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The Influence of Performance Anxiety of Career Adaptability and Career Optimism in Music Students: Self-Efficacy as a Mediator

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Abstract

Music performance anxiety has traditionally been an important issue related to musical performance, both for professional performers or music majors. Although extensive research has been carried out on the negative effects of musical performance anxiety on musicians, including biological and psychological vulnerabilities. Nevertheless, literature that focuses on the relationship among music performance anxiety, self-efficacy and career development of music majors remains limited. China has many high-level music conservatories that prepare students for performance and teaching careers. Based on Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), this study is designed to explore the impact of musical performance anxiety on music majors' self-efficacy and future career choice within the Chinese context.

Participants were 360 students majoring in music performance and music education from several regions in China, who had internship experience in related fields (e.g. private teachers, schools or orchestras), completed a set of questionnaires that included Music Performance Anxiety Inventory for Adolescents (MPAI-A), Self-Efficacy Formative Questionnaire, and Career Future Inventory (CFI). Students who suffered from high MPA were interviewed trying to explain why do MPA affect self-efficacy and future career inventory from different perspectives.

The results show that music performance anxiety has significant differences in students' self-efficacy, which is mainly in terms of gender and major differences. Comparably, females suffered more MPA than males. Performance students had higher MPA than music education students. In addition, MPA also has an obvious negative effect on music learners' self-efficacy and future career choice, which plays a mediating role between self-efficacy and three perspectives from career future inventory.

As MPA has a significant negative impact on music majors' self-efficacy and career expectations, music colleges could strengthen education on MPA-coping strategies, and shape an appropriate learning environment to help students gain a better sense of self-efficacy. At the same time, students may also can enhance their self-efficacy, find MPA management, and try to reduce the destructive impact of MPA.