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Original Article

Piano Learning Anxiety Among Preschool from Vocational Colleges in Yunnan Province, China

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ABSTRACT

This study delves into the realm of piano learning anxiety among students specializing in preschool education at vocational colleges in Yunnan Province, China. Its primary objectives are to scrutinize the prevalence of anxiety, explore its implications for piano learning, and elucidate the factors that contribute to varying anxiety levels. Employing a mixed-methods approach encompassing literature review and questionnaire survey, data were collected from a cohort of 168 participants.

The findings reveal a substantial portion of students grappling with anxiety during their piano learning journey, with over one-fifth of them reporting heightened anxiety levels. This study discerns two pivotal factors intricately linked with anxiety: students' learning disposition and the adaptability of teaching methods. It elucidates that students harboring positive learning attitudes and displaying a higher aptitude for accommodating teaching strategies exhibit reduced anxiety levels. In light of these outcomes, this study proffers actionable recommendations to mitigate piano learning anxiety. Firstly, the cultivation of a constructive and supportive learning milieu, one that nurtures students' enthusiasm and fosters their active engagement, emerges as a promising avenue for alleviating anxiety. Secondly, educators are encouraged to tailor their teaching methodologies to cater to the diverse requirements of vocational school students, offering individualized instruction and personalized guidance. Lastly, the implementation of targeted strategies to directly address anxiety, such as furnishing feedback, fostering encouragement, and imparting coping mechanisms, holds the potential to significantly reduce anxiety levels.

This study underscores the pivotal role played by students' attitudes and adaptability in the realm of piano learning, underscoring the imperative nature of tackling anxiety within the pedagogical context. Furthermore, it signals a call for future research to delve deeper into the development of precise interventions and methodologies aimed at mitigating piano learning anxiety in the realm of preschool education. By adhering to these recommendations, educators and policymakers stand poised to elevate teaching practices and foster a conducive learning atmosphere for piano enthusiasts enrolled in vocational colleges.



Introduction

As the field of early childhood education in China undergoes rapid development, there is a corresponding surge in the demand for proficient preschool education professionals within society. The year 2017 witnessed the issuance of pivotal policies by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council, aimed at expediting the advancement of preschool education. (The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council, 2017.43-74). Additionally, since 2021, a series of directives have been released to comprehensively stimulate stable population growth and reproduction, heralding the advent of a new wave of births in the Chinese population. This demographic shift is anticipated to further escalate the societal need for preschool education. (The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council, 2021.4-8).

In this context, vocational schools play a pivotal role in the training of preschool education professionals, envisioning the cultivation of adept and morally sound individuals capable of delivering quality care and education within kindergartens and early childhood education institutions across urban and rural landscapes. Presently, institutions such as secondary vocational schools, higher vocational schools, higher vocational colleges, and universities shoulder the responsibility of nurturing future kindergarten educators. Notably, in third and fourth-tier cities, a significant proportion of kindergarten teachers and caregivers are products of secondary vocational schools.

However, the pedagogical landscape presents distinct challenges, particularly in the domain of music education, for students majoring in preschool education within vocational schools. The training objectives in music education are multifaceted. They encompass the cultivation of artistic appreciation and musical aesthetics, mastery of fundamental concepts like music theory, sight-singing, and music appreciation, acquisition of essential skills for teaching young children to sing and perform, orchestration of choirs, and proficiency in playing and singing children's songs. Moreover, students are expected to grasp the fundamentals of keyboard instrument performance, enabling them to competently interpret diverse compositions and styles while adeptly arranging accompaniments for children's songs. The intent behind these rigorous training objectives is to supply society with preschool teachers possessing both specialized competencies and a high standard of musical acumen (Ministry of Education of China, 2017.1-37).

Notably, a considerable challenge arises from the disparities in admission assessment standards between vocational schools and conventional high schools. This dichotomy has far-reaching implications as vocational school students often fail to establish effective learning habits during their nine-year compulsory education in primary and middle schools. Consequently, many struggle to derive a sense of accomplishment from their studies, leading to diminished enthusiasm for learning. Additionally, a noteworthy divergence is observed in the musical preparation of students entering vocational schools. Most students arrive with minimal exposure to musical instrument instruction, resulting in a fragile foundation in music theory and performance skills. Remarkably, there exists no prerequisite for students to demonstrate musical proficiency during the enrollment assessment for vocational preschool education majors, and admission procedures do not encompass evaluations of musical aptitude or theoretical knowledge. This incongruity between the students' prior musical exposure and the lofty music training objectives within the vocational preschool education curriculum engenders

a profound disparity, thus underscoring the unique challenges of music education within this specific educational context.

In this context, it becomes evident that a substantial research gap exists concerning the experience of piano learning anxiety among students majoring in preschool education at vocational colleges. This gap is characterized by the dearth of studies focusing on this specific demographic and their distinct challenges related to piano education. The importance of addressing this gap lies in the need to provide tailored interventions and pedagogical strategies to mitigate piano learning anxiety in this context, thus facilitating a more effective and nurturing learning environment for these students. This study seeks to bridge this research gap by examining piano learning anxiety among this particular group of students and shedding light on the factors that influence their anxiety levels.

Objective

In order to analyze the current situation of piano learning anxiety among students majoring in preschool education at local vocational schools in Yunnan, China.

Scope

Content scope, in response to the anxiety issues among students majoring in preschool education at vocational schools in Yunnan Province, during their piano learning period.

Population scope, there are 168 students and graduates from multiple vocational colleges in Yunnan Province, aged between 15 and 19.

Regional scope, concentrated within Yunnan Province, China, including Qujing Technician College, Jiangnan Vocational School, Kunming University, Qujing Agricultural Technology School, Qujing Qilin Vocational and Technical College, Preschool Teachers College, Yunnan Business Vocational College, and Yunnan New Southwest Technical School.

Time boundary, 2022.5—2023.3

Methodology

1. Literature research

The researcher conducted a comprehensive literature search using resources such as CNKI (<https://www.cnki.net>) and Matte Creative (<https://www.metstr.com/>). Chinese and foreign language literature, including academic journals, dissertations, books, and other relevant materials were reviewed. The focus was on gathering information related to music education, psychology, and education methods to expand the knowledge framework.

2. Questionnaire survey

A questionnaire survey was conducted among preschool teachers and students in vocational schools in Yunnan Province. The survey was distributed using online methods such as WeChat, email, and QQ. The respondents were requested to share the survey with their colleagues or classmates. The author received the survey results promptly through the use of survey software. A total of 170 questionnaires were received, out of which 168 were complete and valid.

Expected Benefits

Based on the survey results, the study aims to analyze the impact of anxiety on the learning process among students majoring in preschool education at vocational schools in Yunnan Province, China.

Research results

The questionnaire consists of 21 questions, which are categorized as follows:

- a. Basic information of students (questions 1, 2, 3, and 5)
- b. Attitude towards piano learning (questions 4, 5, and 6)
- c. Fitness for teaching (questions 7, 8, 9, 13, 16, and 21)
- d. Performance of students' anxiety (questions 11, 17, and 19)
- e. Impact of anxiety on piano learning (questions 10, 12, 14, 18, 20, and 21)

At the end of the survey, a total of 170 questionnaires were received, of which 168 were valid, with a response rate of 98.8%. In order to test whether the scale is suitable for this study, the author conducted a reliability analysis of the questionnaire survey. Using SPSS 25.0 software for reliability analysis, the 9 items in the questionnaire that can be converted into data were tested. The overall Cronbach Alpha coefficient was 0.773, indicating good reliability and belonging to the reliable measurement table (reliability test can measure the reliability of the questionnaire data. If the reliability is high, it indicates that the internal structure of the scale is relatively complete, the questionnaire's question setting is reasonable, and the accuracy of the data results is higher, and vice versa).

1. Analysis of students' basic situation

Out of the 168 participants in the survey, 153 were female and 15 were male, accounting for 91.1% of the total sample. This distribution is consistent with the current trend of predominantly female students majoring in preschool education in China. The age range of the survey participants was between 14 and 25 years old, with an average age of 17.74 (Figure 1). The questionnaire was administered to both current and graduating students. Based on the data, the majority of students pursuing preschool education in vocational schools fall within the age group of 16 to 19, which constitutes 87.2% of the total population. According to Alikoning's theory of child development stages, this age group corresponds to the later stage of school age (14 to 18 years old) and is characterized by engagement in vocational learning activities. During this stage, students can develop cognitive and professional interests, acquire research skills, cultivate moral ideals, and demonstrate a high level of self-awareness (Feng Zhongliang, 2021.95).

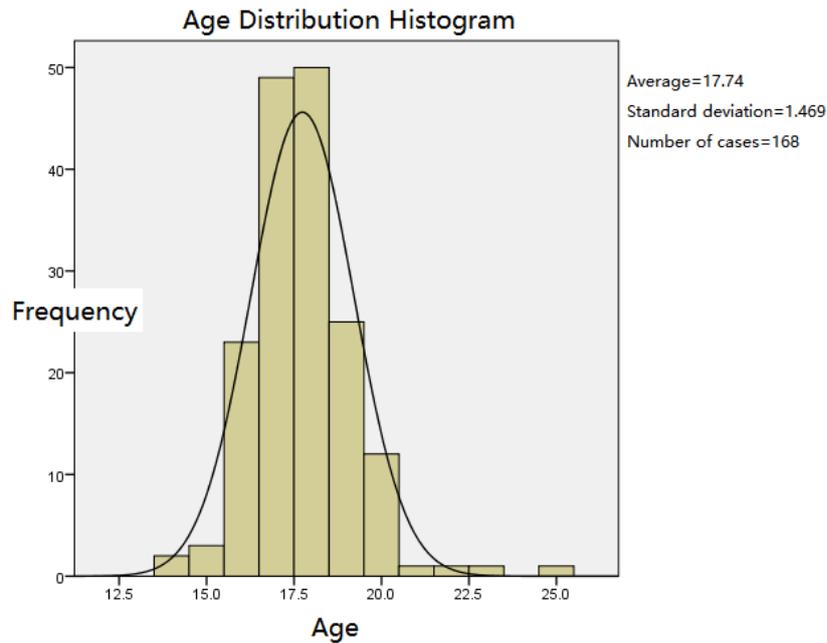


Figure 1: Histogram of Student Age Distribution

Source:Wei Zichun 2023.3.22

When asked about the "piano learning time before entering school" in the questionnaire survey, 155 respondents, accounting for 92.3% of the total, indicated that they had not studied piano prior to entering school. Among the remaining 13 individuals, 8 had studied piano for less than 1 year before entering school, accounting for 4.8%, while 5 had studied piano for 1-3 years before entering school, accounting for 2.9%. None of the respondents had studied piano for more than 3 years before entering school (Figure 2). These findings validate the literature's indication of the weak piano foundation among preschool education majors in secondary vocational schools. Considering the students' foundation and age-related characteristics in piano learning, teachers need to develop teaching methods that are distinct from those used for children and music majors. The "Optimization of Teaching Process" theory advocated by Babansky can be employed to formulate a teaching implementation plan suitable for vocational college students in teaching practice activities, taking into account the teaching objects, objectives, and conditions.

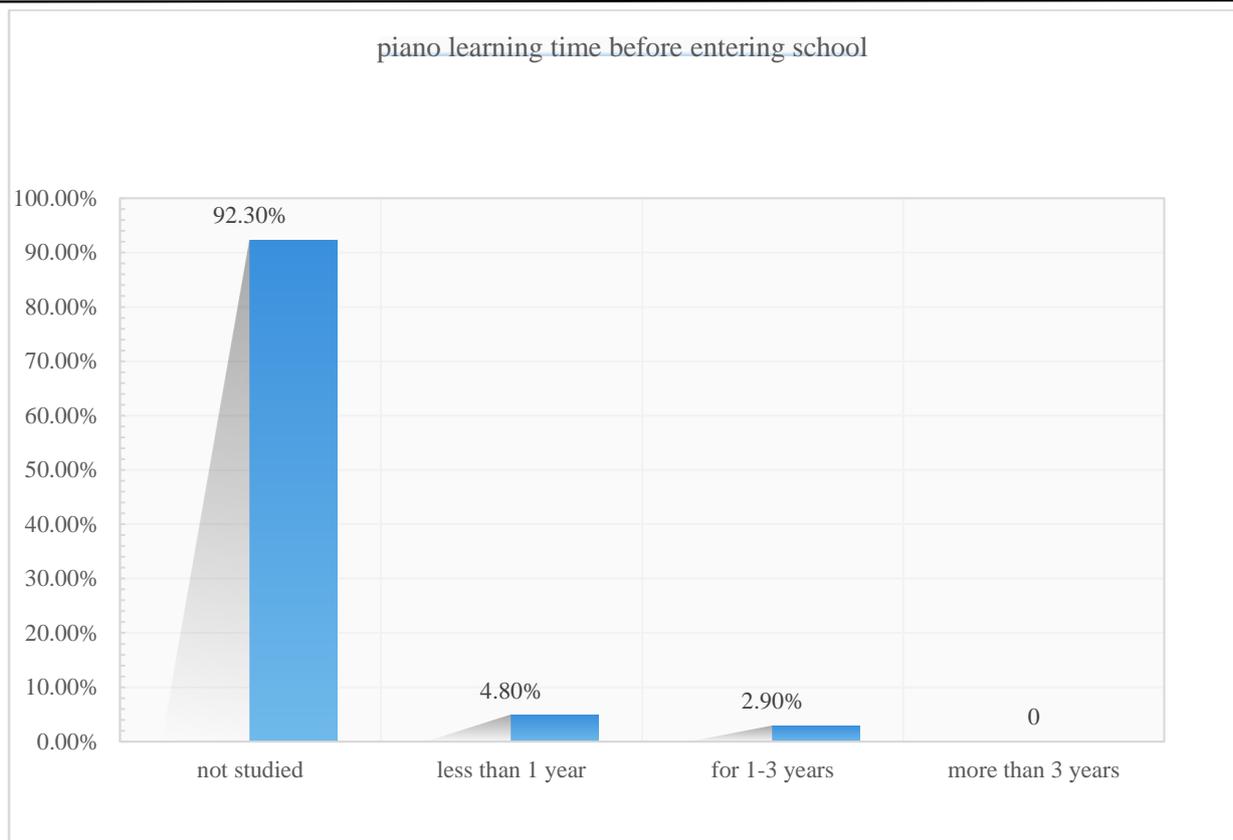


Figure 2: Statistical chart of students' piano learning time before enrolment

Source:Wei Zichun 2023.3.22

2. Analysis of Attitudes towards Piano Learning

When asked in the questionnaire about their liking for the piano, 65 respondents (38.7%) expressed a strong fondness for it, 66 respondents (39.2%) had an average liking, 6 respondents (3.5%) disliked it, and 2 respondents (1.1%) strongly disliked it. Shakespeare once said: "No profit grows where is no pleasure ta'en."(Shakespeare,W,1623,p.125). In daily learning, interest serves as the best teacher, and liking acts as an internal driving force for learning. Therefore, when students have an interest in a subject, it can motivate them to work hard and achieve better grades. Based on the survey results, it can be seen that the majority of students have a liking for the piano, and teachers can leverage this interest to guide students towards active learning.

In the questionnaire survey, when asked about the importance of piano learning in their future work, 91 respondents (54.1%) considered it to be very important, 95 respondents (56.5%) did not consider it important, 6 respondents (3.5%) considered it not important, and 5 respondents (2.9%) considered it not useful. Based on the survey results, it can be inferred that a significant number of students recognize the importance and significance of piano learning. Generally, students should have a positive attitude towards piano learning when they have an interest in it and recognize its practical value.

When asked in the questionnaire about their satisfaction with their current piano performance level, 23 respondents (13.6%) were very satisfied, 95 respondents (56.5%) were average, 43 respondents (25.5%) were dissatisfied, and 7 respondents (4.1%) were very

dissatisfied. The level of satisfaction with piano performance reflects students' confidence and goal-setting. Students who have set reasonable and confident goals are more likely to be satisfied with their performance level. When there is a balance between confidence and goal setting, students are more likely to be satisfied with their current performance level and maintain long-term motivation in their learning.

3. Analysis of teaching piano

When asked about piano teaching methods in the questionnaire survey, 106 participants (63.1%) preferred whole-class teaching, 30 participants (17.8%) preferred group teaching, and 32 participants (19.1%) preferred one-on-one teaching. The choice of teaching methods in piano teaching does not necessarily indicate the superiority or inferiority of the methods. However, it is important to consider the characteristics of the teaching objects and the content being taught when selecting appropriate teaching methods, as different methods can have varying teaching effects.

When asked in the questionnaire about whether they are adapted to the piano teaching of school teachers, 76 respondents (45.2%) reported being very adapted, 83 respondents (49.4%) reported not being very adapted, 4 respondents (2.3%) reported not being adapted, and 5 respondents (2.9%) reported being very not adapted. The results indicate that less than half of the students feel well-adapted to the teaching methods used by their piano teachers and are able to keep up with the pace of teaching. This suggests that there is a need to optimize the teaching process in order to better meet the needs and learning styles of the students.

In the questionnaire survey, when asked about "What aspect do you think you need to improve in?", the question was a multiple-choice question. Among the survey respondents, 121 people (71.9%) selected music theory knowledge, 117 people (69.6%) selected basic exercises, 65 people (38.7%) selected music performance, and 52 people (31%) selected work backgrounds. Based on the students' weak foundation and low learning efficiency, it is evident that they require more focus on basic content and increased practice time during the teaching process.

When asked in the questionnaire survey, "Can you easily complete the homework assigned by the teacher?", the responses were as follows: 21 people (12.5%) reported being very relaxed, 69 people (41%) reported being relatively easy, 69 people (41%) reported it to be slightly difficult, and 9 people (5.3%) reported being completely unable to complete the assigned homework. The results indicate that students have varying perceptions of the difficulty level of homework. Appropriate homework difficulty can effectively assess students' learning progress and motivate students of different levels to actively engage in their learning.

In the questionnaire survey, there was an open-ended question asking "What suggestions do students have for piano teaching?" Out of the survey respondents, 28 students provided their own suggestions. After organizing and analyzing the responses, the main suggestions were as follows:

- a. Increase piano practice time: Students expressed the need for more dedicated practice time to improve their piano skills and proficiency.
- b. One-on-one targeted coaching: Students suggested personalized and individualized coaching to address their specific needs and challenges in piano learning.
- c. Creating a relaxed and enjoyable teaching environment: Students emphasized the importance of a positive and supportive learning atmosphere that promotes relaxation, enjoyment, and creativity during piano lessons.

d. Pay attention to students who are slow learners: Students recommended that teachers provide extra support and attention to students who may require additional time and assistance to grasp piano concepts.

e. Mutual learning among classmates: Students highlighted the benefits of collaborative learning and suggested opportunities for peer interaction and sharing of knowledge and skills among classmates.

f. Improve hardware conditions: Students expressed the need for better infrastructure and resources, such as well-maintained pianos and practice rooms, to facilitate effective learning experiences.

g. Teach more playing skills: Students desired a focus on practical playing techniques to enhance their performance abilities and repertoire.

h. Teach some music that students like: Students suggested incorporating music pieces and genres that resonate with their personal interests and preferences to keep them engaged and motivated in their piano learning journey.

These suggestions reflect the students' perspectives and aspirations for piano teaching, emphasizing the importance of tailored instruction, a supportive learning environment, and a comprehensive approach to skill development.

4. Analysis of the Influence of Anxiety on Piano Learning

According to the questionnaire survey, the anxiety levels of the respondents were measured on a scale ranging from low to high, with the lowest anxiety level assigned 1 point and the highest anxiety level assigned 23 points. Among the 168 survey subjects, the anxiety scores ranged from 8 to 23 points.

Based on the division of the total scores into high and low groups, 62 individuals were classified as having low anxiety, accounting for 36.9% of the respondents. There were 65 individuals classified as having moderate anxiety, accounting for 38.7%, and 41 individuals classified as having high anxiety, accounting for 24.4%.

To examine the significance of the differences between the high and low anxiety groups, independent sample t-tests were conducted. The results indicated that there was a highly significant difference in anxiety levels between the two groups ($p < 0.01$). This finding has significant research implications, suggesting that many students majoring in preschool education in vocational colleges experience anxiety during their piano learning process. Additionally, over one-fifth of the students reported high levels of anxiety.

Understanding the prevalence and impact of piano learning anxiety among preschool education students is important for developing appropriate strategies and support systems to address and alleviate their anxiety, thereby promoting a positive learning environment and enhancing their overall learning outcomes.

Table 1: Independent sample t-test for anxiety level

| | | Levin's variance equivalence test | | Mean equivalence t-test | | | | | | |
|---------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|---------|------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|--|-------------|
| | | F | Significance | t | freedom | Significance (Double tailed) | Mean difference | Standard error difference | 95% confidence interval for difference | |
| | | | | | | | | | lower limit | upper limit |
| Anxiety | Assuming equal variance | .027 | .871 | 21.506 | 117 | .000 | 6.096 | .283 | 5.535 | 6.658 |
| | Not assuming equal variance | | | 21.466 | 115.107 | .000 | 6.096 | .284 | 5.534 | 6.659 |

The analysis of anxiety levels across different academic years reveals a clear trend of increasing anxiety as student progress through their four years of learning. The average anxiety level, measured on a scale of 1 to 23, increases significantly from 13.0 in the first academic year to 17.6 in the fourth year (Table 2).

This trend suggests that it is crucial to intervene and address students' piano learning anxiety early on, particularly in the first academic year. Establishing a positive learning attitude and equipping students with strategies to alleviate anxiety during their initial exposure to piano learning can have a profound impact on their subsequent studies. By addressing anxiety at an early stage, students can improve their efficiency and achieve better learning outcomes throughout their educational journey.

Implementing supportive measures and providing resources to help students cope with anxiety during their first year can contribute to the development of resilient and confident learners. It is important for educators and institutions to recognize the potential challenges faced by students in the early stages of piano learning and provide appropriate guidance and support to mitigate anxiety and promote a positive learning experience.

Table 2: Anxiety level of each grade

| | Number of people | Average level of anxiety |
|----------------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| First academic year | 78 | 13.0 |
| Second academic year | 47 | 14.8 |
| Third academic year | 22 | 15.1 |
| Fourth academic year | 24 | 17.6 |

By using the same method of assigning values to learning attitude and teaching fitness, a correlation analysis was conducted between students' anxiety and learning attitude (Table 3).

The Pearson correlation coefficient between the two variables is calculated to be -0.424. This negative correlation suggests that there is a moderate inverse relationship between students' piano learning attitude and their anxiety levels.

The negative correlation indicates that students who exhibit a positive and favorable learning attitude tend to have lower levels of anxiety when it comes to piano learning. Conversely, students who have a more negative or unfavorable learning attitude may experience higher levels of anxiety. This finding highlights the importance of cultivating a positive learning environment and fostering a supportive attitude towards piano learning. Encouraging students to approach their piano studies with enthusiasm, curiosity, and a growth mindset can contribute to reducing anxiety levels and promoting a more productive and enjoyable learning experience.

Educators and instructors should strive to create an atmosphere that nurtures students' motivation, self-confidence, and belief in their own abilities. By addressing and improving students' learning attitudes, it is possible to positively impact their anxiety levels and enhance their overall learning outcomes.

Table 3: Correlation between learning attitude and anxiety level

| | | Anxiety level | Learning attitude |
|-------------------|------------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Anxiety level | Pearson correlation | 1 | -.424** |
| | Significance (Double tailed) | | .000 |
| | Number of cases | 168 | 168 |
| Learning attitude | Pearson correlation | -.424** | 1 |
| | Significance (Double tailed) | .000 | |
| | Number of cases | 168 | 168 |

** . At the 0.01 level (double tailed), the correlation is significant.

According to the correlation analysis between students' anxiety level and teaching fitness, the Pearson correlation coefficient is calculated to be -0.576 (Table 4). This negative correlation indicates that there is a moderate inverse relationship between students' fitness to teaching and their anxiety levels.

The results suggest that students who feel more adapted and suited to the teaching methods employed in their piano lessons tend to have lower levels of anxiety. On the other hand, students who struggle to adapt to the teaching methods may experience higher levels of anxiety. This finding emphasizes the significance of implementing teaching methods that are well-suited to the needs and characteristics of students. By tailoring the teaching approach to the individual learning styles and preferences of students, educators can create a more supportive and conducive learning environment. This, in turn, can contribute to reducing students' anxiety levels and promoting their overall well-being and engagement in piano learning.

Additionally, it is crucial for teachers to be attentive to students who may be facing challenges in adapting to the teaching methods. Providing additional support, guidance, and individualized attention can help these students overcome their anxieties and enhance their learning experiences.

Table 4: Correlation between fitness of teaching and anxiety

| | | Anxiety level | Learning attitude |
|-------------------|------------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Anxiety level | Pearson correlation | 1 | -.576** |
| | Significance (Double tailed) | | .000 |
| | Number of cases | 168 | 168 |
| Learning attitude | Pearson correlation | -.576** | 1 |
| | Significance (Double tailed) | .000 | |
| | Number of cases | 168 | 168 |

** . At the 0.01 level (double tailed), the correlation is significant.

Yes, based on the Pearson correlation data, both learning attitude and teaching fitness are moderately negatively correlated with piano learning anxiety. The correlation coefficient between teaching fitness and anxiety (-0.576) is higher compared to the correlation coefficient between learning attitude and anxiety (-0.424).

These findings indicate that both learning attitude and teaching fitness play important roles in influencing students' learning anxiety. Students who have a positive learning attitude and feel adapted to the teaching methods employed in their piano lessons tend to experience lower levels of anxiety. Having a positive learning attitude can contribute to students' motivation, engagement, and perseverance in their piano learning journey. When students have a genuine interest in piano and believe in their own abilities to learn and improve, they are more likely to approach learning tasks with confidence and enthusiasm, which can help reduce anxiety. Similarly, when students feel that the teaching methods used by their instructors are well-suited to their needs and learning styles, they are more likely to feel comfortable, supported, and engaged in the learning process. This sense of adaptability and satisfaction with teaching methods can contribute to lower levels of anxiety.

These findings highlight the importance of fostering positive learning attitudes and creating a supportive and inclusive teaching environment. By addressing students' learning attitudes and adapting teaching methods to meet their individual needs, educators can help alleviate learning anxiety and enhance students' overall learning experiences.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study focused on investigating piano learning anxiety among students majoring in preschool education in vocational schools in Yunnan Province, China. Through a literature review and a questionnaire survey, the author analyzed the anxiety levels of the students, the factors influencing their anxiety, and the impact of anxiety on piano learning.

The findings of the study revealed that a considerable number of students experience anxiety during piano learning. The analysis showed that both learning attitude and teaching fitness significantly influence students' anxiety levels. Students with a positive learning attitude and a sense of adaptability to teaching methods tend to have lower levels of anxiety.

The study emphasizes the importance of addressing piano learning anxiety and suggests that further exploration is needed to find effective strategies for alleviating anxiety in piano learning. Creating a positive learning environment, promoting a supportive teaching approach,

and enhancing students' learning attitudes are recommended as potential avenues for mitigating anxiety and improving piano learning outcomes.

Overall, this study contributes to the understanding of piano learning anxiety among preschool education students and highlights the significance of addressing this issue in future research and educational practice.

Discussion

Looking back at this study, we conducted a survey on piano learning anxiety among students majoring in preschool education at vocational colleges in Yunnan Province, China. The analysis of the data revealed that these students exhibited anxiety symptoms that align with the specific manifestations of learning anxiety, such as avoidance and withdrawal in class, easy distractibility, and fear of facing the teacher (Wang Aiping, Che Hongsheng, 2005). In the process of analyzing the anxiety levels across different grade levels, we found that anxiety increased progressively with higher grades, which is consistent with the notion proposed by Pekrun, Goetz, Frenzel, Barchfeld, and Perry (2011) that different emotions, including anxiety and frustration, tend to increase as the learning difficulty escalates. Learning is a complex and long-term process, especially in piano learning, where individuals are confronted with numerous challenges and obstacles. As they experience failures, the level of anxiety naturally intensifies, and they become fearful of facing the next challenge.

Upon reviewing the relevant academic literature, it is evident that there is a dearth of research on anxiety in piano learning. Thus, this study contributes to filling this gap by focusing specifically on anxiety in piano learning and conducting a comparative study among students majoring in preschool education. Moreover, through extensive data analysis, we discovered a negative correlation between students' learning attitudes, teaching adaptability, and piano learning anxiety, which constitutes a novel finding in this paper. However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study. The sample size was restricted to preschool education majors in vocational colleges in Yunnan Province, China. Given the presence of regional and cultural differences, future research should aim to expand the sample size and include students from different regions and cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, this study primarily focused on school-related factors, and future research should consider students' individual characteristics and family backgrounds more comprehensively. Future studies can delve deeper into the relationship between piano learning and anxiety and provide more comprehensive teaching interventions to contribute to the field of piano education.

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