.750 > 0.05$). This finding shows that gender has little influence on attitudes towards the *Individual Musical Instrument* course.

Gender	N	Mean	Median	Min	Max	SD	Mean Rank	U	P
Female	200	71.4	73.3	26.7	97.0	15.0	168.9		
Male	134	71.1	70.7	32.6	97.0	15.3	165.4	13124.5	0.750
Total	334	71.3	72.2	26.7	97.0	15.1			

Table 1: Mann-Whitney U-Test Results Regarding Students' Attitudes towards the Individual Musical Instrument Course According to Gender

The second question to be analysed in the study was:

Do the attitudes of students enrolled in the graduate program of music education towards the Individual Musical Instrument course differ according to the types of high schools from which they graduated?

Table 2 shows that there was no statistically significant difference between the types of high schools from which the students graduated and their scores in terms of their attitudes towards the *Individual Musical Instrument* course ($p = 0.926 > 0.05$). According to this finding, the types of school from which the students graduated has no effect on their attitudes towards the *Individual Musical Instrument* course.

Type of high school	N	Mean	Median	Min	Max	SD	Mean Rank	H	P
General High School	66	2.75	72.2	38.5	97.0	13.6	173.4		
Fine Arts and Sports High School	233	71.1	72.6	26.7	97.0	15.3	166.8	0.469	0.926
Anatolian High School	18	69.9	68.9	37.0	94.1	15.1	157.4		
Vocational High School	17	71.0	71.9	40.0	97.0	18.2	165.1		
Total	334	71.3	72.2	26.7	97.0	15.1			

Table 2: Kruskal-Wallis H-Test Results Regarding Students' Attitudes towards the Individual Musical Instrument Course According to the Types of High Schools from which they Graduated

The third question to be analysed in the study was:

Do the attitudes of students enrolled in the graduate program of music education towards the Individual Musical Instrument course differ according to their grade levels?

Table 3 showed that there was a statistically significant difference between the grade levels of students and their scores in terms of their attitudes towards the *Individual Musical Instrument* course ($p= 0.006 >0.05$). The attitude scores of the students in the first year were significantly higher than those of the second and fourth years. According to this finding, the grade levels of the students can be said to have had an effect on their attitudes towards the *Individual Musical Instrument* course, with students in the first year having a more positive attitude than students in the second and fourth years.

Grade level	N	Mean	Median	Min	Max	SD	Mean Rank	H	P	Paired comparison
1st Year	84	75.4	78.5	26.7	97.0	14.1	195.7			
2nd Year	80	70.8	70.7	38.5	97.0	13.8	161.1			1-2
3rd Year	84	71.2	73.0	32.6	96.3	16.6	168.8	12.343	0.006	1-4
4th Year	86	67.8	65.2	31.1	97.0	15.0	144.7			
Total	334	71.3	72.2	26.7	97.0	15.1				

Table 3: Kruskal-Wallis H-Test Results Regarding Students' Attitudes towards the Individual Musical Instrument Course in terms of Grade Levels

The fourth question to be analysed in the study was:

Do the attitudes of students enrolled in the graduate program of music education towards the Individual Musical Instrument course differ according to types of musical instruments they learned to play throughout the course?

Table 4 reveals a statistically significant difference between the types of musical instruments that the students learned to play throughout the course and their attitudes towards the *Individual Musical Instrument* course ($p= 0.000 <0.05$). The attitude scores obtained by the students who received vocal training throughout the course were significantly higher than those of the students who learned to play the violin, viola, guitar and bağlama. Similarly, the attitude scores of the students who learned the flute throughout the course were significantly higher than those that learned to play the violin and viola. According to this finding, the type of instrument that a student learns to play has an effect on their attitudes towards the *Individual Musical Instrument* course.

Musical instrument	N	Mean	Median	Min	Max	SD	Mean Rank	H	P	Paired comparison
1.Flute	52	76.6	77.0	53.3	97.0	10.9	196.3			
2. Violin	111	67.2	67.4	31.1	97.0	16.3	141.0			
3. Viola	32	66.1	63.3	37.8	91.9	15.7	131.9			1-2 1-3 2-7
4. Cello	29	74.0	73.3	43.0	97.0	13.4	179.7	28.698	0.000	3-7 5-7 6-7
5. Guitar	50	72.1	70.4	40.0	97.0	13.3	167.8			
6. Bağlama	28	70.4	67.0	26.7	97.0	17.1	160.2			
7. Vocal training	27	80.6	82.2	45.9	97.0	12.4	226.5			
Total	329	71.3	72.6	26.7	97.0	15.2				

Table 4: Kruskal-Wallis H-Test Results Regarding Students' Attitudes towards the Individual Musical Instrument Course According to the Type of Instrument they learned to Play throughout the Course

The fifth question to be analysed in the study was:

Do the attitudes of students enrolled in the graduate program of music education towards the Individual Musical Instrument course differ according to the time allotted each day for practice with the musical instrument?

Table 5 revealed a statistically significant difference between the level of daily practice of students with their musical instruments and their attitudes towards the *Individual Musical Instrument* course ($p= 0.000 <0.05$), with students who practiced 30 minutes a day obtaining significantly lower attitude scores when compared to the other students. The attitude scores of those who practiced for one hour a day were significantly lower than those of the students who practiced for more than three or four hours a day. According to this finding, the time allocated by the students to practice in a day had an effect on their attitudes towards the *Individual Musical Instrument* course.

Daily practice	N	Mean	Median	Min	Max	SD	Mean Rank	H	P	Paired comparison
1. One hour	119	70.9	71.1	26.7	97.0	14.8	164.4			
2. Two hours	73	75.5	77.0	31.1	97.0	14.3	196.2			
3. Three hours	17	81.1	80.7	54.8	94.8	12.2	230.3	35.399	0.000	1-3 1-4 1-5 2-5
4. Four hours and more	13	83.4	91.9	54.8	97.0	14.9	243.1			3-5 4-5
5. Thirty minutes	112	66.0	65.6	32.6	94.8	14.2	133.8			
Total	334	71.3	72.2	26.7	97.0	15.1				

Table 5: Kruskal-Wallis H-Test Results Regarding the Students' Attitudes towards the Individual Musical Instrument Course According to Amount of Daily Practice

The sixth question to be analysed in the study was:

Do the attitudes of students enrolled in the graduate program of music education towards the Individual Musical Instrument course differ in terms of the length of education of the musical instrument?

No statistically significant difference was identified between the total periods of education that the students received on the musical instrument and their attitudes towards the *Individual Musical Instrument* course ($p=0.180 >0.05$) (Table 6). This finding shows that the total duration of education on the musical instrument has no effect on the attitude of the student towards the *Individual Musical Instrument* course.

Total period of education on the musical instrument	N	Mean	Median	Min	Max	SD	Mean Rank	H	P
1 year	18	74.4	74.8	50.4	91.9	9.9	185.9		
2 years	16	68.8	66.7	54.8	94.8	11.6	144.7		
3 years	26	74.3	79.6	38.5	97.0	16.6	187.5		
4 years	44	69.1	68.5	40.7	97.0	13.6	152.0	12.633	0.180
5 years	34	75.0	78.5	26.7	97.0	16.7	197.1		
6 years	51	73.2	73.3	38.5	97.0	15.2	178.9		
7 years	54	69.2	68.9	32.6	94.8	15.3	153.0		
8 years	49	68.9	68.1	31.1	97.0	14.5	151.5		

9 years	20	75.8	78.9	44.4	94.8	14.3	195.3
Other	22	67.5	64.8	34.1	95.6	19.3	150.4
Total	334	71.3	72.2	26.7	97.0	15.1	

Table 6: Kruskal-Wallis H-Test Results Regarding the Students' Attitudes towards the Individual Musical Instrument Course According to the Total Duration of Education on the Musical Instrument

Conclusion and Discussion

In this study, the attitudes of students enrolled in the graduate program of music education towards the *Individual Musical Instrument* course were analysed in terms of a number of diverse variables. Karabulut (2009) concluded in her study that the attitudes of students who were enrolled in music education towards the piano course differed between genders, and that the female students developed more positive attitudes than the male students. However in this study the analysis revealed that no statistically significant difference exists between genders in terms of the attitudes of the students towards the course. This concurs with the finding of Özmenteş (2009) who also identified no significant difference between genders and attitudes towards instrument practicing in a music instrument course.

Another conclusion of the present study is that there was no statistically significant difference between students' attitudes towards the course and the types of high schools from which they graduated. Similar to this finding, Karabulut (2009) determined that the attitudes of students enrolled in music education towards the piano did not differ according to the types of high schools from which they graduated.

The current study found also that there was a statistically significant difference between the students' attitudes and their grade levels, with the students in the first year scoring higher than the other grade levels. The ambition and desire to learn to play a new musical instrument may have supported this result.

In the second, third and fourth grades, the level of technical difficulties gradually became more significant. This may also explain why the attitude scores of the students towards the course decreased, while their grades increased. As the technical difficulty of the musical instrument increased throughout the course, the time allocated for practice decreased. Similar to the findings of this study, Karabulut (2009) determined in her study that first-year students recorded higher attitude scores related to the piano course when compared to the third year students. Güdek (2007) identified in her study that first-year students had more positive attitudes towards the music teaching profession when compared to those of other grades.

There was a statistically significant difference between the students' attitudes towards the course and the types of musical instruments they took up. The attitude scores obtained by the students who learned the flute and those who underwent vocal training were found to be higher than the students who learned other musical instruments. It can thus be concluded that the students who received vocal training and education on the flute during the course adopted their tasks and practiced willingly. The reason behind this finding may be related to factors outside the scope of this research including the teacher/student. Teacher behaviours are one of the most important variables for an education system to achieve its goals (Önder, 2014). Various studies of teacher qualifications have concluded that personality traits, behaviours, attitudes, interests and the academic characteristics of teachers play an important role in the teaching and learning process (Erdem *et al.*, 2005; Memişoğlu, 2006). The appreciation that

students gain of the musical instrument they learn to play throughout the course may also contribute to the development of a positive attitude towards the course.

Another finding of the study was that there was a statistically significant difference between the students' attitudes towards the *Individual Music Instrument* course and the amount of time the students allocated for daily practice with their musical instruments. As the amount of time increased, the scores related to their attitudes towards the course also increased. Developing a positive attitude towards a course may lead a student to develop a willingness and desire to study the subject, leading the time allocated for practice also to increase. This finding is in line with the findings of O'Neill (1999), Akıncı and Moray (2005) and Özmenteş (2009) in their studies, in which it is indicated that students who give more time over to practicing their instruments were also found to have more positive attitudes towards the course.

Finally, it was concluded that there was no statistically significant difference between the students' attitudes towards the course and the total length of education in their chosen instruments. Similarly, Özmenteş (2009) identified that the students' attitudes towards the *Individual Music Instrument* course did not vary depending on their personal experiences with the musical instrument.

The current study contributes to the field of music education in its determination of the attitudes of students towards the *Individual Musical Instrument* course. It can be understood that attitudes of the students towards the course are both positive and negative with regard to a number of diverse variables. Music education students are expected to maintain a positive attitude towards all courses in the program, and to achieve that, the requirements of students should be taken into consideration to ensure the development of positive attitudes.

Recommendations

Certain suggestions may be made based on the results of this study that could assist those developing curriculum for music teacher preparation courses. The *Individual Musical Instrument* course may be revised and modified to develop more positive attitudes. The attitude scores obtained by the students who received education in the flute and who underwent vocal training were found to be higher than those learning other musical instruments. Students choose the instrument that they want to learn to play in the course and this should be continued as it leads to a greater motivation for the course and the development of positive attitudes. However, sometimes students are unable to master the instrument that they want to learn. Students' physical aptitude for an instrument, musical adequacy (especially hearing adequacy for strings) or the capacity of the instrument teachers' program may be some factors that impact on student success. Collating feedback and assessment of student's performance from instrument instructors could provide useful information on the suitability of the instrument the student has selected and enable members of the music education department to counsel students on their instrument choice in the first semester of their study. In addition, certain personality traits, behaviours and academic characteristics of teachers or students may be effective for developing positive or negative attitudes for this course. Further research should be conducted, looking into the impact of student/teacher relationship and the technical requirements of the instrument itself.

The attitude scores of the students in the first year were higher than those of other grades. As technical difficulty increases, the time allocated for practice decreases despite the need to sustain the same level of motivation and willingness to study throughout the course. To this end, teachers should encourage students to overcome the technical difficulties in the

course at all grade levels, and should encourage students to increase their daily practice times. When the technical difficulty increases teachers should patiently and positively motivate the students to study more. This could include the provision of extra lessons or greater time spent on listening to students practice and providing them with corrective feedback. In addition, a student concert could be organized at the end of each year, during which the students will be able to present what they have learned throughout the course. The concert would provide the impetus for additional practice as well as the incentive of an authentic task to apply their skills.

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