

# Music to combat stress during the pandemic: brief theoretical review

## Abstract

Music, every day more, is used for quality of life. In recent years we have attended projects and experiences where music is used as therapy, in hospitals, in residences for the elderly people etc. In addition, music is used in education, to improve concentration, strengthen memory, facilitate communication skills and body expression, and even to relax students. The situation caused by COVID-19 has generated an increase in stress and poor quality of life in all people, regardless of age, however, this work focuses on the quality of life of adults and older people. This manuscript is a literature review. In this proposal includes articles and other documents that show the importance of music during confinement and the need to promote musical education and training in both young people, adults and elderly people. The methodology used combines qualitative and quantitative data. The results respond, through the selected articles, to the need to include music as a tool for quality of life. The conclusions point out the need to continue researching in this line of action that unites music and health.

**Keywords:** music education, quality of life, Covid-19, adults, wellbeing

## Introduction

As some authors point out<sup>1</sup> point out different research related to stress and music, clarifying that music is a good means of reducing stress states, although not all music will be suitable and it will also depend on the listener. These authors highlight the evidence related to anxiety and music, as well as the impact on emotions, which can be observed from neuroimaging studies.

Other authors say<sup>2</sup> that music can be a great way to improve mood, as well as activating many regions, including those associated with emotion and memory.

The work that is shown is based on a theoretical foundation complemented by a bibliographic review in two important databases in the Google Scholar although not differently relevant in terms of quality standards, such as academic google and SCOPUS.

As detailed<sup>2</sup> in the report of the Global Council on Brain Health (GCBH), music has a positive effect on emotional well-being and mood, reducing anxiety and stress. In this report with the collaboration of Suzanne Hanser, president of the International Association for Music & Medicine (IAMM) and Professor of Music Therapy at Berklee College of Music, the brain impact from active music is explained, relating the melodies with events and personal feelings. There is a research study<sup>3</sup> that demonstrates the effect of music to reduce stress in a group of students, both those related to physical and psychological reactions. In this work, it was valued how music can be a positive strategy to deal with academic stress.

Also, another study<sup>4</sup> indicates that takes music as a tool to reduce stress and improve academic performance. This author highlights that universities support the use of music as part of a program of activities aimed at improving the quality of life of students, insisting on the importance of these actions.

As Maté<sup>5</sup> points out, in recent years research on music education in Spain has increased, with a significant number of theses read, however, the works that relate music to human development and social inclusion are still scarce. For this reason, it is understood that it is necessary to investigate the musical educational contexts to know the impact of music.

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These articles are only a small piece of evidence of the benefits of music based on science and whose contributions show that active musical practice is beneficial both for stress, for quality of life, and to promote emotions.

In the following sections, it will be verified how music has a special relationship with health, as well as an impact with the improvement of the quality of life, from the COVID-19.

## Music, covid and health

There is research<sup>6</sup> that briefly show us through their article, the general difficulties to which music professionals have been subjected, also relating activity to well-being.

There are investigations,<sup>7</sup> regarding older people and the digital divide, relates music to quality of life and the need expressed by a group of older people to remain connected with their musical activities during the pandemic. In another study by the same author (2019), the value of music for quality of life is already emphasized, especially in older people and through songs close to the participants.<sup>8</sup> The abundance of flourishing art is explored as a therapeutic antidote to the COVID-19 pandemic and panic emerging around the world. This author argues how the act of seeing, making and sharing music, street art, paintings, graphic art, cinema and digital videos can serve as therapy for empowerment, solidarity in the majority of people who make an effort to bet on community strategies. to help save lives before a vaccine is developed.

## Health and COVID-19

According to a report<sup>9</sup> on the psychological consequences of COVID-19 and confinement, physical and psychological well-being have been the most affected by COVID-19, through the loss of habits and routines. Confinement has led to the adoption of unhealthy habits, such as a sedentary lifestyle. This study also indicates some recommendations in a situation of confinement, highlighting dance and music for activation. COVID-19, according to Hernández Rodríguez,<sup>10</sup> has a negative impact on the mental health of the most vulnerable people. In his work, this author highlights the impact of social distancing linked to the pandemic.

## Hypothesis

The hypotheses that are raised relate music to quality of life:

H1: There is a relationship between music, health and COVID-19, taking music as a tool to improve health and quality of life

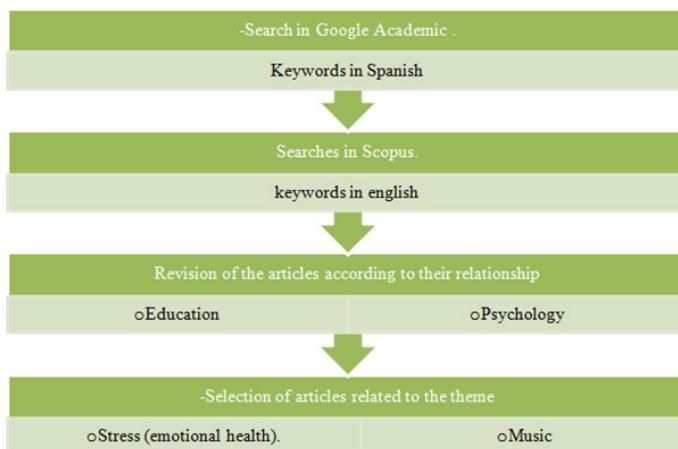
H2: Sharing music during the pandemic, and also the rest of art, has worked as a therapeutic element.

## Materials and methods

### Objectives

The general objective set has been to know the importance of music for quality of life, during the pandemic. To do this, other secondary objectives have been set, such as investigating some repositories to see the documents related to our hypotheses. On the other hand, what kind of topics were addressed in these documents, regarding music education.

There are research works<sup>11</sup> that point out, mixed research methods involve a series of systematic, empirical and critical actions to collect data and analyze them qualitatively and quantitatively, adding discussion to better understand each other. Some authors<sup>12</sup> are of the opinion that the bibliographic review is part of the research, although it can also be considered the main action if it is taken as a tool to inform and develop the practice, as well as foster discussion in the academic field. In the opinion of other authors<sup>12,13</sup> bibliographical reviews are essential to discover new lines of research and identify trends, since many fields are basically enriched with reviews. The process that has been followed can be seen in the following Figure 1.



**Figure 1** Bibliographic search process.

As indicated in the previous figure, an article selection process was followed, taking into account the keywords and their relationship with the theme. Those articles that showed a relationship with music and health, especially stress, in the field of education and psychology were reviewed.

The databases chosen were, on the one hand, Google Academic, because it is a very generalized source, where diverse documents can be easily found. On the other hand, and looking for the rigor of the publications, SCOPUS was chosen, whose registration goes through the selection of publications in high quality standards.

The years of the publications were taken into account, not taking documents published beyond the year 2014.

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## Results

The number of results found, both for the selected keywords and for the chosen database, is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1** Number of articles found

Font	Keywords	No.
Google Academic	Covid; música; salud	3,880
	Covid; music; health	42,000
Scopus	Covid; music; health	600
	Covid; música; salud	20
		46,500

In addition to stress, the relationship with academic performance and anxiety has also been taken into account, specifically relating to educational environments (Table 2).

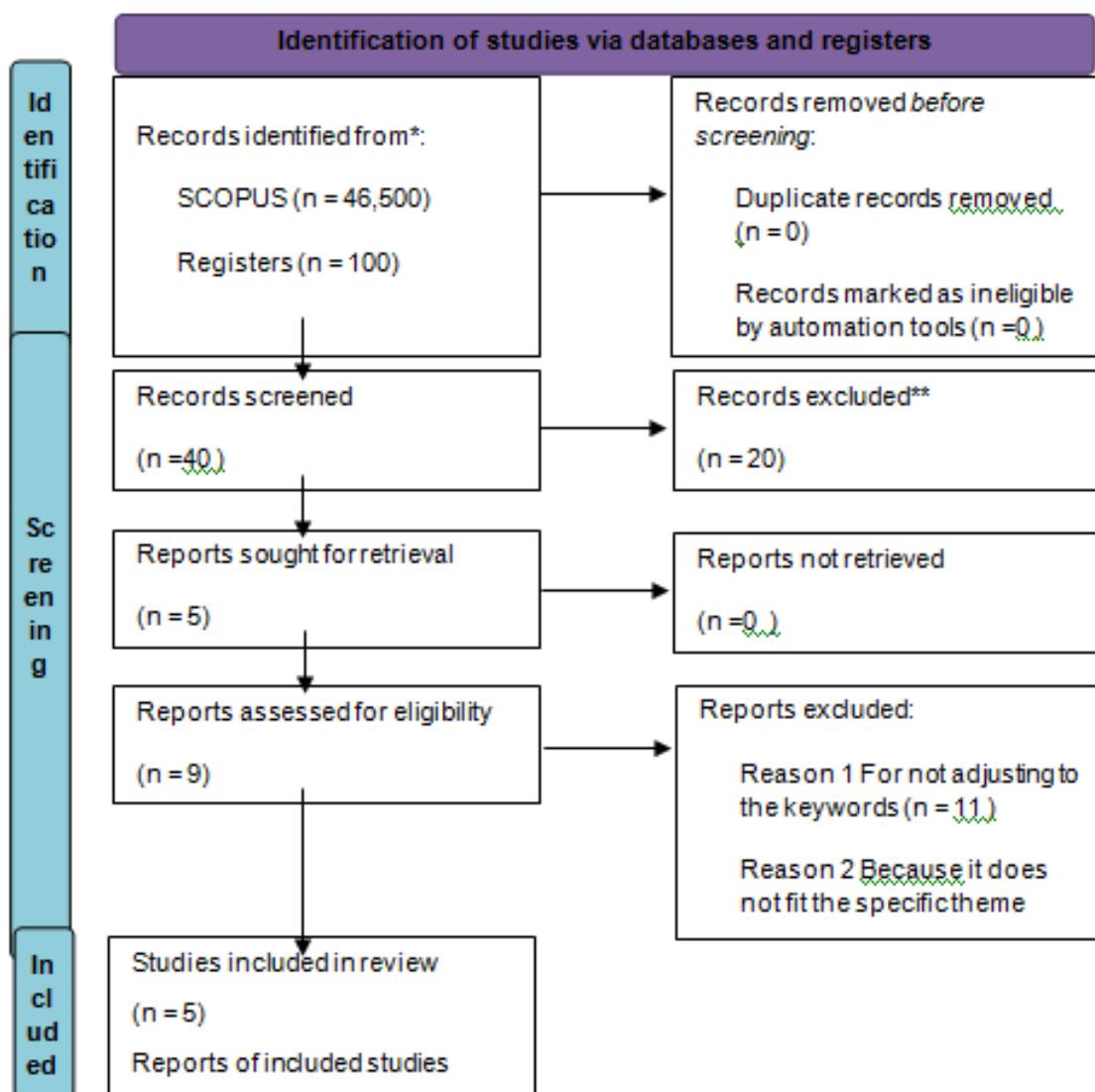
**Table 2** Shows the selected articles, according to their relationship with music and moods

Authorship	Title
Gomez et al. <sup>4</sup>	Relationship between music, stress and academic performance in a group of university students
Gonzalez Corona et al. <sup>1</sup>	Music as an anxiety reducer: A pilot study
Idme Machaca <sup>3</sup>	Efficacy of Music in reducing academic stress in high school students.
Vernia Carrasco, Ana M <sup>14</sup>	Educational innovation Project: songs for life
Montejano and Rojas <sup>6</sup>	Master music, virtual stages in times of COVID-19

Table 3 shows those articles that have been found that specifically showed the relationship between COVID-19 and music, in the psychological field. Those documents that did not directly relate to our search, which was to find research on the benefits of music during COVID-19, were discarded (Figure 2).

**Table 3** Articles that relate COVID-19, music and psychological factors

Authorship	Title
Balluerka Lasa et al. <sup>9</sup>	The psychological consequences of COVID-19 and confinement.
Vernia AM <sup>7</sup>	Music and technology against COVID-19: a case in older people.
Gupta N <sup>8</sup>	Singing Away the Social Distancing Blues: Art Therapy in a Time of Coronavirus. Journal of Humanistic Psychology
Hernandez Rodriguez <sup>10</sup>	Impact of COVID-19 on people's mental health.



**Figure 2** Flow diagram for new systematic reviews which included searches of databases and registers only.

In the previous figure we can see the articles that were finally selected for evaluation (n=5), although at first, they were considered a greater number (n=9), they were finally rejected, for not responding specifically to what was expected to be answered. However, the search, especially in Spanish, since it was also desired to know the research in this language, in the end there were very few (n=20), which shows that, on the one hand, there is a lot of English literature, and on the other in the Hispanic context, this is much lower. It is worth mentioning that from this sample, some articles had to be rejected because they did not respond specifically to the theme (n=11).

The valued articles provide important reflections aimed at improving the quality of life of people from active musical practice. Mental health, which was affected by Covid, can be improved through active music, reducing stress. This also represents an advance in the field of psychology and the importance of working with interdisciplinary teams between music and health.

## Discussion and conclusions

The results show that there is a relationship between music, health and Covid, taking music as a tool to improve health and quality of

life. Literature in English is superior both in impact journals and in those that are not.

The selected literature reveals that Covid has had a clear psychological impact that has affected the educational and social spheres. There is a relationship between vulnerable people and the stress caused by Covid, with loneliness, especially in older people, causing this state of mind. Sharing music during the pandemic, and also the rest of art, has worked as a therapeutic element. Music can be a good alternative to combat academic stress, as well as improve moods caused by COVID-19.

The line of discussion that opens is aimed at promoting the use of music in educational health settings,<sup>14</sup> not only as mere entertainment or musical learning, but also as an alternative therapy to improve quality of life and reduce stress both in educational as well as social and personal.

Research showing the positive effect of music on emotional well-being, including mood enhancement, decreased anxiety, and stress management. There are so many mechanisms that explain the great impact that listening to a piece of music can have, but there is an even

greater impact if the music is actively practiced. The impact begins in the brain, where music activates many regions, including those associated with emotion and memory. The music performed or heard at some relevant moment in a person's life is preserved for the neural pathways that connect that melody with very positive feelings.

Finally, the review of the literature has revealed to us the abundance of art that is flourishing as a therapeutic antidote to the COVID-19 pandemic and the panic that is emerging throughout the world. The act of viewing, making, and sharing digital music, street art, paintings, graphic arts, film, and video can serve as a therapeutic vehicle for the empowerment, solidarity, and collective action that most human beings strive to embrace. extreme social distancing practices as the recommended community mitigation strategy to help save lives before a vaccine is developed. The creation of therapeutic art can promote physical, mental and social health at a time in history when everyone is threatened by COVID-19. In this sense, it can be said that music can be considered as a tool in the field of medicine, used rigorously and by professional experts, both in music and in health.

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## Conflicts interest

The authors declare they have no conflicts of interest that are directly or indirectly related to the research.

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