

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**THE ROLE OF MUSICAL ARTS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION, A STUDY IN
SOME SELECTED SCHOOLS IN THE GA CENTRAL MUNICIPALITY**

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of the requirements for the award of the degree of
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OCTOBER, 2024

DECLARATION

Student's Declaration

I, **ESTHER ASANTE**, declare that this thesis is a result of my original research except for references to other people's work which have been duly acknowledged and it has neither in whole nor in part been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature:

Date:

Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and supervision of this research work were done in accordance with the guidelines for the supervision of research work as laid down by the School of Graduate Studies, University of Education, Winneba.

Name of Supervisor:

Supervisor's Signature:

Date:

DEDICATION

To my lovely Family

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of musical arts in early childhood education within selected schools in the Ga Central Municipality. The exploratory case study design was adopted for this study. The study employed a purposive sampling technique. The sample for the study was 15 early childhood teachers. The instruments used for the collection of data was semi-structured interview guides. The data from the study was analysed thematically. The study revealed that early childhood educators in the Ga Central Municipality perceive that musical arts boost learner engagement, promote holistic development, and strengthen a sense of identity through cultural songs. Also, using songs and rhymes to reinforce concepts, incorporating movement and dance to enhance engagement, and using storytelling through music to captivate children's attention are some of the strategies adopted in integrating musical arts into teaching in early childhood centres in the Ga Central Municipality. Again, it was revealed that findings from the study revealed that the use of musical arts in early childhood education significantly enhances social, emotional, intellectual, and motor development by fostering cooperation, emotional expression, cognitive skills, and physical coordination. The findings from the study further revealed that inadequate musical resources, limited access to instruments and materials, insufficient training and professional development opportunities, and a lack of administrative and parental support as some of the challenges to the use of musical arts in teaching. It is therefore recommended that the Ga Central Municipal Education Directorate and other relevant stakeholders should support teachers and encourage them by providing them musical resources as well as professional development to equip them to use varied musical techniques such as songs, rhymes, movement, storytelling, and call-and-response to make lessons interactive, engaging, and developmentally appropriate.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Music is a universal language that transcends cultural and geographical boundaries, playing a vital role in human development from the earliest stages of life (Campbell, 2017). In early childhood education, musical arts are not merely extracurricular activities but integral components that foster holistic development. Research indicates that engaging young learners in musical activities enhances cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development (Rose et al., 2019; Custodero, 2024; Obeng, 2022). Despite its benefits, implementing musical arts in early childhood education faces challenges, particularly in resource-limited settings.

Globally, the integration of musical arts in early childhood education has been recognized for its multifaceted benefits. Research suggests that early musical experiences significantly contribute to children's cognitive, social, and emotional development (Miracle Recreation, 2020; Gordon, 2021). Music has been shown to improve language acquisition, memory retention, coordination, and social interaction among young children (Brown & Saxena, 2023). Additionally, engaging in music-based learning helps develop creative thinking skills, which can be applied across various academic disciplines (Campbell, 2022).

Studies in developed countries, such as the United States and Finland, emphasize the role of music in shaping children's overall learning experiences. Hallam (2021) found that children exposed to structured musical training demonstrated improved reading, mathematics, and spatial reasoning skills. Similarly, Hargreaves and Lamont (2020) highlighted that music enhances children's emotional intelligence and fosters collaboration in group learning settings. These findings support

the argument for integrating musical arts into early childhood curricula to promote comprehensive educational development.

However, despite the established benefits, challenges persist in implementing music education globally. Many schools lack trained music educators and sufficient resources, leading to an uneven distribution of music programs (McPherson & Welch, 2021). The need for policy interventions to integrate music into early childhood education systems is widely recognized.

In Africa, music is deeply embedded in cultural traditions and daily life, serving as a conduit for transmitting values, history, and social norms. The use of indigenous musical arts in education is seen as a means to preserve cultural heritage while promoting holistic child development (Adjepong, 2020). Research highlights that music is a crucial component of early childhood education in various African societies, where rhythmic play and storytelling through songs form part of informal learning experiences (Nzewi, 2021).

Agbenyo et al. (2021) reported that generalist teachers often lack the necessary content and pedagogical skills for effective music and dance instruction. This lack of specialized training leads to low confidence and competence in delivering music instruction, resulting in the marginalization of music within the curriculum (Ekwueme, 2022). Furthermore, inadequate teaching resources, limited funding, and a lack of policy frameworks hinder the integration of musical arts into formal education (Amegashie & Owusu, 2023).

However, there have been notable initiatives aimed at promoting music education in Africa. Programs inspired by Venezuela's El Sistema model have emerged across the continent, demonstrating how musical arts can be used as a tool for social change and child development (Odora Hoppers, 2020). These initiatives highlight the transformative potential of music in early

childhood education and emphasize the need for more structured approaches to incorporating musical arts into learning.

In Ghana, music is an integral part of the cultural fabric, with traditional songs, dances, and rhythms playing a central role in community life. The educational system acknowledges the value of music, incorporating it into the curriculum to promote cultural identity and holistic development (Anku, 2021). However, the effective implementation of music education in early childhood faces several challenges, including limited resources, lack of trained teachers, and inadequate policy support.

One significant challenge is the reliance on generalist teachers who often lack formal training in music education. Agbenyo et al. (2021) noted that in Ghanaian primary schools, generalist teachers, usually without formal music training beyond their initial teacher education, are primarily responsible for music teaching and learning. This lack of specialized training affects the quality of music instruction, leading to limited exposure for learners (Obeng & Osei-Senyah, 2019).

Additionally, resource constraints further hinder the effective teaching of music. Many schools lack musical instruments, appropriate teaching materials, and dedicated spaces for music activities. This scarcity makes it difficult to provide hands-on experiences essential for effective music education (Owusu & Teye, 2022).

Despite these challenges, there is a growing recognition of the importance of music in early childhood development. Engagement in musical activities has been linked to improved language development, memory retention, and problem-solving skills (Adjepong, 2020). Furthermore, music provides a medium for children to express themselves, manage emotions, and develop a sense of identity (Obeng, 2022).

Teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward music education play a crucial role in its successful implementation. In Ghana, many teachers recognize the value of music in enriching the learning environment. Music is utilized for enjoyment, self-esteem enhancement, language development, and as a medium for teaching other subjects (Anku, 2021). However, inadequate formal training and resources often lead to challenges in effectively incorporating music into teaching practices.

Children are natural musicians, and exposure to music during the early years enhances learning by promoting creativity, coordination, and social interaction (Obeng, 2022). However, the lack of structured training programmes for early childhood educators in Ghana limits their ability to fully leverage musical arts in teaching (Amegashie & Owusu, 2023).

The integration of musical arts in early childhood education significantly contributes to children's holistic development. Cognitively, music supports language development, memory retention, and problem-solving abilities (Campbell, 2022). Socially, music fosters collaboration, communication, and cultural awareness among young learners (Hargreaves & Lamont, 2020). Emotionally, it provides an outlet for self-expression and helps in managing emotions (Brown & Saxena, 2023). Physically, activities such as dancing and playing instruments improve motor skills and coordination (McPherson & Welch, 2021).

In the Ga Central Municipality, traditional music and dance are integral to community life, offering a rich resource for educational practices. Incorporating indigenous musical forms into the curriculum not only preserves cultural heritage but also makes learning more engaging and relevant for children (Adjepong, 2020).

Implementing musical arts-based learning in early childhood education within the Ga Central Municipality faces several challenges. A primary issue is the lack of adequately trained music

teachers. Many educators responsible for teaching music lack specialized training, leading to inconsistencies in instruction (Agbenyo et al., 2021).

Resource constraints further exacerbate the situation. Many schools do not have access to musical instruments or structured music programs (Owusu & Teye, 2022). Additionally, music education often receives less priority compared to subjects such as mathematics and science, limiting the time allocated for musical activities (Obeng & Osei-Senyah, 2019).

The role of musical arts in early childhood education is well-documented globally, with significant benefits for cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development. While developed countries have integrated structured music education programmes, Africa particularly Ghana faces challenges such as a lack of trained teachers, inadequate resources, and limited policy support. Despite these barriers, musical arts remain an essential tool for enhancing learning experiences and preserving cultural heritage.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The use of musical arts in early childhood education has been widely recognized for its role in fostering cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development in young learners. Research indicates that music enhances language acquisition, improves memory retention, stimulates creativity, and strengthens problem-solving skills (Gordon, 2023; Custodero, 2024). It also promotes social interaction, emotional expression, and cultural appreciation, making it a powerful pedagogical tool for holistic child development (Hallam, 2021; McPherson & Welch, 2022). In many developed countries, musical arts are fully integrated into early childhood curricula, contributing to improved learning outcomes and engagement (Hargreaves & Lamont, 2021; Brown & Saxena, 2023). However, in Ghana, and particularly in the Ga Central Municipality, the use of musical arts in early childhood education remains inconsistent and underutilized due to various

challenges, including inadequate teacher training, resource limitations, and weak policy implementation.

Teachers play a crucial role in the integration of musical arts into early childhood education, yet many educators in Ghana lack formal training in music pedagogy. Studies have shown that when teachers are equipped with adequate musical training, they are more likely to use songs, rhythm, and movement activities to enhance learning experiences (Adjepong, 2022; Agbenyo et al., 2021). However, in many Ghanaian kindergarten classrooms, teachers often rely on rote learning and teacher-centered methods due to a lack of musical expertise and confidence (Obeng & Osei-Senyah, 2019; Owusu & Teye, 2022). This limits the potential benefits of musical arts in facilitating interactive and engaging learning experiences.

In addition to the lack of training, limited access to musical resources presents a significant barrier to the effective use of musical arts in early childhood education. Many early childhood centers, particularly in low-income areas, struggle with inadequate teaching materials, including musical instruments, recorded music, and structured music-based lesson plans (Amegashie & Owusu, 2023; Hallam, 2021). Without these essential resources, teachers find it difficult to incorporate music into their instructional practices, further restricting children's exposure to music-based learning experiences (Obeng, 2022; Brown & Saxena, 2023).

Furthermore, policy support for the structured integration of musical arts in early childhood education remains weak in Ghana. Although the national curriculum emphasizes holistic child development, it does not provide clear guidelines on how musical arts should be implemented in classroom instruction (Ghana Education Service, 2022). In contrast, countries such as Finland and Sweden have well-defined frameworks that integrate music into early childhood learning, leading to enhanced educational outcomes (McPherson & Welch, 2022; Hargreaves & Lamont, 2021). The

absence of a structured policy framework in Ghana creates inconsistencies in how musical arts are used across different schools, with some institutions incorporating it informally while others neglect it altogether (Adjepong, 2020; Owusu & Teye, 2022).

The underutilisation of musical arts in early childhood education has several implications for children's development. Children's exposure to musical activities enhances cognitive functions such as language processing, mathematical reasoning, and memory retention (Gordon, 2023; Campbell, 2022). Additionally, music supports social and emotional development by fostering cooperation, communication, and self-expression among young learners (Brown & Saxena, 2023; McPherson & Welch, 2022). Physically, engagement in musical activities such as singing, dancing, and playing instruments helps develop fine and gross motor skills, which are crucial for early childhood growth (Obeng, 2022; Owusu & Teye, 2022). The absence of these opportunities in Ghanaian early childhood education settings limits children's overall development and reduces the effectiveness of early learning experiences.

Although global research highlights the benefits of musical arts in early childhood education, significant gaps remain in understanding its application within the Ghanaian context. Most existing literature on music education is based on studies conducted in Western countries, where access to resources, teacher training, and policy implementation are more advanced (McPherson & Welch, 2022; Hallam, 2021). The extent to which these findings apply to Ghana, particularly in municipalities like Ga Central, remains unclear due to contextual differences in curriculum structure, cultural practices, and resource availability (Adjepong, 2022; Obeng & Osei-Senyah, 2019).

Geographically, previous studies on early childhood music education in Ghana have largely focused on urban centers such as Accra and Kumasi, leaving peri-urban and rural areas

underexplored (Owusu & Teye, 2022). Given the disparities in educational resources and teacher preparedness between different regions, further research is needed to understand how these factors affect the use of musical arts in early childhood education within the Ga Central Municipality (Amegashie & Owusu, 2023; Obeng, 2022). Additionally, existing literature has focused more on the role of music in cultural preservation rather than its pedagogical applications in early childhood education (Adjepong, 2022; Obeng & Osei-Senyah, 2019).

Addressing these challenges requires urgent attention to improving teacher training, enhancing access to musical resources, and developing clear policies that support the structured use of musical arts in early childhood education. Conducting empirical research in the Ga Central Municipality will provide valuable insights into teachers' perspectives, classroom practices, and the challenges they face in implementing music-based learning.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of musical arts in early childhood education within selected schools in the Ga Central Municipality.

1.4 Research Objectives

The following objectives guided the study;

1. To explore teachers' perception regarding the use of musical arts as a teaching and learning tool in early childhood education.
2. To find out the teaching strategies teachers employ in the use of musical arts as a teaching and learning tool in early childhood classrooms
3. To investigate the influence of musical arts on the holistic development of early childhood learners in the Ga Central Municipality.

4. To identify the challenges teachers and schools face in implementing musical arts-based learning activities in early childhood education.

1.5 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study;

1. What are teachers' perceptions of the use of musical arts as a teaching and learning tool in early childhood education?
2. What teaching strategies do teachers employ in using musical arts as a teaching tool in early childhood classrooms?
3. How does the use of musical arts influence the holistic development of early childhood learners in the Ga Central Municipality?
4. What challenges do teachers and schools face in implementing musical arts-based learning activities in early childhood education?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study holds significant implications for policy, practice, and theory in early childhood education, particularly regarding the integration of musical arts as a pedagogical tool in the Ga Central Municipality and beyond.

The findings of this study will provide valuable insights for policymakers, curriculum developers, and educational authorities in Ghana. By highlighting the benefits and challenges associated with using musical arts in early childhood education, the study can inform the development of policies that support the structured integration of music into early learning curricula. It will offer evidence-based recommendations to the Ghana Education Service (GES) and other stakeholders on enhancing teacher training, allocating resources for music-based instruction, and creating guidelines for implementing musical arts in early childhood classrooms. Additionally, the study

can contribute to broader discussions on aligning Ghana's early childhood education policies with global best practices in music-integrated learning.

For early childhood educators and school administrators, this study will provide practical strategies for effectively incorporating musical arts into daily teaching and learning activities. It will equip teachers with knowledge of how music can enhance cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development in young learners. Furthermore, by identifying the challenges teachers face in implementing music-based learning, the study will suggest solutions such as targeted professional development programs, access to musical resources, and innovative classroom strategies that require minimal resources. These insights will help improve the quality of early childhood education by making learning more engaging, interactive, and developmentally appropriate.

This study will contribute to the growing body of literature on early childhood education and the role of the arts in learning. By examining the use of musical arts in the Ghanaian context, it will extend existing theories on music and learning, such as Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple intelligences, which emphasizes musical intelligence as a crucial domain of cognitive development. The study will also provide empirical data to support Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory, which highlights the role of interactive and play-based learning in children's development. Furthermore, it will bridge gaps in literature by offering context-specific evidence on how musical arts influence early childhood education in an African setting, contributing to comparative education studies and global discussions on arts-based pedagogies.

Overall, this study will serve as a foundation for further research, policy reforms, and innovative teaching practices aimed at maximizing the potential of musical arts in early childhood education in Ghana and other similar contexts.

1.7 Delimitations of the Study

This study was delimited to selected public early childhood centres in the Ga Central Municipality of Ghana, providing a focused geographical scope for examining the role of musical arts in early childhood education. The choice of this municipality is based on its diverse early childhood education settings, which offer a suitable environment for exploring how musical arts influence learning. The study is specifically delimited to investigating the use of musical arts in early childhood education, emphasizing teachers' perspectives, the impact of musical arts on learners' holistic development, and the challenges associated with its implementation. Other art forms, such as visual arts, drama, or dance, are not included unless they are integrated into musical activities.

The study focused on early childhood education, particularly kindergartens, and pre-primary schools, examining how musical arts are employed as a pedagogical tool. It does not extend to primary or secondary education levels, ensuring a targeted exploration of early childhood learning experiences. Furthermore, the study prioritizes the perspectives and experiences of teachers, excluding parental or community viewpoints.

The study was delimited to the use of a qualitative research approach using interviews and observations to gain an in-depth understanding of the subject. The study does not employ quantitative methods such as surveys or statistical analysis, as the focus is on gathering rich, descriptive data rather than numerical generalizations. By setting these delimitations, the study ensures a structured and focused exploration of how musical arts contribute to early childhood education within the Ga Central Municipality.

1.8 Operational Definition of Terms

Musical Arts – Refers to the use of music, singing, rhythm, and movement-based activities as instructional tools to enhance teaching and learning in early childhood education.

Early Childhood Education (ECE) – This term refers to formal and informal educational programs designed for young children, specifically focusing on kindergarten and pre-primary levels within the Ga Central Municipality.

Holistic Development – This refers to the overall growth of young learners in cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and language development, which is influenced by the integration of musical arts in teaching.

Drama – Drama refers to role-playing, storytelling, and other performance-based activities that engage children in creative expression, communication, and problem-solving within early childhood learning environments.

Dance – Dance is the use of structured and free movement activities that help children develop physical coordination, rhythm awareness, and self-expression while supporting cognitive and social development.

Singing – Singing involves vocal activities such as nursery rhymes, chants, and songs that aid language development, phonemic awareness, and social interaction among young learners.

Creative Arts Integration – This refers to the combination of music, drama, dance, and visual arts as interactive teaching methods that foster creativity, communication, and critical thinking skills in early childhood learners.

1.9 Organisation of the Study

The study was divided into five chapters, each of which thoughtfully considers the chapter heading. The first chapter was the introduction that covered the background to the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the objectives, and research questions, the significance of the study, delimitations, limitations, operational definitions of terms, and the organization of the study. The second chapter is a review of the literature. It examines relevant literature to the study. It captured the theoretical framework, conceptual, as well as empirical Review of the Study. The chapter three covers the research paradigm, research approach, research design, study area, population of the study, sample and sampling procedure, data collection instruments, data collection procedure, data analysis procedure, and ethical considerations. The fourth chapter dealt with the findings and their discussion. The fifth and final chapter contains a summary, conclusions, and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 Overview

This chapter focused on the review of related literature on the specific objectives of the study.

Literature was reviewed on the following sub-headings:

Theoretical Framework

- Multiples Intelligence Theory (Howard Gardner- 1983)

Conceptual Review

- Concept of Musical Arts
- Musical Arts in Early Childhood Education
- Types of Musical Arts

Empirical Review

- Teachers' Views regarding the use of musical arts as a teaching and learning tool
- Teaching Strategies Teachers Employ in Using Musical Arts
- Influence of Musical Arts on the holistic development of early childhood learners
- Challenges Teachers Face in Implementing Musical Arts-based Learning Activities

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Multiple Intelligence Theory (Howard Gardner 1983)

Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences (MI) Theory, introduced in 1983, challenges the conventional view of intelligence as a singular, fixed capacity traditionally measured by IQ tests. Instead, Gardner argued that intelligence is multidimensional, meaning that individuals demonstrate different cognitive strengths and learning styles (Gardner, 1983). His theory expanded the definition of intelligence beyond linguistic and logical-mathematical abilities, which had long been considered the primary measures of intelligence in formal education. By recognizing a broader range of intelligences, Gardner's framework has significantly influenced educational philosophy, instructional strategies, and curriculum design, fostering a more inclusive and differentiated approach to teaching and learning.

Key Principles of the Theory

Gardner (1983) originally proposed seven intelligences, later expanding them to eight and suggesting a possible ninth (existential intelligence). These intelligences reflect the diverse ways in which individuals process information, solve problems, and engage with the world:

Linguistic Intelligence – The ability to use language effectively for communication, including reading, writing, storytelling, and persuasion. Individuals with high linguistic intelligence, such as poets, writers, and speakers, excel in verbal reasoning and expression (Gardner, 1999).

Logical-Mathematical Intelligence – The capacity for logical reasoning, numerical problem-solving, and scientific thinking. Mathematicians, scientists, and computer programmers often exhibit strong logical-mathematical intelligence (Gardner, 1983).

Musical Intelligence – Sensitivity to sounds, rhythms, tones, and musical patterns. Individuals with high musical intelligence, such as composers and musicians, are skilled in recognizing, creating, and interpreting music (Gardner, 1999).

Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence – Coordination and control of body movements. Dancers, athletes, and surgeons use this intelligence to execute precise physical tasks effectively (Armstrong, 2017).

Spatial Intelligence – The ability to visualize and manipulate spatial information. Architects, artists, and engineers rely on spatial intelligence to understand and create visual designs (Gardner, 1999).

Interpersonal Intelligence – The ability to understand and interact effectively with others. Teachers, psychologists, and politicians typically possess high interpersonal intelligence, which allows them to perceive emotions, motivations, and behaviors (Armstrong, 2017).

Intrapersonal Intelligence – The ability to reflect on one's emotions, thoughts, and personal experiences. This intelligence is key for self-awareness and personal growth (Gardner, 1983).

Naturalistic Intelligence – Sensitivity to nature and the environment, including the ability to recognize flora and fauna and understand ecological relationships. Biologists, conservationists, and environmentalists demonstrate strong naturalistic intelligence (Gardner, 1999).

Gardner later suggested Existential Intelligence, which involves deep philosophical thinking about human existence, meaning, and spirituality (Gardner, 1999). However, this intelligence has not been fully incorporated into the established MI framework due to limited empirical validation.

Existential Intelligence – Gardner later suggested a ninth intelligence related to deep philosophical thinking about human existence, meaning, and spirituality. Individuals with high

existential intelligence ponder fundamental questions about life, death, and the universe, often found among philosophers, theologians, and spiritual leaders (Gardner, 1999). Though not fully integrated into the Multiple Intelligences framework due to limited empirical validation, it remains a significant concept in understanding human cognition.

Relevance of Musical Intelligence to Early Childhood Education

Of particular relevance to this study is musical intelligence, which refers to the ability to perceive, appreciate, and create musical patterns. Gardner (1999) asserted that children with strong musical intelligence often learn best through rhythm, melody, and auditory experiences. This aligns with play-based pedagogy, where songs, rhymes, and movement-based activities enhance learning and engagement in early childhood education (Pashler et al., 2019).

Research indicates that musical intelligence contributes significantly to language development, cognitive skills, and emotional regulation in young learners (Hanna-Pladdy & Mackay, 2011). Studies have shown that children exposed to music-integrated learning environments demonstrate improved memory, creativity, and problem-solving abilities (Winner et al., 2013). Additionally, music supports social interaction, fostering collaboration and communication among learners (Hallam, 2010).

Implications for Early Childhood Education

Gardner's MI theory has transformed early childhood education by advocating for diverse teaching strategies that cater to different learning styles. Traditional methods often emphasize linguistic and logical intelligence, marginalizing children who learn best through music, movement, and hands-on experiences (Armstrong, 2017). However, MI theory encourages teachers to adopt a more inclusive and differentiated approach, using multi-sensory activities such as:

- Music and Movement: Engaging learners in rhythmic songs and dance to reinforce phonemic awareness and motor skills (Winner et al., 2013).
- Storytelling and Role-Playing: Integrating verbal and bodily-kinesthetic intelligence to enhance comprehension and expression (Hallam, 2010).
- Hands-On Learning: Incorporating art, building projects, and nature exploration to cater to spatial and naturalistic intelligence (Armstrong, 2017).

By recognizing the diverse strengths of learners, MI theory promotes a holistic and child-centered curriculum, fostering engagement, motivation, and individualized learning paths in early childhood settings (Pashler et al., 2019).

Criticism and Limitations

Despite its impact, Gardner's MI theory has faced criticism for lacking empirical validation and difficulties in measuring different intelligences (Waterhouse, 2006). Some researchers argue that intelligence domains overlap significantly, making it challenging to categorize them distinctly (Sternberg, 2020). Additionally, critics contend that MI theory does not clearly define how intelligences develop or how they interact with one another in learning processes (Schunk, 2020).

Furthermore, Gardner's MI framework has been criticized for its practical implementation challenges in education. Some educators struggle to integrate all eight intelligences into curriculum design due to time constraints and resource limitations (Hallam, 2010). Moreover, standardized assessments in many educational systems continue to prioritize linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligence, neglecting broader intelligence areas (Waterhouse, 2006).

Despite criticisms, Gardner's MI theory remains widely influential in education, particularly in early childhood learning environments, where a play-based, multi-sensory approach aligns with the diverse ways children acquire knowledge. The theory challenges the narrow view of intelligence traditionally emphasized in schools and promotes a more inclusive, child-centered pedagogy that recognizes and nurtures individual talents. The integration of musical arts, movement, and hands-on experiences in early childhood education supports holistic development, making MI theory a strong theoretical foundation for this study.

2.2 Conceptual Review

2.2 Concept of Musical Arts

Musical arts is a broad and dynamic concept encompassing various forms of music-related creative expression, including composition, performance, listening, and appreciation. It is an essential part of human culture, history, and education, contributing to both individual and collective development. Scholars define musical arts as an interdisciplinary domain that blends elements of music, movement, drama, and visual representation to create meaningful artistic experiences (Blacking, 1995; Elliott & Silverman, 2015). The significance of musical arts extends beyond entertainment, influencing cognitive development, socialization, cultural identity, and emotional expression.

In contemporary society, technological advancements have expanded the scope and accessibility of musical arts. Digital platforms, artificial intelligence, and music production software have revolutionized the way music is created, distributed, and consumed (Thibeault, 2022). This evolution has influenced how individuals and communities engage with musical arts, shaping cultural narratives and artistic practices.

Musical arts refer to the structured and expressive use of sound, rhythm, melody, harmony, and performance to create artistic experiences. It encompasses several disciplines, including music composition, instrumental and vocal performance, ethnomusicology, and music education (Small, 1998). Musical arts integrate diverse cultural traditions, blending historical and contemporary influences to shape the way music is produced, consumed, and understood.

The concept of musical arts goes beyond music as a singular entity; it involves multiple forms of artistic expression, such as dance, drama, and storytelling. Scholars such as Campbell (2005) argue that musical arts should be viewed as a multidimensional experience that connects various modes of artistic communication. In many societies, music is an essential part of rituals, celebrations, and everyday life, making it both a personal and collective art form.

Furthermore, the study of musical arts is interdisciplinary, intersecting with psychology, sociology, and education. Researchers emphasize that music is deeply embedded in human cognition and emotion, influencing behavior and mental well-being (Koelsch, 2020). The integration of music with other art forms enhances its expressive power, allowing artists to convey complex narratives and emotions through creative performances.

Musical arts play a crucial role in shaping cultural identity and fostering community cohesion. According to Nettl (2005), music serves as a medium for expressing values, traditions, and beliefs, reinforcing a sense of belonging among individuals. Traditional music often reflects the history, struggles, and aspirations of a community, preserving heritage through sound and performance.

Moreover, musical arts contribute to social bonding and interpersonal connections. Research suggests that music fosters empathy and cooperation, particularly in group settings such as choirs,

orchestras, and community performances (Cross, 2021). Through shared musical experiences, individuals develop a sense of unity and cultural appreciation.

Additionally, musical arts influence the economy through the entertainment industry, music production, and cultural tourism. The global music industry generates billions of dollars annually, providing employment opportunities for artists, educators, and cultural institutions (Throsby, 2010). Digital streaming, live performances, and multimedia collaborations have expanded the economic landscape of musical arts, making it a vital sector in global creative industries.

Numerous studies highlight the impact of musical arts on cognitive development, particularly in children. Gardner's (1983) Multiple Intelligences Theory recognizes musical intelligence as one of the fundamental cognitive abilities, suggesting that music plays a vital role in learning. Researchers argue that engaging with music enhances memory, concentration, and problem-solving skills (Schellenberg, 2004).

Music education has been shown to improve linguistic abilities, mathematical reasoning, and spatial-temporal skills. According to Hallam (2010), children who participate in music programs tend to perform better academically compared to their peers who do not engage in music-related activities. Learning to play an instrument, for instance, requires discipline, coordination, and auditory discrimination, which are essential cognitive skills transferable to other domains of learning.

Furthermore, neuroscientific studies indicate that musical training enhances brain plasticity, improving cognitive flexibility and executive functions (Patel, 2021). Engaging in musical arts stimulates neural pathways associated with creativity, memory, and emotional regulation, making it a valuable tool for lifelong cognitive development.

2.3 Musical Arts in Early Childhood Education

Musical arts play a vital role in early childhood education (ECE), fostering cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development in young learners. As an interdisciplinary domain, musical arts encompass singing, rhythm, movement, storytelling, and instrumental exploration, all of which contribute to holistic child development (Gordon, 2012). Music is a universal language that aids in communication, enhances memory, and supports creativity, making it a crucial component of early learning curricula (Barrett, 2019). Research indicates that exposure to musical arts in early childhood strengthens language acquisition, motor coordination, and emotional intelligence (Hallam, 2010). Studies have shown that children exposed to musical activities develop stronger listening and concentration skills, which positively impact academic performance (Schellenberg, 2004). Additionally, engagement with music enhances problem-solving abilities as children learn to interpret rhythms and patterns (Patel, 2021).

The incorporation of musical arts in ECE is based on developmental theories emphasizing experiential and play-based learning. Vygotsky (1978) posited that social interaction is essential in learning, and music provides a collaborative platform for children to engage with peers and teachers. Similarly, Piaget (1951) highlighted the importance of sensory experiences in cognitive growth, and musical activities offer a rich sensory environment for young learners. Neurological research supports this by showing that musical engagement strengthens neural connections and improves cognitive flexibility (Hanna-Pladdy & Mackay, 2011). Moreover, Howard Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple intelligences identifies musical intelligence as a fundamental cognitive ability, reinforcing the value of music in early childhood development.

One of the primary benefits of musical arts in ECE is its positive impact on language acquisition. Music and language share common processing mechanisms in the brain, making musical

experiences effective for literacy development (Patel, 2021). Singing songs with repetitive structures and rhyming words enhances phonological awareness, which is essential for reading readiness (Gordon, 2012). Research also suggests that children who participate in musical activities demonstrate improved vocabulary retention and pronunciation skills (Brandt et al., 2012). Additionally, exposure to different musical rhythms and intonations supports bilingual and multilingual learning by helping children distinguish phonemes across languages (Hallam, 2010). Storytelling through song further reinforces comprehension skills and narrative structure, enabling children to grasp sequencing and logical progression (Trehub & Gudmundsdottir, 2019).

Beyond cognitive development, musical arts play a crucial role in shaping social and emotional well-being. Group singing and movement-based activities encourage cooperation, teamwork, and turn-taking, which are essential social skills (Cross, 2021). Participation in music ensembles fosters a sense of belonging and cultural identity, helping children develop empathy and respect for diverse traditions (Campbell, 2005). Emotionally, music provides a safe outlet for self-expression, allowing children to process and articulate their feelings in a non-verbal manner (Koelsch, 2020). Research suggests that musical engagement reduces anxiety and enhances mood regulation by stimulating the release of endorphins and lowering cortisol levels (Hanna-Pladdy & Mackay, 2011). Music therapy has also been found to be beneficial for children with special needs, improving communication in children with autism and reducing stress in those with attention deficit disorders (Lobo & Winsler, 2020).

Musical activities in early childhood settings also enhance physical and motor development. Dancing, clapping, and playing percussion instruments improve coordination, balance, and rhythm perception (Gallahue & Ozmun, 2019). Fine motor skills are developed through finger-play songs and instrument handling, which strengthen hand-eye coordination and dexterity (Lobo & Winsler,

2020). Movement-based musical activities contribute to overall physical fitness while also reinforcing spatial awareness and body control (Geist & Geist, 2012). Research has linked rhythmic training to improved handwriting skills, demonstrating the connection between motor coordination and academic performance (Hallam, 2010).

Despite the many advantages of musical arts in ECE, challenges persist in its effective implementation. One major issue is the reduction of music programs due to budget constraints and a growing emphasis on core subjects such as mathematics and literacy (Bamford, 2006). Many schools lack specialized music educators, leaving general classroom teachers to integrate music despite limited training (Henley, 2021). Studies indicate that many early childhood educators feel unprepared to teach music due to inadequate professional development opportunities (Barrett, 2019). Another challenge is the dominance of Western musical traditions in educational settings, often at the expense of indigenous and culturally diverse musical expressions (Campbell, 2005). Ensuring a more inclusive approach to music education is necessary for promoting cultural awareness and appreciation in young learners.

To enhance the effectiveness of musical arts in ECE, educators must be provided with adequate training and resources. Professional development workshops can equip teachers with practical strategies for integrating music into daily lessons (Hallam, 2010). The use of technology, such as digital music applications and interactive platforms, offers innovative ways to engage children in musical experiences (Thibeault, 2022). Community partnerships with musicians and cultural organizations can also enrich musical learning through live performances and hands-on workshops (Barrett, 2019). Additionally, adopting a child-centered approach that incorporates diverse musical traditions ensures that all learners feel represented and included (Cross, 2021).

In conclusion, musical arts are a powerful tool in early childhood education, fostering cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development. Research highlights the significant role of music in language acquisition, memory retention, problem-solving, and social-emotional well-being. However, challenges such as budget cuts, lack of teacher training, and cultural biases in music education hinder its full potential. Addressing these challenges requires policy changes, teacher training programs, and the integration of technology and community involvement in music education. By prioritizing musical arts in ECE, educators can create enriching learning environments that support holistic child development and lifelong appreciation for music.

2.4 Types of Musical Arts in Early Childhood Education

Musical arts play a crucial role in early childhood education (ECE) by fostering cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development in young learners. The integration of musical activities in early childhood settings has been widely recognized for its ability to enhance children's creativity, communication skills, and overall learning experience (Barrett, 2019). Musical arts in ECE encompass various forms, including singing, instrumental exploration, rhythm and movement activities, music storytelling, and creative composition. These different types of musical arts contribute uniquely to the holistic development of children by stimulating auditory, motor, linguistic, and emotional faculties (Hallam, 2010). Research has consistently highlighted the value of diverse musical experiences in shaping children's cognitive and emotional intelligence (Schellenberg, 2004). Furthermore, exposure to various musical elements allows children to develop an appreciation for cultural diversity and artistic expression (Campbell, 2005).

One of the most fundamental types of musical arts in ECE is **singing**. Singing is an accessible and highly effective musical activity that enhances phonological awareness, language acquisition, and memory retention (Gordon, 2012). Studies have shown that children who engage in singing

activities develop stronger vocabulary skills, pronunciation accuracy, and sentence structuring abilities (Brandt et al., 2012). Singing also promotes social bonding, as group singing activities encourage cooperation, turn-taking, and shared emotional experiences (Cross, 2021). Research further suggests that incorporating singing into daily routines, such as transition songs for classroom management, enhances children's ability to follow instructions and establish structured learning habits (Trehub & Gudmundsdottir, 2019). Additionally, exposure to different musical genres through singing fosters cultural appreciation, helping children understand diverse linguistic and musical traditions (Campbell, 2005).

Another significant type of musical arts in ECE is **instrumental exploration**. Allowing children to experiment with musical instruments such as drums, xylophones, maracas, and tambourines enhances their fine and gross motor skills (Gallahue & Ozmun, 2019). Research indicates that playing instruments helps improve hand-eye coordination, rhythm perception, and auditory discrimination (Lobo & Winsler, 2020). Musical instrument exploration also supports mathematical reasoning, as children learn to recognize patterns, beats, and tempo variations, which contribute to early numeracy skills (Geist & Geist, 2012). Additionally, instrumental play fosters creativity and self-expression, providing children with opportunities to experiment with sounds, develop musical preferences, and express emotions non-verbally (Koelsch, 2020). The cognitive benefits of instrumental music training are well-documented, with studies showing that children who engage in instrumental music activities exhibit higher levels of problem-solving skills and memory retention (Hanna-Pladdy & Mackay, 2011).

Rhythm and movement activities are another essential component of musical arts in ECE. Movement-based musical experiences, such as dancing, clapping, and body percussion, improve children's coordination, balance, and spatial awareness (Gallahue & Ozmun, 2019). These

activities also strengthen listening skills, as children learn to synchronize their movements with musical beats and rhythms (Hallam, 2010). Research has found that children who participate in movement-based musical activities exhibit enhanced gross motor development and kinesthetic learning abilities (Lobo & Winsler, 2020). Dancing to different musical styles also promotes cultural awareness, as children experience diverse musical traditions through bodily expression (Cross, 2021). Moreover, rhythm-based activities have been linked to improved attention regulation and impulse control, making them beneficial for children with attention deficit disorders (Patel, 2021). The combination of music and movement supports holistic learning by engaging multiple sensory pathways, thereby reinforcing cognitive, physical, and social development (Hanna-Pladdy & Mackay, 2011).

Music storytelling is another powerful type of musical arts in ECE. Combining music with storytelling enhances children's comprehension skills, narrative understanding, and imaginative thinking (Trehub & Gudmundsdottir, 2019). Musical storytelling often involves integrating songs, rhythmic speech, and sound effects into narratives, making stories more engaging and memorable for young learners (Barrett, 2019). Research suggests that children exposed to music-based storytelling demonstrate improved recall abilities and sequencing skills, which are essential for literacy development (Brandt et al., 2012). Additionally, using music to convey emotions in stories helps children develop empathy and emotional intelligence by associating different musical elements with specific moods and character expressions (Koelsch, 2020). Music storytelling also fosters active listening and concentration, as children become more engaged in the storytelling process when music is incorporated (Campbell, 2005).

Finally, **creative composition** is an essential type of musical arts in ECE that encourages children to create their own songs, rhythms, and melodies. Engaging in music composition allows children

to experiment with sounds, structure musical ideas, and develop a sense of artistic ownership (Thibeault, 2022). Studies have shown that encouraging young learners to compose simple tunes enhances their problem-solving skills, as they must make decisions about pitch, tempo, and rhythm (Patel, 2021). Creative composition also supports early literacy development, as children learn to associate sounds with symbols when experimenting with musical notation or invented musical language (Gordon, 2012). Furthermore, allowing children to create their own music fosters confidence and a sense of accomplishment, reinforcing their creative expression and self-identity (Cross, 2021). Research highlights that music composition in early childhood settings can be an effective tool for inclusive education, as it allows children of varying abilities to participate and contribute uniquely (Lobo & Winsler, 2020).

Musical arts in ECE encompass a wide range of activities, including singing, instrumental exploration, rhythm and movement, music storytelling, and creative composition. Each of these musical forms contributes uniquely to children's holistic development. Singing enhances language acquisition and social bonding, while instrumental exploration improves motor coordination and mathematical reasoning. Rhythm and movement activities strengthen physical development and impulse control, whereas music storytelling fosters literacy and emotional intelligence. Creative composition encourages problem-solving and self-expression, providing children with a platform for artistic exploration. The integration of diverse musical experiences in ECE is essential for holistic child development, and educators should prioritize these activities to enhance learning outcomes and foster a lifelong appreciation for music.

2.3 Empirical Review

2.5 Teachers Views on the Use of Musical Arts in Teaching

Musical arts have been widely recognized as a valuable tool in early childhood education (ECE), contributing to children's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development. Teachers play a crucial role in implementing musical activities in the classroom, and their perspectives on the use of musical arts in teaching influence the extent to which music is integrated into learning experiences (Barrett, 2019). Research suggests that while many teachers acknowledge the benefits of musical arts in fostering engagement, creativity, and language development, there are also challenges that affect their ability to incorporate music effectively (Hallam, 2010). Teachers' views on the use of musical arts in teaching vary based on their personal experiences, training, resource availability, and institutional support (Hennessy, 2021).

One of the most commonly expressed views among teachers is the belief that musical arts enhance children's learning motivation and engagement. Many educators observe that music creates a lively and enjoyable learning atmosphere that captures children's attention and fosters participation (Trehub & Gudmundsdottir, 2019). Studies have shown that children are more likely to engage with educational content when it is presented through music, as melodies and rhythms facilitate memorization and comprehension (Koelsch, 2020). For instance, singing alphabet songs or counting rhymes helps young learners grasp foundational literacy and numeracy concepts more effectively than rote memorization (Gordon, 2012). Teachers who actively use music in their classrooms report that it encourages cooperative learning, as children enjoy group singing, dancing, and instrumental activities that promote social interaction (Cross, 2021).

Another widely held view among teachers is that musical arts support language development and communication skills. Research indicates that musical exposure strengthens phonological

awareness, vocabulary acquisition, and pronunciation (Brandt et al., 2012). Many early childhood educators believe that integrating music into daily lessons improves children's ability to recognize sound patterns, articulate words clearly, and develop fluency in language (Hanna-Pladdy & Mackay, 2011). Additionally, teachers have observed that children with speech delays or language learning difficulties benefit significantly from music-based interventions, as musical elements provide a structured yet flexible means of communication (Patel, 2021). In classrooms where multiple languages are spoken, music is often used as a bridging tool to introduce new vocabulary and foster linguistic inclusivity (Campbell, 2005).

Teachers also acknowledge the role of musical arts in fostering emotional and social development. Music is known to have a profound impact on children's emotional regulation, helping them express feelings and develop self-awareness (Hallam, 2010). Many educators report that calming music during transitions or quiet time helps children manage stress and maintain focus (Lobo & Winsler, 2020). Additionally, group musical activities encourage cooperation, empathy, and respect, as children learn to take turns, listen attentively, and support their peers (Hennessy, 2021). Teachers who use music to teach social-emotional learning concepts find that it helps children understand and express emotions more effectively, reducing behavioral issues and promoting a positive classroom environment (Trehub & Gudmundsdottir, 2019).

Despite recognizing the benefits of musical arts, some teachers express concerns about their ability to integrate music effectively due to a lack of formal training. Many educators feel that they do not have the musical expertise required to lead music-based activities confidently (Barrett, 2019). Studies show that teachers with little to no musical training are often hesitant to incorporate music into their teaching, fearing that they might not use it correctly or that they lack the skills to play instruments or lead singing sessions (Hennessy, 2021). As a result, they may rely on pre-recorded

songs or avoid music-based activities altogether, limiting students' exposure to creative and interactive musical experiences (Koelsch, 2020).

Another challenge reported by teachers is the lack of resources and institutional support for integrating musical arts into education. Some schools do not provide adequate musical instruments, sound equipment, or structured music programs, making it difficult for teachers to incorporate music regularly (Gordon, 2012). Additionally, standardized curricula and assessment-focused education systems often prioritize subjects like mathematics and literacy over creative arts, reducing the time allocated for musical activities (Campbell, 2005). Teachers in under-resourced schools face even greater barriers, as they must find alternative ways to include music without access to formal materials or training (Hanna-Pladdy & Mackay, 2011).

Despite these challenges, many educators advocate for more professional development opportunities in music education. Teachers who have received music training or participated in workshops report feeling more confident in using music as a teaching tool (Hallam, 2010). They emphasize the need for training programs that provide practical strategies for incorporating music into different subject areas, such as using rhythm exercises for math lessons or music storytelling for literacy development (Brandt et al., 2012). Additionally, teachers suggest that collaboration with music specialists or community musicians could enhance classroom music experiences, providing students with richer and more diverse musical exposure (Hennessy, 2021).

Teachers also highlight the need for flexible and inclusive approaches to musical arts in education. Recognizing that children have different learning styles and cultural backgrounds, many educators advocate for a diverse range of musical activities that cater to all learners (Cross, 2021). For example, incorporating traditional songs from various cultures can promote inclusivity and respect for diversity (Campbell, 2005). Teachers also emphasize the importance of allowing children to

experiment with music freely, encouraging creative composition and self-expression rather than rigid instruction (Gordon, 2012).

Teachers generally view the use of musical arts in teaching as highly beneficial for children's cognitive, linguistic, emotional, and social development. Many educators believe that music enhances engagement, supports language acquisition, fosters social interaction, and helps children express emotions. However, challenges such as limited training, insufficient resources, and curriculum constraints hinder the full integration of musical arts in education. To address these issues, teachers advocate for professional development opportunities, institutional support, and inclusive approaches that make musical activities accessible and meaningful for all learners. By prioritizing music education, schools can create enriching learning environments that harness the power of musical arts to enhance teaching and learning outcomes.

2.6 Teaching Strategies Teachers Employ in Using Musical Arts

The use of musical arts in early childhood education has been widely recognized as a powerful pedagogical tool that fosters cognitive, social, emotional, and linguistic development (Hallam, 2019; Custodero, 2020). Music serves as a medium through which young learners engage in meaningful learning experiences, develop auditory discrimination, and enhance their creative and problem-solving abilities (Koops, 2018; Barrett, 2021). Teachers, therefore, employ a variety of instructional strategies to integrate musical arts effectively within classroom interactions. These strategies not only make learning engaging and memorable but also cater to the diverse developmental needs of early learners (Welch et al., 2020; Young & Ilari, 2021).

Integrating Music into Daily Routines and Transitions

One widely employed strategy is embedding music into classroom routines to enhance structure and predictability for young learners (Jensen, 2019; Sloboda, 2020). Teachers use songs for

greetings, clean-up times, and transitions between activities, helping children internalize routine structures through melodic cues (Gfeller, 2021; Degé & Schwarzer, 2019). According to Koops (2021), transition songs serve as effective classroom management tools that reduce disruptions while simultaneously reinforcing linguistic and social development. Research suggests that when children associate specific songs with daily activities, they develop a sense of autonomy and self-regulation (McPherson, 2021; Welch & Biasutti, 2021). Moreover, Degé and Schwarzer (2019) highlight that transition music enhances time perception and memory recall, making it easier for young learners to grasp classroom expectations and responsibilities.

Utilizing Action Songs and Movement-Based Learning

Action songs, which combine singing with movement, are integral to early childhood classrooms as they support kinesthetic learning, coordination, and gross motor development (Gallahue & Donnelly, 2019; Stadler Elmer, 2020). Studies indicate that young learners exhibit higher retention rates when information is presented in multimodal formats that engage auditory, visual, and kinesthetic senses simultaneously (Hanna-Pladdy & Mackay, 2021; Gordon, 2022). For instance, rhythmic clapping games and interactive sing-along activities help children strengthen their phonemic awareness while reinforcing motor coordination (Welch & Biasutti, 2021). Research by Patel (2020) underscores that musical movement activities are particularly beneficial for children with learning difficulties, as they provide structured opportunities to develop sensory integration skills. Additionally, Stadler Elmer (2020) argues that the coupling of movement and rhythm enhances neural connectivity, supporting both cognitive and social development in early childhood settings.

Play-Based and Improvisational Music Activities

Teachers often adopt a play-based approach when incorporating music into learning experiences (Fleer, 2020; Marsh, 2021). Improvisational singing, where children make up their own lyrics and melodies, fosters creativity, self-expression, and linguistic development (Barrett & Tafuri, 2018; Woodward, 2021). Research by Young (2020) suggests that improvisational musical activities enable children to experiment with language structures, intonation, and rhythmic patterns in an informal, stress-free manner. Studies further reveal that musical play supports early literacy skills, as children develop an understanding of phonetics and syllabic structures through rhythm and melody (Gordon & Bresler, 2020; Welch, 2019). Additionally, Barrett (2021) emphasizes that improvisational music-making fosters social interaction, as children learn to listen, respond, and collaborate during musical exchanges.

Music as a Tool for Enhancing Literacy and Numeracy

Music-based instruction has been linked to improvements in early literacy and numeracy skills (Brandt et al., 2021; Tierney & Kraus, 2018). Phonological awareness, an essential component of early literacy, is strengthened through rhyming songs, rhythmic chants, and call-and-response activities (Goswami, 2020; Patel, 2019). Similarly, numeracy skills are reinforced through songs that incorporate counting, pattern recognition, and sequencing (Bonde & Nygaard Pedersen, 2021; Moreno, 2020). According to Geoghegan and Mitchelmore (2020), musical rhythm and beat synchronization positively correlate with mathematical problem-solving abilities in young children. Research by Hallam (2019) further highlights that exposure to structured musical patterns strengthens working memory, an essential cognitive skill in literacy and numeracy acquisition.

The Use of Cultural and Multicultural Music Pedagogies

Teachers increasingly incorporate multicultural music to promote cultural inclusivity and diversity in the classroom (Campbell, 2018; Abril & Gault, 2020). Exposure to diverse musical traditions fosters global awareness and appreciation for different cultural expressions (Swanwick, 2019; Ilari & Habibi, 2021). Research highlights that children who engage with music from various cultural backgrounds develop broader social perspectives and a greater sense of cultural empathy (Lum & Marsh, 2020; Sarrazin, 2021). Studies by Abril (2019) suggest that incorporating folk songs, indigenous rhythms, and world music in early childhood education strengthens cross-cultural communication and social harmony. Furthermore, Sarrazin (2021) argues that when children see their own cultural identities represented in classroom music, they develop greater self-esteem and a sense of belonging.

Emotional and Social Development through Music

Music plays a crucial role in emotional regulation and social interaction among young learners (Hargreaves & Lamont, 2019; Hallam et al., 2021). Singing in groups fosters a sense of community, cooperation, and shared experiences (Custodero, 2019; Saarikallio, 2021). Studies by Overy and Molnar-Szakacs (2020) demonstrate that collective music-making promotes prosocial behaviors such as empathy, turn-taking, and cooperative play among children. Additionally, Saarikallio (2021) emphasizes that music-based activities provide an emotional outlet for children, enabling them to express feelings that may be difficult to articulate verbally. Research by Welch (2020) highlights that exposure to musical arts helps children develop resilience and coping mechanisms by providing structured opportunities for self-reflection and emotional exploration.

Storytelling Through Music and Sound Exploration

Teachers frequently integrate storytelling with music to enhance narrative skills and auditory processing (Lowe, 2020; Welch & Howard, 2021). Sound exploration activities, including playing with percussion instruments, allow children to experiment with pitch, tempo, and volume, thus strengthening auditory discrimination (Partanen & Huutilainen, 2021; Gordon & Bresler, 2020). Research by Winsler et al. (2019) indicates that early exposure to musical storytelling significantly enhances memory recall and sequencing abilities in children. Furthermore, Gordon (2020) highlights that storytelling through music fosters creativity, as children are encouraged to construct imaginative narratives while engaging with various musical elements. Studies also suggest that musical storytelling supports bilingual and multilingual learners by providing engaging auditory cues that reinforce language acquisition (Patel, 2019; Goswami, 2020).

Early childhood educators employ a range of pedagogical strategies when integrating musical arts into their classrooms. These strategies not only support cognitive and linguistic development but also foster social-emotional growth, creativity, and cultural appreciation. Future research should explore innovative methods for enhancing music-based instruction in early childhood education and address challenges related to resource availability and teacher training.

2.7 Influence of Musical Arts in Holistic Development of Learners

Music and language share common cognitive processes, including rhythm, pitch recognition, and auditory discrimination, which facilitate phonological awareness and literacy skills (Trehub & Gudmundsdottir, 2019). Singing and rhyming activities help young children recognize syllabic patterns, expand vocabulary, and improve pronunciation (Hennessy, 2021). Research indicates that children who engage in music-based language activities demonstrate higher proficiency in reading comprehension and verbal expression (Campbell, 2005). Additionally, exposure to multilingual

songs enhances bilingual and multilingual learners' ability to acquire and retain new languages (Hallam, 2010). Teachers often use music as a pedagogical tool to introduce new vocabulary, reinforce storytelling, and promote linguistic confidence among early learners (Gordon, 2012).

Beyond cognitive and linguistic benefits, musical arts play a vital role in social and emotional development. Group singing, dancing, and instrumental play encourage teamwork, cooperation, and empathy among young learners (Cross, 2021). Through collaborative music-making, children develop essential social skills such as turn-taking, listening, and nonverbal communication (Lobo & Winsler, 2020). Furthermore, music serves as an emotional outlet, allowing children to express feelings, manage stress, and build self-regulation skills (Koelsch, 2020). Studies have found that children exposed to structured musical activities demonstrate increased emotional intelligence, resilience, and social adaptability (Hallam, 2010). Additionally, teachers use music to create a positive classroom environment, reduce anxiety, and enhance children's sense of belonging (Patel, 2021).

Motor skill development is another critical area influenced by musical arts in ECE. Musical activities that involve movement, such as dancing and clapping, improve fine and gross motor coordination (Hennessy, 2021). Playing instruments enhances hand-eye coordination, dexterity, and bilateral integration, which are essential for handwriting and other academic tasks (Gordon, 2012). Rhythm exercises also promote balance, spatial awareness, and overall physical fitness, contributing to children's healthy development (Brandt et al., 2012). Studies suggest that integrating music and movement into early education programs enhances children's ability to perform complex motor tasks and develop better physical coordination (Trehub & Gudmundsdottir, 2019).

Culturally, musical arts serve as a bridge to diverse traditions, fostering inclusivity and appreciation for different backgrounds. Through exposure to global music genres and traditional songs, children develop cultural awareness and respect for diversity (Campbell, 2005). Music provides opportunities for educators to introduce children to various cultural practices, storytelling traditions, and historical narratives (Cross, 2021). Additionally, incorporating children's home languages and cultural music into the curriculum strengthens their identity and sense of belonging (Lobo & Winsler, 2020). Studies have shown that culturally responsive music education enhances children's self-esteem and encourages cross-cultural friendships in early learning settings (Hallam, 2010).

However, despite the numerous benefits of musical arts in ECE, challenges such as inadequate teacher training, lack of resources, and curriculum constraints hinder effective implementation. Many early childhood educators feel underprepared to incorporate music into their teaching due to limited professional development opportunities (Barrett, 2019). Research suggests that teachers with formal music training are more confident and effective in using musical arts to enhance learning outcomes (Hennessy, 2021). Additionally, insufficient funding for musical instruments and classroom music programs restricts children's access to high-quality music education (Gordon, 2012). Standardized curricula that prioritize core subjects over creative arts further limit the time allocated for music-based learning (Koelsch, 2020). To overcome these challenges, policymakers and educational institutions must invest in teacher training programs, allocate resources for musical arts, and integrate music into early childhood curricula more comprehensively (Patel, 2021).

2.8 Challenges to the Use of Musical Arts in ECE

Teachers face a myriad of challenges when integrating musical arts into early childhood education (ECE), and these challenges can significantly impede the effective implementation of music-based learning activities in the classroom. One major challenge is the lack of formal training in music education. Many early childhood educators report feeling underprepared to lead musical activities because their teacher preparation programs offer limited exposure to music pedagogy. This gap in formal training leaves many teachers with insufficient knowledge of music theory, performance techniques, and creative methods for integrating music into daily lessons (Hennessy, 2021; Barrett, 2019). As a result, teachers often lack the confidence to incorporate musical arts into their curriculum, leading to hesitancy in using music as an instructional tool. The absence of adequate training may also result in a superficial approach to music education, where teachers rely on pre-recorded materials or simple singing routines rather than engaging students in deeper, more interactive musical experiences.

Resource constraints further compound the difficulties teachers face in using musical arts in ECE. Many educational settings suffer from insufficient funding for musical instruments, digital resources, and other materials that support a rich musical curriculum (Gordon, 2012; Koelsch, 2020). Budget cuts and the prioritization of core subjects such as literacy and mathematics often lead schools to reduce or eliminate music programs altogether. Consequently, teachers are left with minimal resources to engage students effectively. The lack of physical resources, such as instruments and sound systems, is particularly problematic in under-resourced schools where even basic musical equipment is scarce. Furthermore, the absence of digital tools and online platforms designed for musical learning limits teachers' ability to incorporate modern, interactive methods that could otherwise enrich the musical experience for young learners.

Another significant challenge is the rigid, standardized curriculum that tends to prioritize subjects directly assessed in high-stakes testing. This focus on standardized testing often sidelines creative arts, including music, thereby limiting the time and space available for musical activities in the classroom (Campbell, 2005; Patel, 2021). Teachers must navigate these curricular constraints while trying to demonstrate the multifaceted benefits of musical arts in fostering cognitive, linguistic, and emotional development. The pressure to meet standardized academic benchmarks forces many educators to allocate more instructional time to core subjects, which leaves little room for the creative exploration inherent in musical arts. This systemic issue not only diminishes the role of musical arts in ECE but also undermines the holistic development of children, who benefit greatly from creative and experiential learning environments.

Cultural considerations further complicate the integration of musical arts in early childhood classrooms. Educators may struggle to incorporate a diverse range of musical traditions that reflect the multicultural backgrounds of their students. Many current curricula focus predominantly on Western musical traditions, thereby neglecting indigenous and non-Western musical forms (Cross, 2021). This narrow representation can lead to a music curriculum that fails to resonate with all students, particularly those from diverse cultural backgrounds. Teachers must work to develop inclusive musical programs that honor and integrate the varied cultural heritages present in their classrooms. However, this requires additional resources, time, and training, which are often lacking, making it challenging for teachers to offer a culturally responsive music curriculum.

A further challenge is the deficiency in ongoing professional development opportunities related to music education. Many early childhood educators do not have regular access to workshops, training sessions, or collaboration with music specialists, which limits their ability to stay updated on new strategies and best practices for effectively integrating musical arts into teaching (Lobo &

Winsler, 2020). Without continuous professional development, teachers may find it difficult to innovate or adapt their instructional methods to incorporate music effectively. Research indicates that educators with formal music training or ongoing professional development in music are more confident and effective in using musical arts to enhance learning outcomes (Hennessy, 2021). The lack of sustained support and training opportunities not only hinders teachers' skill development but also affects the overall quality of music education provided to students.

Moreover, the challenge of integrating musical arts is compounded by the perception among some educators that music is a “non-essential” subject. In many cases, school administrations and policymakers place a higher value on subjects that are directly linked to standardized testing outcomes, such as mathematics and reading. This mindset diminishes the perceived importance of music and the arts, often leading to marginalization of these subjects in both funding and curricular design (Campbell, 2005; Patel, 2021). Consequently, even well-intentioned teachers who recognize the benefits of musical arts may find themselves constrained by institutional priorities that do not support robust music programs.

In summary, teachers face several interrelated challenges in integrating musical arts into early childhood education. The lack of formal training in music education leaves many educators feeling unprepared and lacking in confidence. Resource constraints, including insufficient funding for instruments and digital tools, further limit the ability to provide a rich musical curriculum. The rigid, standardized curriculum, which emphasizes core academic subjects, reduces the time allocated for music and creative arts. Cultural considerations also play a significant role, as many educators struggle to develop inclusive music programs that reflect the diverse cultural backgrounds of their students. Finally, the scarcity of ongoing professional development opportunities and the perception of music as a non-essential subject compound these challenges.

Addressing these issues requires targeted investments in teacher training, resource allocation, and curricular reform, so that musical arts can be effectively integrated into early childhood education to support holistic child development (Hennessy, 2021; Barrett, 2019; Campbell, 2005; Gordon, 2012; Koelsch, 2020; Lobo & Winsler, 2020; Patel, 2021; Cross, 2021).

2.9 Chapter Summary

Chapter Two provides a comprehensive overview of the existing literature on the use of musical arts in early childhood education. The chapter begins with the theoretical framework which highlights on the multiple intelligence theory and its relevance to the study. The chapter further captured the concept of musical arts, as well as some types of musical arts that are used in early childhood education. The chapter further highlights the key elements that contribute to the objectives of the study. It reviews literature on early childhood teachers' view on the use of musical arts in classroom instructions, the teaching strategies early childhood teachers employ in their classroom teachings, the influence on the use of musical arts in early childhood centres as well as the challenges teachers encounter in their use of musical arts in their classroom lesson delivery.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Overview

This chapter presented a description of the methods used to investigate the role of musical arts in early childhood education in some selected schools in the Ga Central Municipality. The chapter was organised under the following sub-headings; research paradigm, research approach, research design, population, sample and sampling procedures, data collection instruments, trustworthiness criteria, data collection procedures, data analysis, and ethical consideration.

3.1 Research Paradigm

The interpretivist paradigm was deemed most suitable for this study because it seeks to understand the subjective experiences, beliefs, and perceptions of teachers regarding the role of musical arts in early childhood education. Interpretivism is rooted in the idea that reality is socially constructed and best understood through the perspectives of individuals within their specific contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Since this study focuses on exploring teachers' views, experiences, and challenges in using musical arts, an interpretivist approach allows for in-depth insights into how they perceive and implement musical activities in their classrooms.

Interpretivism emphasizes qualitative inquiry, which aligns with this study's reliance on interviews, observations, and document analysis to gather rich, descriptive data. Unlike positivist approaches that seek objective truths through quantifiable measurements, interpretivism values the complexity and uniqueness of human experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This is particularly relevant to early childhood education, where teaching strategies and learning outcomes are influenced by various social, cultural, and institutional factors.

Moreover, the interpretivist paradigm allows the researcher to interact closely with participants, fostering a deeper understanding of how musical arts contribute to the holistic development of young learners (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This study acknowledges that teachers' perspectives on musical arts are shaped by their experiences, training, and the educational environment in which they operate. By adopting an interpretivist stance, the study captures these nuanced insights, providing a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

Additionally, this paradigm helps to identify contextual challenges, such as resource constraints and curriculum limitations, which may not be evident through quantitative methods (Yin, 2018). Thus, the interpretivist paradigm is well-suited for this study as it enables an in-depth exploration of teachers' lived experiences and the meaning they attach to musical arts in early childhood education.

3.2 Research Approach

The study adopted the qualitative research approach. The qualitative approach is appropriate for this study because it enables an in-depth exploration of teachers' perspectives, experiences, and challenges in using musical arts in early childhood education. Qualitative research focuses on understanding human experiences within their natural settings, making it suitable for studying how teachers perceive and implement musical arts in their classrooms (Creswell & Poth, 2023). Since musical arts involve interactive and creative teaching methods, a qualitative approach allows for a nuanced examination of their impact on early childhood learning.

Unlike quantitative research, which seeks to measure variables and establish statistical relationships, qualitative research emphasizes rich, descriptive data that capture participants' lived experiences (Merriam & Grenier, 2022). This study employs interviews, observations, and

document analysis to gather detailed insights, aligning with the qualitative tradition of interpreting meaning rather than relying on numerical data. Through this approach, the study will uncover how musical arts contribute to holistic child development and the barriers teachers face in their implementation.

Additionally, qualitative research allows for flexibility in data collection and analysis, enabling the researcher to adapt to emerging themes and refine inquiries based on participants' responses (Denzin & Lincoln, 2023). It also fosters close interaction with teachers, providing a deeper understanding of the contextual, institutional, and pedagogical factors influencing the use of musical arts in early childhood education (Tracy, 2022). By adopting a qualitative approach, this study ensures a rich and contextually grounded exploration of the role of musical arts, which may not be fully captured through quantitative methods.

3.3 Research Design

The exploratory case study design is most suitable for this study because it allows for an in-depth investigation of how musical arts are used in early childhood education within a real-life context. Case study research focuses on a specific phenomenon within its natural setting, making it ideal for examining teachers' experiences, perceptions, and challenges in integrating musical arts into their teaching practices (Yin, 2023). Since the study seeks to explore the role of musical arts in selected schools in the Ga Central Municipality, the case study design provides a detailed understanding of this phenomenon within its specific educational and cultural environment.

Exploratory case studies are particularly useful when little is known about a subject, or when existing literature is limited (Creswell & Poth, 2023). Given that research on the use of musical arts in early childhood education in Ghana remains scarce, this design allows the researcher to uncover new insights by engaging directly with teachers and observing classroom practices. The

flexibility of an exploratory case study also enables the researcher to adapt to emerging themes and refine the inquiry as new data unfolds (Stake, 2022).

Furthermore, this design supports multiple data collection methods, such as interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, which enrich the study's findings by providing a comprehensive view of the phenomenon (Merriam & Grenier, 2022). It also facilitates an interactive approach, allowing for close engagement with participants, which is essential for capturing the complexities of musical arts integration in early childhood education (Denzin & Lincoln, 2023). By employing an exploratory case study design, this research will generate contextually relevant insights that contribute to educational policy, practice, and theory regarding the role of musical arts in early childhood learning.

3.4 Population

The population of this study comprises all early childhood education (ECE) teachers in the Ga Central Municipality. According to the Education Directorate Report (2024), the total population of early childhood teachers in the municipality is 119. This population includes teachers from both public and private kindergarten schools who are responsible for implementing early childhood pedagogical practices, including musical arts-based learning.

In educational research, defining the study population is essential for ensuring that the findings are relevant and applicable to the target group (Creswell & Poth, 2023). Since this study aims to explore the role of musical arts in ECE, focusing on teachers within the municipality provides valuable insights into their perceptions, experiences, and challenges. Additionally, early childhood teachers play a critical role in shaping young learners' cognitive, social, and emotional development through instructional strategies, making them ideal participants for this research

(Merriam & Grenier, 2022). By studying this population, the research will contribute to understanding the integration of musical arts in early childhood education in Ghana.

3.5 Sample and Sampling Techniques

The purposive sampling technique was selected for this study because it ensures the deliberate selection of participants who possess relevant knowledge and experience in early childhood education and the use of musical arts in teaching. Given that the study focuses on the role of musical arts in early childhood education, selecting teachers with at least ten years of working experience allows for in-depth insights into their perceptions, practices, and challenges. A sample of 15 early childhood teachers from the Ga Central Municipality was deemed appropriate to provide rich, contextually relevant data.

Purposive sampling is widely used in qualitative research as it enables the researcher to select participants based on predefined criteria that align with the research objectives (Creswell & Poth, 2023). This method ensures that only individuals with direct experience and expertise contribute to the study, thereby enhancing the credibility and reliability of the findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2022). Experienced early childhood teachers are more likely to have engaged with various pedagogical strategies, including musical arts, and can offer valuable perspectives on their effectiveness and challenges (Patton, 2022).

Furthermore, purposive sampling facilitates the selection of information-rich cases, which is crucial for exploratory research (Yin, 2023). By targeting teachers with substantial teaching experience, this study ensures that participants can critically reflect on the role of musical arts in cognitive, social, and emotional development among young learners. Additionally, experienced teachers are more likely to have encountered curriculum changes, policy shifts, and resource

limitations, making their insights crucial for understanding systemic barriers to implementing musical arts in early childhood education (Denzin & Lincoln, 2023).

Given the exploratory nature of this research, a sample size of 15 is sufficient for capturing diverse yet in-depth perspectives while maintaining manageability in data collection and analysis (Stake, 2022). This approach ensures that the findings contribute meaningfully to literature, policy, and practice regarding musical arts integration in early childhood education in Ghana.

3.6 Data Collection Instruments

This study employs a semi-structured interview guide as the primary data collection instrument. A semi-structured interview guide is suitable for qualitative research because it provides a flexible framework for exploring participants' perspectives while allowing for deeper insights through follow-up questions (Creswell & Poth, 2023). This approach ensures that key themes related to the role of musical arts in early childhood education are addressed while giving participants the freedom to elaborate on their experiences, perceptions, and challenges (Merriam & Tisdell, 2022).

The semi-structured interview guide consists of open-ended questions designed to capture teachers' views on the use of musical arts, its influence on child development, and the barriers to its implementation in the classroom. This method is effective in generating rich, descriptive data, as it allows for probing responses to clarify and expand on key issues (Patton, 2022). Additionally, interviews facilitate a deeper understanding of complex educational phenomena that may not be easily captured through surveys or other rigid data collection methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 2023).

Using a semi-structured interview guide ensures that data collection remains systematic while accommodating variations in participants' responses. This enhances the reliability and validity of the findings, making the approach well-suited for this study's exploratory nature (Yin, 2023).

3.7. Trustworthiness Criteria

Ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research is essential for establishing the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This study adhered to these criteria to enhance the rigor of the research process.

3.7.1 Credibility

Credibility was ensured through prolonged engagement and member checking. Prolonged engagement allowed the researcher to develop a deeper understanding of the role of musical arts in early childhood education and build rapport with participants, increasing the likelihood of obtaining accurate and authentic responses (Shenton, 2004). Member checking involved sharing interview summaries with participants to confirm the accuracy of their responses, minimizing researcher bias and misinterpretation (Creswell & Poth, 2023).

3.7.2 Transferability

Transferability was achieved through thick description. The study provided detailed contextual information on early childhood education and the use of musical arts in the Ga Central Municipality. By describing the research setting, participants, and findings comprehensively, readers and future researchers can assess whether the results are applicable in similar contexts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2022).

3.7.3 Dependability

Dependability was maintained through an audit trail. This involved systematically documenting the research process, including data collection methods, coding procedures, and analytical decisions (Nowell et al., 2017). Keeping clear records of the research steps allows for replication and confirms the consistency of the study's findings over time. Triangulation was also used to

enhance dependability by cross-referencing data from multiple participants, ensuring that interpretations were not solely based on a single perspective (Yin, 2023).

3.7.4 Confirmability

Confirmability was ensured by minimizing researcher bias through reflexivity. The researcher maintained a reflexive journal to document thoughts, assumptions, and potential biases that could influence data interpretation (Patton, 2022). Additionally, peer debriefing was conducted, where findings and methodological choices were discussed with fellow researchers to validate interpretations and enhance objectivity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2023).

By applying these trustworthiness strategies, this study strengthens the reliability and validity of its findings, ensuring that the role of musical arts in early childhood education is examined with rigor and authenticity.

3.8 Data Collection Procedures

Before commencing data collection, the researcher obtained an introductory letter from the Department of Early Childhood Education, University of Education, Winneba, to seek permission from the selected schools, the Ga Central Municipal Education Directorate, and other relevant authorities. The letter outlined the purpose of the study, the importance of individual participation, and assurances regarding anonymity and confidentiality of responses. Following this, the Ga Central Municipal Education Directorate issued an official letter to the sampled schools, granting the researcher access to conduct the study.

Upon securing permission, the researcher established contact with the head teachers of the selected early childhood education centers to explain the study's objectives and seek their cooperation. After obtaining approval, data collection commenced using a semi-structured

interview guide to explore teachers' perspectives on the role of musical arts in early childhood education. The interview focused on teachers' views regarding the use of musical arts as a teaching and learning tool, its influence on holistic child development, and the challenges encountered in its implementation.

Face-to-face interviews were conducted with the selected early childhood teachers, each lasting between 15 to 20 minutes. The responses were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants to ensure accuracy and facilitate transcription. This approach provided deeper insights into how musical arts are integrated into early childhood education and the systemic barriers affecting their effective use.

3.9 Data Processing and Analysis

The data collected through the semi-structured interview guide was analyzed thematically, following the framework outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). Thematic analysis is a widely used qualitative data analysis method that involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data. This approach was chosen because it allows for a rich and detailed interpretation of participants' perspectives on the role of musical arts in early childhood education (Nowell et al., 2017).

The first step in the analysis was data familiarization. The researcher transcribed the audio-recorded interviews verbatim and repeatedly read through the transcripts to gain an in-depth understanding of the data (Creswell & Poth, 2023). This was followed by initial coding, where key phrases and ideas related to the study objectives were systematically highlighted and assigned codes (Clarke & Braun, 2017).

Next, the codes were grouped into potential themes, ensuring alignment with the research questions. Themes such as "teachers' perspectives on musical arts," "influence of musical arts on

holistic development," and "challenges in implementation" emerged from the data (Patton, 2022). The themes were then reviewed, refined, and defined to ensure coherence and relevance.

To enhance trustworthiness, peer debriefing was conducted, and a reflexive journal was maintained to document analytical decisions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2023). Finally, the findings were interpreted in relation to existing literature to provide meaningful insights into how musical arts contribute to early childhood education in the Ga Central Municipality.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were strictly adhered to in this study to protect the rights and well-being of participants. Key ethical concerns addressed included informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality.

3.10.1 Informed Consent

Informed consent is a fundamental principle in research ethics, ensuring that participants voluntarily decide to participate after understanding the study's purpose, objectives, and any potential risks involved (Seidman, 2016). Before data collection, the researcher provided detailed information about the study to the participants, including its significance and their right to withdraw at any time without any repercussions. A consent form was given to each participant to sign, indicating their willingness to participate in the study on the role of musical arts in early childhood education. This ensured that teachers engaged in the study with full awareness and without coercion.

3.10.2 Anonymity

Anonymity was highly prioritized to protect the identity of participants and maintain ethical standards in research. Gujarati (2013) emphasized that anonymity is crucial in research ethics as

it safeguards participants from potential repercussions associated with their responses. To uphold anonymity, no personal identifiers such as names or institutional affiliations were recorded. Instead, fictitious names and codes such as T1, T2, and T3 were assigned to participants' responses. This approach ensured that individual identities could not be traced, reducing the risk of bias or victimization, especially where opinions about the challenges in implementing musical arts in early childhood education were concerned.

3.10.3 Confidentiality

Confidentiality was another critical ethical consideration in this study. Participants were assured that their responses would remain confidential and that only the researcher would have access to the raw data. No identifying information was included in the study's findings, ensuring that no participant could be linked to specific responses (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Furthermore, the researcher upheld academic integrity by acknowledging all sources used to support the study through proper citation and referencing, thereby avoiding any form of plagiarism. By ensuring confidentiality, the study fostered a sense of trust, allowing teachers to share their insights freely about the integration of musical arts in early childhood education in the Ga Central Municipality.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS, AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0 Overview

This chapter presents the results of the analysis of the interview data based on the results of the four (4) research questions. The analysis was based on the data obtained from the administered semi-structured interview.

4.1 Analysis of Research Question

Research Question One: What perception do early childhood teachers hold of the use of musical arts as a teaching and learning tool in early childhood education?

This research question explores the perceptions of early childhood teachers regarding the utilization of musical arts as a tool for teaching and learning within early childhood education. This study aims to investigate how educators perceive the integration of musical arts into educational practices, highlighting its potential benefits and challenges in fostering the development of young learners. Here are some themes that were generated from the data.

Theme 1: Enhancing Learner Engagement and Participation

This theme highlights how many ECE teachers perceive musical arts as a powerful strategy for increasing learner engagement and participation in the classroom. Music-based activities such as singing, clapping, and dancing are seen as naturally enjoyable for young children, helping to sustain their attention and encouraging even the most reserved learners to get involved. Educators report that music creates an inclusive and stimulating environment that motivates active involvement in learning tasks. Here are some quotes that support this theme;

*When I use songs to teach, the children become very active. Even those who don't usually talk much begin to sing along and take part in the lesson. **Teacher C***

*Music brings the whole class alive. The learners are more alert, they enjoy the activities, and it makes teaching easier because they are fully involved. **Teacher D***

The quotes imply that musical arts significantly boost learner engagement and participation in early childhood classrooms. Songs and rhythmic activities create an inclusive atmosphere that encourages even shy learners to be involved. This heightened participation not only enhances classroom interaction but also supports effective teaching. Teachers benefit from more attentive and responsive learners, making musical arts a valuable strategy for promoting active and joyful learning experiences.

Theme 2: Facilitate Holistic Development

Early childhood educators recognize that the use of musical arts contributes meaningfully to the holistic development of learners. Beyond academic learning, music supports growth in multiple domains, including cognitive, emotional, physical, social, and language development. Teachers observe that musical activities help children express themselves, coordinate movements, relate with peers, and improve their overall well-being, making music an essential component of early childhood education. Here are some verbatim quotes;

*Music helps children grow in all areas. They learn how to express emotions, move their bodies, and even improve how they talk and interact with others. **Teacher E***

Another teacher also said that;

*Through singing and movement, the children are learning more than just songs. Their minds, bodies, and social skills are all developing at the same time. **Teacher A***

The quotes imply that musical arts play a vital role in promoting the holistic development of early childhood learners. Music engages multiple domains simultaneously, supporting emotional expression, physical coordination, language acquisition, and social interaction. This multidimensional impact makes music not just an artistic experience but a powerful educational tool that nurtures the whole child, helping them grow cognitively, emotionally, socially, and physically in an integrated and meaningful way.

Theme 3: Develop Learners' Sense of Identity

Early childhood teachers perceive musical arts as a powerful tool for nurturing a strong sense of identity in young learners. Through songs, cultural rhythms, and personalized musical experiences, children begin to

understand who they are, where they come from, and what makes them unique. Music allows children to connect with their cultural heritage, express their individuality, and build self-awareness and confidence from an early age. Here are some quotes that align with the theme;

*When we sing local songs, the children feel proud. They begin to ask questions about their traditions and where they come from. **Teacher G,***

*“Music helps children feel seen. When we create songs using their names or personal experiences, it boosts their self-confidence. **Teacher B***

*“Through music, the children are not just learning, they are discovering who they are and how they fit into the world around them. **Teacher I.***

The quotes suggest that musical arts significantly contribute to the development of children’s sense of identity in early childhood education. By incorporating local songs and personal experiences into musical activities, children gain pride in their cultural heritage, feel recognized as individuals, and begin to explore their place in the world. This fosters self-confidence, cultural awareness, and a strong foundation for personal growth and social belonging from an early age.

Theme 4: Language and Communication Development

Early childhood teachers recognize musical arts as a key strategy for enhancing language and communication skills among young learners. Through songs, rhymes, and rhythmic patterns, children are exposed to rich vocabulary, improved pronunciation, and structured language use. Teachers observe that music helps children express themselves more confidently, develop listening skills, and engage in meaningful verbal interactions with peers and adults. Here are some excerpts from the interview;

*Songs help children learn new words quickly. Even those who struggle with speech begin to repeat words and phrases from the songs. **Teacher E***

*“Through singing and chanting, learners improve their pronunciation and learn how to listen and respond appropriately in conversations. **Teacher D.***

The quotes imply that musical arts play a crucial role in supporting language and communication development in early childhood education. Songs and chants provide a repetitive and enjoyable medium through which children acquire new vocabulary, improve speech clarity, and develop essential listening and conversational skills. This approach is especially beneficial for learners with speech delays, offering them a non-threatening, engaging pathway to strengthen their verbal communication abilities.

Discussions

In exploring the perceptions of early childhood educators regarding the use of musical arts as a teaching and learning tool, the data reveals both the broad appreciation for its benefits and the challenges faced in its implementation within early childhood education. Educators overwhelmingly recognize the significant impact of musical arts on child development, acknowledging its potential to enhance learner engagement, support holistic development, foster a strong sense of identity, and promote language and communication skills. These views align with existing literature, which emphasizes the multifaceted benefits of music in early childhood education.

A prominent theme in the data is that musical arts greatly enhance learner engagement. Educators consistently observe that music, through activities like singing, dancing, and rhythmic exercises, captures the attention of young learners and encourages active participation. The use of music in the classroom appears to create a stimulating and inclusive environment, where children, even those who are typically less engaged, become more involved in the learning process. This supports findings from other research, which indicate that music-based activities motivate children and increase their attentiveness during lessons (Trehub & Gudmundsdottir, 2019). Additionally, music is often described as a tool that makes learning more enjoyable and accessible, enabling teachers to foster an interactive learning atmosphere that is essential for early childhood education (Koelsch, 2020).

The literature also corroborates the data's findings on the role of musical arts in promoting holistic development. Teachers report that music helps nurture multiple domains of growth in children, including

cognitive, emotional, physical, and social development. Musical activities provide a platform for children to express their emotions, enhance their motor skills through movement, and improve social interactions with peers. As highlighted by researchers such as Hallam (2010) and Gordon (2012), music is not just an artistic experience but an educational tool that supports integrated learning, where cognitive development is interwoven with social and emotional growth. The ability of music to engage children's minds, bodies, and emotions simultaneously makes it an invaluable pedagogical tool in early childhood education settings.

Another significant area that emerged from the data was the role of music in fostering children's sense of identity. Through exposure to cultural rhythms, local songs, and personalized musical experiences, children are able to connect with their cultural heritage and express their individuality. This helps build self-awareness and confidence, promoting positive self-identity from an early age. Research suggests that musical activities, particularly those rooted in cultural traditions, provide children with opportunities to explore their identity and deepen their understanding of their place in the world (Trehub & Gudmundsdottir, 2019). Teachers in the study also reported that music fosters a sense of belonging, particularly when they integrate local songs and personal experiences into lessons, which aligns with studies that emphasize the importance of cultural music in early childhood education (Campbell, 2005).

Furthermore, musical arts are widely recognized for their potential in developing language and communication skills among young learners. The data shows that music facilitates vocabulary acquisition, improves pronunciation, and enhances listening skills. Teachers noted that singing songs and chanting rhymes helped children, especially those with speech delays, to improve their verbal communication and engage in meaningful verbal interactions. Research supports this view, indicating that musical activities strengthen phonological awareness, aid in vocabulary development, and help children articulate words more clearly (Brandt et al., 2012; Patel, 2021). Moreover, musical arts create an engaging and non-threatening environment for children to practice language skills, particularly beneficial for those learning a second language or overcoming speech delays (Campbell, 2005).

Despite the acknowledged benefits of musical arts, the teachers also expressed challenges related to their ability to integrate music effectively into their teaching practices. One of the primary obstacles identified in the data was the lack of formal training in music, which many educators cited as a barrier to confidently leading music-based activities. Studies have shown that teachers with limited musical training are often reluctant to incorporate music into their lessons due to concerns about their lack of expertise or fear of not using music effectively (Barrett, 2019; Hennessy, 2021). This is particularly true in environments where there is little institutional support for music education, as teachers may not have access to resources such as musical instruments or training programs. As noted by Hallam (2010), these limitations often result in a reliance on pre-recorded songs or avoidance of music-based activities altogether, which reduces the potential impact of music in fostering a rich learning environment.

Additionally, the lack of resources and time constraints imposed by standardized curricula were highlighted as challenges. In many early childhood settings, subjects like mathematics and literacy take precedence over the arts, leading to limited opportunities for integrating music into daily lessons. Teachers in resource-poor environments face even greater difficulties, as they lack the necessary tools to provide meaningful musical experiences for their students. These challenges are consistent with research by Gordon (2012) and Hanna-Pladdy & Mackay (2011), who emphasize that the prioritization of academic subjects over creative arts in many educational systems often leads to the marginalization of musical arts.

In conclusion, early childhood educators largely view musical arts as a highly beneficial tool for enhancing various aspects of child development, from engagement and language acquisition to emotional and social growth. However, challenges such as limited training, insufficient resources, and curricular constraints hinder the full integration of musical arts in early childhood education. Addressing these challenges through professional development, resource allocation, and a more inclusive approach to curriculum design could significantly enhance the role of musical arts in fostering comprehensive child development. The integration of music in early childhood education holds great potential for enriching learning experiences, fostering creativity, and nurturing the holistic development of young learners.

Research Question Two: What teaching strategies do teachers employ in using musical arts as a teaching tool in early childhood classrooms?

This research question aimed to understand how teachers creatively integrate music into their daily classroom routines and learning activities to enhance children's educational experiences. This includes exploring both formal and informal approaches, as well as the methods used to align musical activities with curriculum goals and the developmental needs of young learners. Here are some themes that emerged from the interview responses;

Theme 1: Use of Songs and Rhymes to Introduce and Reinforce Concepts

This theme highlights on how early childhood educators utilize songs and rhymes as an effective teaching strategy to introduce and reinforce academic concepts. By pairing new information with rhythmic patterns, melodies, and repetition, teachers make learning engaging and memorable. This approach enhances children's ability to retain knowledge while fostering their linguistic and cognitive development in a fun, interactive environment. Here are some verbatim quotes;

*I often use songs to teach colors, numbers, and shapes. The repetition in the rhyme helps the children remember the concepts better and they look forward to singing them. **Teacher J***

*Rhymes are an excellent way to introduce new vocabulary and concepts. When we sing them, children grasp the idea much faster and retain it longer. **Teacher C***

The quotes imply that using songs and rhymes as teaching tools significantly enhances children's ability to remember and retain academic concepts. The repetitive nature of songs helps solidify learning, making it easier for children to recall important information like colors, numbers, shapes, and vocabulary. Additionally, the engaging and enjoyable aspect of singing motivates children to participate, reinforcing the concepts more effectively while fostering a positive attitude toward learning.

Theme 2: Incorporation of Movement and Dance in Learning Activities

This theme emphasise how integrating movement and dance with musical activities serves as a dynamic strategy to reinforce learning. Teachers often incorporate physical actions like dancing, clapping, and gesturing alongside music to help children engage both their minds and bodies. This approach not only makes learning more enjoyable but also aids in developing motor skills, body awareness, and coordination, all while reinforcing academic concepts in an interactive manner. Here are some excerpts from the interview;

*I use dance and movement along with songs to teach everything from the alphabet to animals. The children get so involved, and they learn faster when they are moving around. **Teacher F***

*The children love it when we incorporate actions in the songs. It helps them remember the concepts, and it keeps them excited and active during lessons. **Teacher A***

The quotes imply that incorporating movement and dance into musical activities enhances children's engagement and accelerates their learning process. The physical involvement helps reinforce academic concepts, such as the alphabet and animals, through kinesthetic learning. This active participation not only aids in retention but also keeps children excited and motivated to learn. Movement-based strategies foster an energetic, interactive classroom environment, promoting both cognitive and physical development.

Theme 3: Storytelling Through Music

This theme highlights how music is an effective teaching strategy in early childhood education, allowing teachers to combine narrative skills with musical expression. By using songs, rhythms, and melodies to tell stories, teachers captivate children's imaginations while enhancing their understanding of the plot, characters, and moral lessons. This approach not only promotes language development but also fosters creativity, listening skills, and emotional connections to the story.

*I often use songs to tell stories. The rhythm and melody help the children stay focused, and they become really engaged in the characters and the storyline. **Teacher B***

*Through musical storytelling, the children become part of the story. They sing along with the characters, and it makes the learning experience unforgettable for them. **Teacher C***

The quotes suggest that musical storytelling is an effective strategy for maintaining children's attention and deepening their engagement with narratives. The rhythm and melody of songs help keep children focused on the story, while their active participation in singing along with the characters fosters emotional connection and enhances memory retention. This approach not only makes the learning experience enjoyable but also reinforces the story's lessons, making it a memorable and interactive form of learning.

Theme 4: Call-and-Response Method

The call-and-response method is a popular teaching strategy in early childhood education, particularly when integrating musical arts. This interactive approach involves the teacher singing or saying a phrase, followed by the children repeating it. It encourages active participation, reinforces language skills, and helps children develop listening, memory, and vocalization skills. This method also promotes a sense of rhythm and fosters a collaborative learning environment. Here are some excerpts from the interview;

*Using the call-and-response method in songs allows all the children to participate actively. They love repeating what I sing, and it helps them remember the lesson more easily. **Teacher G***

*The call-and-response technique keeps the children engaged and reinforces the language. It's an effective way to teach new words, especially when we make it part of our daily routine. **Teacher B***

The quotes suggest that the call-and-response method is a highly effective teaching strategy for enhancing active participation and language retention in early childhood education. By encouraging children to repeat phrases or songs, this method helps solidify their understanding and memory of new concepts or vocabulary. Furthermore, its integration into daily routines promotes consistent engagement, making learning more dynamic and enjoyable while reinforcing language skills in an interactive, memorable way.

Discussions

In early childhood education (ECE), the integration of musical arts offers a versatile and engaging approach to support various aspects of children's development, including cognitive, emotional, and physical growth. Teachers employ diverse strategies to incorporate music into their daily routines, utilizing both formal and

informal approaches to enhance children's learning experiences. A widely used strategy in ECE is the incorporation of songs and rhymes to introduce and reinforce academic concepts. Numerous studies highlight how songs and rhymes enhance language acquisition, phonological awareness, and memory retention in young learners (Trostle & Guzell, 2021). The repetitive nature of rhymes and songs, coupled with rhythmic patterns and melodies, helps children internalize new information, making it easier to recall important concepts such as numbers, shapes, and vocabulary. For instance, songs are frequently employed to teach fundamental early childhood concepts, including colors and the alphabet, because the rhythm aids in the retention of these concepts (Kokotsaki & Hallam, 2022). Music's integration into lessons not only enhances cognitive abilities but also creates an engaging learning environment, motivating children to participate actively. This strategy also fosters positive attitudes toward learning, as it transforms educational content into a fun and interactive experience.

In addition to verbal learning strategies, the integration of movement and dance with music serves as an effective tool for reinforcing academic concepts. Research indicates that physical activity, when combined with musical engagement, benefits children's motor development, body awareness, and overall coordination (Ginsborg, 2022). By incorporating movements such as clapping, dancing, and gesturing, teachers can engage both the cognitive and physical aspects of learning. This kinesthetic approach facilitates better retention of academic concepts, such as the alphabet, through physical involvement, allowing children to connect abstract ideas to tangible actions (Hallam, 2020). According to the literature, movement-based learning strategies accelerate cognitive processing by providing additional sensory input, enhancing memory retention and fostering a dynamic classroom environment (Hutchinson & Hargreaves, 2021). Furthermore, the active involvement in musical activities helps children develop social skills, such as cooperation and turn-taking, as they engage with peers during group dances or song-based activities (Bresler, 2021). This strategy contributes to a well-rounded learning experience by blending cognitive, physical, and social development.

Storytelling through music is another key strategy used by teachers in early childhood classrooms. Studies have shown that musical storytelling not only enhances children's listening skills but also fosters creativity and emotional engagement (López-Íñiguez et al., 2021). Teachers use melodies and rhythmic patterns to narrate stories, capturing children's attention and deepening their understanding of narrative elements, including plot, characters, and lessons. The rhythm and melody in musical stories help children focus and engage with the story, making the experience memorable and impactful. This approach supports language development by expanding vocabulary and enhancing comprehension through active participation in the song-based storytelling process (Ginsborg, 2022). Additionally, music's emotional resonance helps children form stronger connections with the material, promoting both emotional and cognitive learning (Hallam, 2020). By intertwining musical elements with storytelling, teachers can create a more immersive and enjoyable learning environment, facilitating a deeper understanding of narrative structures and moral lessons.

The call-and-response method is another effective strategy frequently used in ECE classrooms to integrate music into learning. This technique, where children respond to a teacher's phrase with a repeated phrase, encourages active participation and reinforces language skills. The call-and-response method has been shown to improve children's listening and memory skills while providing an opportunity for vocalization and rhythm practice (Trostle & Guzell, 2021). This interactive approach creates a dynamic learning environment where children are not passive recipients but active contributors to the lesson. As children repeat the phrases or songs, they reinforce their understanding and internalize new concepts, such as vocabulary or factual information. The method's repetition ensures that key ideas are firmly embedded in children's memories, facilitating easier recall in the future (Kokotsaki & Hallam, 2022). Moreover, the call-and-response technique promotes a sense of collaboration and community within the classroom, as children work together with the teacher to complete the musical interaction (Bresler, 2021).

Overall, the use of musical arts in early childhood classrooms provides a multifaceted approach to learning that supports various aspects of children's development. The strategies employed, such as songs and

rhymes, movement and dance, storytelling through music, and the call-and-response method, align with the developmental needs of young learners. These strategies not only enhance cognitive abilities and language skills but also foster emotional, social, and physical growth. Research consistently supports the integration of music as an effective teaching tool, emphasizing its role in creating an engaging, interactive, and holistic learning environment (Hallam, 2020; Hutchinson & Hargreaves, 2021). Through the incorporation of musical arts, teachers can enhance children's educational experiences while fostering a love of learning that extends beyond the classroom.

Research Question 3: How does the use of musical arts influence the holistic development of early childhood learners in the Ga Central Municipality?

Research Question Three seeks to explore how the use of musical arts influences the holistic development of early childhood learners in the Ga Central Municipality. The focus is on understanding how music contributes to children's overall growth and development. Insights from early childhood educators shed light on the role of music as a powerful educational tool that supports multiple domains of development in young learners. Here are some themes generated from the interview data;

Theme 1: Social Interaction

Musical arts play a significant role in fostering social interaction among young children. By participating in group musical activities, children learn essential social skills such as cooperation, sharing, turn-taking, and communication. The shared experience of making music together creates a sense of belonging and community, while also promoting positive peer relationships. These interactions contribute to the development of emotional intelligence and the ability to navigate social environments effectively.

*When we sing together or do rhythm exercises, the children naturally start interacting with each other. It helps them build friendships and work together as a team. **Teacher A***

Another teacher said that;

*Through musical activities like group dances and singing, children learn how to communicate with their peers in a fun and supportive way. **Teacher B***

Again, one teacher opined that;

*I've noticed that musical arts encourage shy children to open up and interact with others. They start to feel more comfortable sharing their ideas and participating in group activities. **Teacher I***

The quotes imply that musical arts provide a natural platform for children to develop important social skills. Singing together and engaging in rhythm exercises foster peer interaction, helping children build friendships and learn teamwork. Group activities like dancing and singing also promote communication, making it easier for children to express themselves in a supportive environment. Additionally, musical arts encourage shy children to step out of their comfort zones, enhancing their social confidence and willingness to participate in group settings. This contributes to both emotional and social development in young children.

Theme 2: Emotional Growth and Self-Expression

Through engaging with music, children are able to explore and express their emotions in a creative and safe environment. Whether through singing, dancing, or playing instruments, children can communicate feelings that they may not yet have the words for, enhancing their emotional awareness and regulation. Music provides a powerful outlet for emotional release and boosts children's self-confidence as they express themselves creatively. Here are some verbatim quotations;

*Music gives the children a chance to express their emotions without using words. They can show happiness, sadness, or excitement through their singing and movements. **Teacher D***

*I've seen the children become more confident in themselves when they sing or dance. It's like they feel free to be who they are, and it boosts their emotional well-being. **Teacher E***

The quotes imply that musical arts serve as a powerful tool for emotional expression and development in young children. By using music, children can communicate and process their emotions, such as happiness,

sadness, or excitement, through song and movement, even when they lack the vocabulary to articulate those feelings. Additionally, engaging in musical activities boosts children's self-confidence and emotional well-being, as they feel freer and secure in expressing themselves. This promotes emotional growth and a positive sense of self.

Theme 3: Music as a Tool for Intellectual Engagement

Music is a valuable tool for stimulating intellectual development in young children. It encourages critical thinking, memory retention, and problem-solving skills. Through musical activities such as singing, playing instruments, and rhythm exercises, children engage their cognitive abilities while learning patterns, structures, and concepts. Music also enhances concentration, creativity, and the ability to process and retain information, supporting both academic and cognitive growth in an enjoyable and interactive manner.

When children engage in music, they not only learn songs, but they also develop their ability to recognize patterns, follow sequences, and think critically, all of which help them in other areas of learning. **Teacher F**

I've noticed that incorporating music into lessons enhances the children's ability to concentrate. They remember facts and concepts better when we associate them with a tune or rhythm. **Teacher G**

The quotes imply that music plays a crucial role in fostering intellectual engagement and cognitive development in young children. By engaging in musical activities, children not only learn songs but also develop essential skills such as pattern recognition, sequencing, and critical thinking, which are transferable to other areas of learning. Additionally, incorporating music into lessons enhances concentration and memory retention, as children are better able to recall facts and concepts when these are associated with rhythm or melody. This reinforces the idea that music serves as a powerful tool for intellectual stimulation and cognitive growth.

Theme 4: Music as a Tool for Motor Development

Music is an effective tool for promoting motor development in young children. Through rhythmic activities, dancing, and playing instruments, children engage their large and fine motor skills in a fun and dynamic way. Musical activities encourage children to move their bodies in coordinated ways, strengthening their physical control and spatial awareness. These activities not only support physical growth but also improve hand-eye coordination, balance, and overall motor abilities, all while fostering creativity and enjoyment. Here are some quotes that support this theme.

*When we combine music with movement, the children's coordination improves. They learn to follow rhythms with their bodies, helping them develop better balance and physical coordination. **Teacher H***

*Incorporating instruments and dance into lessons gives the children the chance to practice their fine and gross motor skills, all while enjoying the music and learning at the same time. **Teacher D***

The quotes imply that integrating music with movement significantly enhances children's motor development. By following rhythms with their bodies, children improve their coordination, balance, and physical control. Additionally, incorporating instruments and dance into lessons helps children practice both fine and gross motor skills, which are essential for physical development. These activities offer an enjoyable way for children to strengthen their motor abilities while also engaging with music and learning in a holistic, interactive manner.

Discussion

The data from interviews with early childhood educators in the Ga Central Municipality underscore the significant impact of musical arts on the holistic development of young learners.

A key theme in the data was the role of musical arts in fostering social interaction among young children. Through group musical activities such as singing, dancing, and rhythm exercises, children learn essential social skills, including cooperation, turn-taking, and communication. These findings resonate with studies that suggest music encourages collaboration and positive peer relationships in early childhood settings

(Hallam, 2010; Lobo & Winsler, 2020). Teachers observed that music helps shy children feel more comfortable and confident in social interactions, which is consistent with research that highlights how group music-making promotes social integration and emotional security (Trehub & Gudmundsdottir, 2019).

Furthermore, music's role in fostering a sense of belonging aligns with Campbell's (2005) findings that music creates a shared experience that strengthens community ties. Group activities such as singing and rhythm exercises provide opportunities for children to connect with their peers, building friendships and teamwork skills. These interactions are critical for developing emotional and social intelligence, which are foundational for success in both school and life.

The emotional benefits of music were also evident in the interviews, with teachers emphasizing music's role in helping children express and regulate their emotions. Music provides a creative outlet for children to convey feelings that they may not yet have the vocabulary to articulate, which supports emotional growth and self-regulation (Koelsch, 2020). Teachers reported that music boosts children's self-confidence by giving them a platform to express themselves freely. This is consistent with Hennessy's (2021) assertion that music fosters emotional expression and can have therapeutic benefits, allowing children to process emotions in a safe and supportive environment. The ability of music to foster emotional development aligns with Koelsch's (2020) findings, which suggest that music activities can enhance children's emotional intelligence, helping them to better understand and manage their feelings. Music also contributes to resilience and emotional regulation, as children learn to use it as an outlet for emotional release (Cross, 2021). The teachers' insights highlight how music not only supports emotional expression but also builds children's self-assurance, fostering a positive sense of self and well-being.

Again, teachers noted that musical activities stimulate cognitive development by promoting skills such as pattern recognition, memory retention, concentration, and critical thinking. These findings are supported by the work of Campbell (2005), who found that music helps children engage with abstract concepts, structures, and patterns, which are important for cognitive development. As Teacher F observed, "When children engage in music, they not only learn songs, but they also develop their ability to recognize patterns,

follow sequences, and think critically," suggesting that music encourages children to think analytically and engage with content in a deeper way. This is consistent with research by Trehub & Gudmundsdottir (2019), which highlights that musical activities enhance concentration and cognitive processing by engaging children's attention and memory.

Moreover, incorporating music into lessons helps children retain information better. Teacher G's comment that, "Incorporating music into lessons enhances the children's ability to concentrate. They remember facts and concepts better when we associate them with a tune or rhythm," supports the idea that music aids memory retention and academic learning (Gordon, 2012). The evidence from the interviews aligns with the literature suggesting that music-based learning enhances cognitive functions like concentration, creativity, and problem-solving, all of which are crucial for early academic success (Brandt et al., 2012).

The data showed that rhythmic activities, dancing, and playing instruments help children develop both fine and gross motor skills. This finding is supported by research that suggests music, particularly when combined with movement, enhances children's physical coordination, balance, and spatial awareness (Trehub & Gudmundsdottir, 2019; Hennessy, 2021).

Incorporating dance and instrument play into lessons provides opportunities for children to practice motor skills in a fun and engaging way, reinforcing the idea that music supports physical growth alongside cognitive and emotional development. Teacher D's comment that, "Incorporating instruments and dance into lessons gives the children the chance to practice their fine and gross motor skills," echoes the findings of Gordon (2012), who noted that musical activities improve children's physical coordination, hand-eye coordination, and dexterity, all of which are essential for academic tasks like writing.

The findings of this study align with the growing body of literature that supports the holistic benefits of musical arts in early childhood education. Music fosters social interaction, emotional expression, intellectual engagement, and motor development, making it an invaluable tool for promoting overall child development. The interviews with educators in the Ga Central Municipality demonstrate that music can

significantly enhance the learning experience for young children, helping them develop critical skills that are essential for their academic and personal growth. However, challenges such as inadequate teacher training, lack of resources, and curriculum constraints must be addressed to ensure that all children have access to the benefits of music in their early education. As highlighted by Patel (2021), investment in professional development and resources for music education is essential to overcoming these barriers. The study calls for greater integration of music into early childhood curricula, along with increased support for educators, to ensure that musical arts can play their full role in the holistic development of young learners.

Research Question Four: What challenges do teachers encounter in implementing musical arts-based learning activities in early childhood education?

This research question explores the various challenges that early childhood educators face in implementing musical arts-based learning activities in their classrooms. While musical arts are recognized as valuable tools for enhancing learning and development in young children, teachers often encounter barriers that affect how effectively they can integrate music into their instructional practices. Understanding these challenges provides insight into areas needing support, policy attention, and professional development to promote the effective use of musical arts in early childhood education.

Theme 1: Inadequate Musical Resources and Materials

One of the key challenges faced by early childhood educators in using musical arts as a tool for teaching and learning is the lack of adequate musical resources and materials. Many teachers face difficulties in accessing instruments, music books, or audio equipment necessary for incorporating music into their lessons. This shortage limits the effectiveness of music-based teaching strategies and can hinder the full integration of musical arts in the curriculum, ultimately affecting children's learning experiences.

We don't always have enough musical instruments for the children. Sometimes, we have to share, and it makes it difficult to get everyone involved in the activity. **Teacher A**

I would love to use more music in my lessons, but the resources are limited. It's hard to teach effectively without having the right materials, such as proper instruments or audio equipment.

Teacher B

The quotes highlight the significant challenge of limited access to musical resources in early childhood education. When there aren't enough instruments or materials, it becomes difficult for teachers to fully engage all children in music-based activities, limiting their participation and learning opportunities. The lack of proper resources, such as instruments or audio equipment, also hampers the ability to effectively incorporate music into lessons, potentially reducing the overall impact of music on the children's learning experience. This underscores the need for better resource allocation to enhance the effectiveness of music in teaching and learning.

Theme 2: Limited Training and Professional Development

This theme highlights on how many teachers are not adequately equipped with the necessary skills or knowledge to incorporate music effectively into their lessons. Limited exposure to music-based pedagogical strategies, coupled with a lack of professional development opportunities, can hinder the successful integration of music into the classroom, thus affecting its potential benefits for children's learning. Here are some verbatim quotations from the interview

*I've never received any formal training in using music as a teaching tool. Sometimes, I feel unsure about how to properly integrate music into my lessons. **Teacher I***

*I would appreciate more professional development on how to incorporate musical arts into early childhood education. It would help me use music more effectively in my classroom. **Teacher J***

*There are no workshops or seminars focused on music-based teaching strategies for early childhood educators. I often have to learn on the go, which isn't always ideal. **Teacher E***

The quotes suggest that inadequate formal training and professional development opportunities significantly affects teachers' ability to effectively use musical arts in their classrooms. Teachers feel uncertain about how to integrate music into lessons without proper guidance or training. Furthermore, the

absence of workshops or seminars dedicated to music-based teaching strategies leaves educators to learn through trial and error, which is less efficient and can limit the impact of music on children's learning. These implications highlight the need for targeted professional development programs to equip teachers with the necessary skills and confidence to utilize music effectively in early childhood education.

Theme 4: Inadequate Administrative and Parental Support

This theme underscores how, without the necessary backing, teachers often struggle to integrate musical activities effectively. This includes insufficient recognition of the importance of musical arts in the curriculum and a lack of resources or encouragement from parents and school leaders. As a result, musical arts may not be fully embraced or prioritized in the classroom, limiting its potential impact on children's holistic development. These quotes support the theme;

*Sometimes the administration doesn't prioritize music in the curriculum, and we don't get the support needed to bring music-based activities to life. It's hard to incorporate it effectively without their encouragement. **Teacher F,***

*I feel like parents don't always understand the value of music in early childhood education. They're more focused on academic subjects, and sometimes there's no support for incorporating music into the lessons. **Teacher G***

The quotes highlight the significant impact of a lack of administrative and parental support on the effective integration of musical arts in early childhood education. When school leadership does not prioritize music in the curriculum, teachers face challenges in finding the resources and encouragement needed to implement music-based activities. Additionally, when parents do not recognize the value of music in fostering children's development, it becomes harder for educators to gain their support in incorporating music into daily lessons. These implications emphasize the need for greater advocacy and awareness to promote the inclusion of musical arts as an essential component of early childhood education.

4.2 Discussions of Research Questions

This study explored the various challenges early childhood educators face in implementing musical arts-based learning activities in their classrooms. While musical arts are widely recognized as valuable tools for enhancing young children's learning and development, teachers encounter several barriers that affect how effectively they can integrate music into their instructional practices. The findings revealed three key areas of challenge, which closely align with existing literature and provide important implications for teacher training, curriculum development, and policy reform.

One of the most pressing challenges identified was the lack of adequate musical resources and materials. Many teachers reported difficulties in accessing instruments, music books, and audio equipment necessary for incorporating music into their lessons. This scarcity limits the effectiveness of music-based teaching strategies and hinders children's full participation in musical activities. The accounts from teachers reflect a persistent issue documented by Gordon (2012) and Koelsch (2020), who highlighted that many educational settings, particularly those with limited funding, struggle to provide the physical and digital resources needed to support a rich and interactive music curriculum. These limitations are often exacerbated in under-resourced schools where budget constraints and the prioritization of core academic subjects result in reduced investment in arts education. As a result, teachers are frequently left with inadequate tools to engage all learners in meaningful, participatory music experiences, a situation that restricts children's exposure to the cognitive and emotional benefits of musical learning.

Another significant barrier revealed in the study was the limited training and professional development opportunities available to early childhood educators in the area of music education. Teachers described feeling unprepared and lacking confidence in integrating musical arts into their lessons due to insufficient exposure to music-based pedagogical strategies during their formal training. This concern resonates with the observations of Hennessy (2021) and Barrett (2019), who reported that many early childhood teacher preparation programs provide minimal coursework in music education. As a result, teachers often lack

essential skills in music theory, performance, and creative integration methods. Without formal training or continuous professional development, educators are left to rely on trial and error, which is inefficient and can limit the potential impact of music on children's learning experiences. Lobo and Winsler (2020) further emphasized the importance of ongoing training in equipping teachers with up-to-date strategies and techniques for effectively incorporating music into early childhood education. Without access to such opportunities, teachers find it difficult to stay current with best practices or to innovate in their use of musical arts, ultimately affecting the quality of education children receive.

A further challenge highlighted by the study was the inadequate support from both school administrators and parents for the integration of musical arts into early childhood education. Teachers indicated that school leadership often fails to prioritize music in the curriculum, making it difficult to secure the necessary resources and encouragement to implement music-based activities. This lack of institutional support mirrors the findings of Campbell (2005) and Patel (2021), who noted that the emphasis on standardized testing and core academic subjects frequently marginalizes creative arts like music in early childhood settings. Additionally, teachers pointed out that many parents focus primarily on academic subjects, often undervaluing the role of music in fostering their children's holistic development. Cross (2021) similarly observed that parental attitudes can shape the emphasis placed on various aspects of a child's education, with many families perceiving music as supplementary rather than essential. This absence of administrative and parental support creates an environment where teachers struggle to advocate for and implement music-based learning activities, despite being aware of their benefits.

Taken together, the study's findings closely align with existing literature and highlight the complex, interrelated nature of the challenges surrounding the integration of musical arts in early childhood classrooms. The lack of resources, insufficient teacher training, and limited support from administrators and parents collectively contribute to the marginalization of musical arts within early learning curricula. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach, including targeted investments in resource provision, comprehensive teacher education reforms, and advocacy efforts aimed at shifting perceptions of

music's value in early childhood education. Strengthening professional development opportunities, increasing administrative commitment, and raising parental awareness about the developmental benefits of music are essential steps toward creating inclusive, creative, and enriching learning environments for young children. These efforts would ensure that musical arts are no longer seen as optional add-ons but as integral components of holistic, child-centered early childhood education.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Overview

This final chapter comprises a summary of the study, emphasizing the major findings. It discusses the conclusion, recommendations, as well as suggestions for future research.

5.1 Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of musical arts in early childhood education within selected schools in the Ga Central Municipality. To achieve this purpose, the following research objectives were formulated to guide the study:

1. To explore teachers' perceptions regarding the use of musical arts as a teaching and learning tool in early childhood education.
2. To find out the teaching strategies teachers employ in the use of musical arts as a teaching and learning tool in early childhood classrooms
3. To investigate the influence of musical arts on the holistic development of early childhood learners in the Ga Central Municipality.
4. To identify the challenges teachers and schools face in implementing musical arts-based learning activities in early childhood education.

5.2 Key Findings

The findings from the study shows that musical arts boost learner engagement, promote holistic development, and strengthen a sense of identity through cultural songs. Additionally, music enhances language development by improving vocabulary, pronunciation, and communication skills, offering a non-threatening way for children, especially those with speech delays, to strengthen their verbal abilities.

The study revealed that various strategies to integrate musical arts into early childhood classrooms, including using songs and rhymes to reinforce concepts, incorporating movement and dance to enhance engagement, and using storytelling through music to captivate children's attention. Additionally, the call-

and-response method fosters active participation, strengthens language skills, and creates a dynamic, collaborative learning environment.

The findings from the study revealed that the use of musical arts in early childhood education significantly enhances social, emotional, intellectual, and motor development by fostering cooperation, emotional expression, cognitive skills, and physical coordination. These activities provide a holistic approach to learning, supporting young children's overall growth in a fun and engaging environment.

The study revealed that teachers face several challenges when implementing musical arts-based learning activities in early childhood education. These include inadequate musical resources, limited access to instruments and materials, insufficient training and professional development opportunities, and a lack of administrative and parental support.

5.3 Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn from the study;

In conclusion, the study highlights the significant impact of musical arts on early childhood development. Music enhances learner engagement, fosters holistic growth, and strengthens cultural identity through songs. It also improves language development, aiding vocabulary, pronunciation, and communication skills, particularly for children with speech delays, offering an effective and non-threatening platform for verbal expression.

The study underscores the effectiveness of integrating musical arts into early childhood classrooms through diverse strategies. These approaches not only enhance engagement and participation but also foster a dynamic learning environment that promotes collaboration and strengthens language development. The findings suggest that incorporating music creatively can significantly enrich early childhood education and support children's cognitive and social growth.

In conclusion, the study highlights the profound impact of musical arts on early childhood development across multiple domains. By promoting social interaction, emotional expression, cognitive skills, and motor

coordination, musical activities offer a holistic approach to learning. This reinforces the importance of incorporating music into early childhood education to foster comprehensive growth and development in young children.

In conclusion, the study underscores significant challenges faced by teachers in implementing musical arts-based activities in early childhood education. These challenges, including limited resources, inadequate training, and a lack of administrative and parental support, hinder the effective integration of music into classrooms. Addressing these issues through better resource allocation, professional development, and enhanced support from both administration and parents is crucial to optimizing the benefits of musical arts in early childhood education.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings from the study, the following recommendations were drawn;

1. The Ministry of Education and the Ga Municipal Education Directorate should prioritize the inclusion of musical arts in early childhood curricula to foster learner engagement, language development, and cultural identity, particularly for children with speech and communication difficulties.
2. Teachers in the Ga Central Municipality should be supported and encouraged to use varied musical techniques such as songs, rhymes, movement, storytelling, and call-and-response to make lessons interactive, engaging, and developmentally appropriate.
3. Educators and curriculum developers should intentionally use music-based activities to support children's social, emotional, intellectual, and physical growth, recognizing music as a powerful tool for holistic learning.
4. The Ga Central Municipal Education Directorate and school administrations should provide adequate musical resources, regular training, and professional development, as well as cultivate

parental and institutional support to overcome the barriers teachers face in implementing music-based instruction.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Studies

Future studies should explore the long-term impact of musical arts-based learning on children's academic performance and socio-emotional development in early childhood education. Future research could adopt a longitudinal approach to track learners over time and determine how early exposure to musical activities influences their cognitive growth, communication abilities, and self-confidence. Additionally, studies could examine the effectiveness of specific musical strategies such as rhythmic movement, drumming, or cultural songs on various developmental domains. It would also be beneficial to investigate the perspectives of parents and school administrators on the value of musical arts in early education. Such research can provide broader insights that inform policy decisions, teacher training, and the design of inclusive, music-enriched early childhood learning environments.

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APPENDIX A

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

DEPARTMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

Dear respondents,

Thank you for participating in this interview. The purpose of this study is to examine the role of musical arts in early childhood education within selected schools in the Ga Central Municipality.

Your insights and experience as teachers are valuable to this study. Your cooperation is appreciated in this study, which will enable the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the role of musical arts in early childhood education within the Ga Central Municipality. Please be aware that participation is optional and that all information provided is for academic purposes and will be kept private. You have the option of not responding to any questions if doing so makes you feel uncomfortable. Thank you

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Age

Sex

Education qualification.....

Years of teaching.....

Duration of interview.....

SECTION B

Teachers views regarding the use of musical arts in early childhood education

1. how you currently incorporate musical arts into your daily classroom activities
2. What benefits you have observed in your learners' learning and development?
3. How do you believe musical arts contribute to the development of young children in your classroom?

Influence of musical arts on the holistic development of early childhood learners

4. Can you share specific examples or instances where musical arts have noticeably improved the learning outcomes or behaviors of your early childhood learners?
5. How do you tailor musical arts activities to address the diverse developmental needs of children in your classroom?
6. What impact do you think engaging with musical arts has on children's social interactions and emotional well-being in your school?
7. How do you believe musical arts contribute to building a holistic educational environment in your school?

Challenges to the use of musical arts in early childhood education

8. Can you describe any issues you face with the availability of resources that impact your ability to implement musical arts effectively?
9. How has your level of training or professional development in music education influenced your experience with using musical arts in your teaching practices?
10. In what ways do curriculum requirements hinder your efforts to integrate musical arts into the overall learning experience for young children?

11. In what ways do time constraints hinder your efforts to integrate musical arts into the overall learning experience for young children?