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Experiences of grit and flourishing in Finnish comprehensive schools offering long-term support to instrument studies. Building a new model of positive music education and grit

Background and aim

The current study was set up to advance conceptual knowledge on how learning and wellbeing are interrelated in the context of music education. To do that we investigated the musical experiences of 16 classes and 297 children with varying levels of music engagement. In particular, we followed four Finnish music classes for six years (2016–2022) to investigate how music class activities - playing an instrument, studying all school subjects of a comprehensive school together with other music-lovers, and continuous performing – are experienced by these 9–16-year-old children. Finnish comprehensive school classes with a curriculum focusing on music (from 3rd to 9th class) have long-standing traditions, where children play some instrument as a long-term extracurricular hobby (Törmälä 2013). Our study made it possible to investigate how a revival of such musical activities at a disadvantaged school contributed to the students' learning and wellbeing. The experiences of the students emerged particularly reflective of the concepts of grit (Duckworth 2019; Valdez & Datu 2021) and flourishing (Diener et. al. 2010; Seligman 2003), so these were selected as the key theoretical frameworks for the study. These concepts are widely discussed in the field of positive psychology, so we start by situating the study at the cross-roads of the fields of music education and positive psychology.

Bringing music education in dialogue with positive psychology

Many of the key concepts of positive psychology literature closely resonate with concepts that have been present in music education literature for a long time. For instance, the concepts of "good music relationship" and "good life" could be seen as an integral part of the Praxial philosophy of music education (Regelski 1998; Tammisalo 2005). There is a vast number of studies that highlight these aspects or wellbeing in musical learning (Björk 2016; Elliott 2020; Perkins & Williamon 2014). The field of music psychology also actively addresses related concepts, such as musical identity (MacDonald et al. 2017), music in youth wellbeing and psychological development (McFerran et. al. 2019). In recent decades there have been a few studies of music and music education that apply positive psychology as a source for their theoretical framing (Adamek & Darrow 2012; Ascenso et al. 2016; Ascenso et al. 2018; Evans 2015; Hallam & Cuadrado 2018; Lamont et al. 2018; Zheng & Bian 2018). Yet, there is still surprisingly little dialogue between these fields. This study is in a way a manifesto for launching an interdisciplinary approach that could be called "Positive music education". Learning music can be a positive resource and a part of human growth and lead to extremely good experiences, but also to negative ones (Valenzuela et al. 2018; Virkkula 2020). This study brings prior research and concepts from positive psychology into a dialogue with music education and music psychology, aiming to identify elements that are

beneficial for learning, performing, creating music, and enjoying music in a way that leads to experiences of a good life and flourishing. In essence, we approach learning music as a source of wellbeing, with a particular focus on grit.

Essential concepts relating to flourishing and grit

Positive psychology typically develops various interventions that could lead to a more flourishing life (Gander et al. 2013; Seligman et al. 2005). Flourishing is a term used for subjective wellbeing and there are many ways to measure such wellbeing before and after interventions, such as the Flourishing Scale by Diener & Biswas-Diener 2009, in which people estimate how much they agree with claims that address wellbeing in areas of positive emotion, engagement, positive relationships, meaning and accomplishment (Diener et. al. 2010; Parks et. al. 2013). These five components form the basis of the PERMA–theory, a scientific theory of happiness developed by Seligman (Seligman 2003). Positive education is an educational branch of positive psychology, which uses scientific research methods to advance both traditional skill-based learning and happiness through education (Seligman et al. 2009). There are many studies about how playing music has many positive effects with respect to learning, orientation of attention, for brains and to wellbeing and mental health (Balbag et al. 2014; Forgeard et al. 2008; Linnavalli 2022; Perkins & Williamon 2014; Tuomela 2017). Studies also show that especially long-term activities such as being a part of a band or a music group have improved interpersonal communication, self-esteem and self-confidence (Knapp & Silva 2019). Long-term activities seem to increase many positive functions, but also demand musical grit. Duckworth (2019) understands grit as a combination of sustained passion and perseverance, especially for long-term goals. This statement is the basis of her Grit-theory (Duckworth 2019). Grit can be seen as an important success-factor in life (Duckworth & Gross 2014; Heckman et al. 2014). Research has shown that grit explains success in competitions (Duckworth et al. 2010), staying in a demanding job (Robertson–Kraft & Duckworth 2014; Eskreis–Winkler et al. 2014), and having fewer burnouts (Walker et al. 2016). According to Valdez and Datu (2021), it is the inner motivation and surging of needs that drive people to gritty practicing so that they gradually achieve better skills and reach more demanding goals. Gritty people differ from less gritty ones also in their resilience under adversity. Gritty individuals can form a more positive picture about hard situations by performing a cognitive reappraisal (Knauft et al. 2019; Valdez & Datu 2021). Grit is also connected with better ability to regulate emotions and the emotional consequences of different situations (Gross & Levenson 1997).

How grit and personal strengths serve wellbeing

Several studies have shown a strong connection between grit and both eudaimonic and hedonic wellbeing (Datu et al. 2016; Datu et al. 2019; Disabato et al. 2016; Li et al. 2018; Renshaw & Bolognino 2016; Vainio & Daukantaitė 2016). One of the central findings of positive psychology is that realizing one's strongest, so called, signature strengths and then developing them increases happiness (Gander et al. 2013). Vuorinen (2022) has observed that teaching methods that are based on character strengths advance children's well-being and happiness (Vuorinen, 2022). Grit belongs to the 24 different character strengths that are understood to be positive and possible to develop (Mayerson 2020; Seligman et al. 2005). Musicality is not in the list of character strengths defined by Seligman (Seligman et al. 2005), but musicality can well be seen as a strength (Torpova et. al. 2016). Many people feel that developing one's own musical strength feels pleasurable – and for some the need to develop their skills and to express themselves becomes like a passion (Maijala 2003). Csikszentmihalyi (1997) noticed that young talented teen-agers could become hooked to an optimal kind of experience, flow, which made them practice passionately (Csikszentmihalyi

1993; 1997). Some studies showed that instrument students, with high amount of practice, achieved higher skill-level and had a better likelihood of experiencing flow than those who practiced less (Marin & Bhattacharya 2013; Miksza & Tan 2015). Also, the theory "learned industriousness" gives the idea that people can learn the association between hard work and reward, which makes them willing to do hard work also in the future (Eisenberger 1992).

Long-term musical activities, motivation and supporting grit

Self-determination theory displays different stages of motivation, from amotivation to intrinsic motivation, which is supported by the possibilities to fulfill the three basic human psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan 2012). Various music educational studies have shown that giving space to these three components in teaching and learning has helped to build stronger motivation and psychological wellbeing in classrooms (Deci et al. 1996; Deci 2009; Evans et al. 2013; Jang et al. 2010; Küpers et al. 2014; Niemiec & Ryan 2009). Learning to play a musical instrument takes much time and demands a lot of motivation and grit. The study of Adkins (2020) showed those students that actively participated in music performances in school ensembles had higher self-reported grit and higher satisfaction level in terms of the basic psychological needs (Adkins 2020). The study of Eerola & Eerola (2014) showed that extended music education enhanced the quality of school life and had a positive effect on the social aspects of schooling (Eerola & Eerola 2014).

Duckworth understands that the following features are beneficial in developing grit: 1) finding personal interest, 2) deliberate practice, where feedback helps continuous learning and improving the performance (Ericsson & Charness 1994), 3) finding the purpose of doing, which helps to maintain interest, and 4) feelings of hope and adopting a growth mindset of having the capacity to learn new material if you just practice enough (Duckworth 2019, 123–234; Dweck 2006). Also, a certain kind of parenting (warm, supportive and respectful, but demanding) can be seen as beneficial in nurturing a child's grit (Duckworth 2019, 253). According to Duckworth (2019), extra-curricular activities like playing an instrument might be especially beneficial for building grit, because they are at the same time challenging and fun, and they are usually structured, skill-focused, and adult-guided (Duckworth 2019, 269–270).

Aim

While the theoretical grounding of this study is in grit, flourishing and the broader field of positive psychology, the original inspiration and a starting point of the study was a practitioner observation: Could there be some "systemic features" that could explain why the combination of a music class and instrument studies seemed to make children so skillful and eager to learn? What prerequisites should be fulfilled to catalyze the development of grit and intrinsic motivation to learn – and to construct optimal kinds of music educational processes that would also support human growth and build good life? The current study thus aimed to increase knowledge on music education as a process that simultaneously fosters learning and wellbeing. While grit and flourishing served as useful concepts for this, we did not want to force the music-related experiences into the existing psychological models, and therefore applied a data-driven, inductive approach. The concepts of grit and flourishing served as a reflective surface for the data-based observations drawn from the music educational context. The study ended up building bridges between music education and positive psychology, resulting in a model of a music educational process that simultaneously fosters musical grit and musical flourishing.

Method

Data were collected with a mixed methods approach. Four different schools with a total of 16 classes and 297 children participated in the study. All schools were comprehensive schools with music classes (a curriculum focusing on music). The project started with two schools (see Table 1), providing data through a survey, students' writing tasks, and interviews. Analysis of the qualitative data was based on the Grounded Theory method (Charmaz 2006) and the survey data were analyzed with exploratory statistics. The project then continued with another survey, conducted in all four schools. Students from the non-music classes also participated in this survey (Table 2), allowing comparisons between students with high and low levels of school music engagement.

Context of the Study

School 1: Start Playing!-music education intervention at a disadvantaged, multicultural school (2016–2022). School 1 was a highly multicultural school, with 41% students with foreign roots. During recent years the Helsinki area has become increasingly multicultural and has gradually got into a rather divided situation (Oittinen 2022). Many music classes do continue their high-quality work according to the old traditions, but in especially in the low-income suburbs, parents can't afford to pay for the quite expensive extracurricular instrument lessons for their musical children – even if they study in a music class. Before the Start Playing!-intervention was organized at this multicultural school, only about 20% of the children in the music classes played an instrument as a hobby. When the Ministry of Education and Culture provided funding, the first author of this paper started to organize instrument lessons as a principal of a music institute and to collect data for her Ph.D., supervised by the second author of this paper. So, during the years 2016–2022 the children of a multicultural school began to receive instrument lessons after school, first at very low expense and then free of charge. This totally changed the culture. Because of the Start Playing!-project, 12 competent instrument teachers gave extra-curricular lessons (playing, band instruction, music theory) weekly. Finally, almost every child that studied at the music classes had at least tried playing as a hobby.

As part of the intervention many music class performances were organized, where the music institute and the school co-operated. In 2018 part of the support budget from the Ministry was used for a massive musical project "Revue of Insects". At the premiere of this new Finnish children's musical in May 2018, there where 110 children (ages between 9–12) on stage acting, dancing and singing, and the instrument teachers of the Start Playing!–project formed the orchestra. Lights, sounds and costumes were of a professional level, because the performances took place in a big concert hall. We managed to get a famous popstar to take a role in the musical because her grandchild took part in the project. Our study showed that during and especially after the performances, many kids were in euphoria.

The intervention was planned so that it would give space also to each child's autonomy. Youngsters could always decide themselves which instrument they start to play, etc. The starting point of another major project was to interpret selected poems by Jukka Itkonen. Junior high school-aged (13–15 years) children were divided into groups that each chose a poem they liked and composed music for it using iPads. Other groups planned how they would interpret their poem by acting and dancing. Two music classes practiced their choir singing to Kai Olander's new Choir Series "Character Images" to these same poems. Many teachers co-operated and it took several months to get all the creative work ready for the performances. The result was impressive and fresh - full of the children's own ideas and humor, as well. The performances were in February 2020, just before the long corona pandemic lockdown began.

School 2 (2016-2022). From the very beginning of this research the first author also followed and collected data in another music-class school (elementary school, school 2). That school had very traditional music classes: every child took part in extra-curricular instrument studies and practiced every week for two hours in a class orchestra (strings, woodwinds, brass, percussion, and piano). This school also had very high-level school choirs and high-class band instruction. These kids were exceptionally good in all subjects. Many of them also had several other hobbies besides music. During their fifth schoolyear, they made an impressive musical show as a class, in which all the children acted, danced, played in the orchestra, and sang in three voices. In this class, there were no children with needs for special education or children who studied Finnish as a second language.

Schools 3 and 4 (2021). The 5th-grade music class and an ordinary 5th class from school 2 took part in the final survey in May 2021. The children, who were in the 5th class of school 2 in 2017, now studied in the 9th class of a secondary school (school 3). School 3 offered a very similar kind of ambitious music education and extremely high-quality performances. In 2021, a new multicultural school (school 4) and it's multicultural 5th music-class, with no music support programs, also answered the survey. The three multicultural music classes of the 2017 survey in school 1 now studied in the 7th, 8th and 9th classes, still in school 1. They and the 5th music class and eight ordinary classes from school 1 answered the final survey. See Table 2 for further details.

Data collection

The quantitative data of this study was collected though two separate surveys, in May 2017 and in May 2021. Qualitative data from the year 2017 was collected through student writing tasks, and qualitative data from the year 2020 was collected through student interviews and student writing tasks. The permissions from the municipality and the schools were asked prior to the data collection and the Human Science Ethics Committee of the University of Jyväskylä gave acceptance to the study. Parents of the students were informed about the study and informed consents were collected from students and their parents. The first author of this paper worked as a full-time music teacher throughout the six years.

The first data collecting stage took place in May 2017, at the end of the first Start Playing! intervention year. Data was collected from schools 1 and 2, from 4 different music classes (Table 1). 81,4% of children from the chosen classes got permission and participated in the study. They answered a survey and wrote an essay about their music studies.

Music educational profile:	Classes	Amount	Answered	Children with needs of support of those who answered	Finnish as a second language
Start to play! School 1.	**3. class**	25	15	5	4
	4. class	23	22	6	7
	5. class	25	19	5	10
Orchestra School 2	**5. class**	24	23	0	0
Total		**97**	**79**	**16**	**21**
Percentage			**81,4 %**	**20,3 %**	**26,6 %**

Table 1. Classes that were followed during the whole research project, with the number and profile of participants from the first data collection stage (in May 2017).

The contents of the survey were partly grounded on the work of Maijala (2003) and partly on the first author's pedagogical experience as a teacher. The survey collected information about the potential aspects that could be considered important in developing musical talent into musical skills: believing in one's talent and musicality as a strength, home support, social motivation to music, commitment to music studies (music relationship) and the experienced supportiveness of the teacher. Answers were given on a Likert scale (1–5, *not at all – extremely*). The survey included one open question, where children could write about their possible musical dreams or goals. In addition, the music class teachers of these children estimated every child's musical abilities, progress, and the support they received.

The second data collection stage. In May 2020, sixteen volunteering 6–9-graders of school 1 were interviewed to gain deeper insight into the participants' experiences about how music potentially relates to wellbeing, grit, and resilience during the pandemic lockdown. Teachers co-operated with the first author and the interviews of the voluntary children were made individually, outdoors in the schoolyard, while other kids were studying at a class. The interview was semi-structured with themes: musical experiences, resilience (ways to cope in pandemic), and grit.

The last data collection stage happened in May 2021 at four schools with seven music-classes and nine ordinary classes (with no emphasis on music). The grades of each participating class are presented in Table 2. In total, there were 16 classes and 297 children. The survey included measures for grit (Grit Scale by Duckworth et. al. 2007) and flourishing (Flourishing Scale by Diener et al. 2009). We further developed a "Flourishing Through Music" questionnaire to measure children's wellbeing, particularly in connection to musical experiences. This small questionnaire had five music related items following the structure of the PERMA-model (Seligman 2018). Answers were provided on a 7-point Likert Scale (*strongly disagree – strongly agree*).

- Positive emotions: *Music gives me positive emotions and good feeling.*
- Engagement: *It is rewarding to concentrate on music and forget everything else for a while.*
- Relationships: *I am happy that I have music-related friends and we can make music together.*
- Meaning: *Music gives content and meaning to my life.*
- Accomplishment: *Music offers to me experiences of accomplishing and being successful.*

In addition, the survey included a question about whether the participant attends instrument lessons, has stopped them, or has never played. We also asked the number of years of having played an instrument as a hobby.

Data analysis

The current study followed a mixed-method approach, in which qualitative and quantitative data were brought into dialogue. The goal was to construct new theoretical knowledge, so the research process was primarily an inductive theory construction process. Data from the two surveys were analysed with statistical methods and data from the writing tasks and the interviews were analysed using the Grounded Theory Method (Charmaz 2006).

The analysis process started with conducting exploratory statistics on the survey data from 2017. Cronbach Alpha* values were calculated to explore and identify questions that measured the same underlying variable. The following variables were found:

1. Child's self-perceived musical ability (.79*). This included three items such as *I consider my musical skills and musicality to be my strength.*
2. Teacher's perception of the child's musical ability (.86*) with three items such as *How good a player is this child related to his/her classmates?*

Schools	Grade	Music educational profile	Music class	Ordinary class	
School 1	5	Start Playing!	19	0	
School 2	5	Orchestra	17	0	
School 3	5	Multicultural, no support	19	0	
School 1	7	Start Playing!	23	0	
School 1	8	Start Playing!	14	0	
School 1	9	Start Playing!	18	0	
School 4	9	Orchestra	23	0	
School 2	5		0	23	
School 1	5		0	22	
School 1	5		0	23	
School 1	7		0	14	
School 1	7		0	16	
School 1	7		0	17	
School 1	8		0	14	
School 1	8		0	16	
School 1	9		0	19	
		Answerers	**133**	**164**	**297**

Table 2. Classes that participated in the last data collection stage (May 2021) with the number of students listed for each class.

3. Home support (.54*) with six items such as *My family appreciates my playing skills very much and strongly encourages me.*
4. Child's social motivation (.80*) with four items such as *Playing together/ band playing is really fun!*

The complete list of items for each variable is provided in Appendix 1. In addition, the Child's own will to continue with music studies (intrinsic motivation) was estimated by asking: *If your friends didn't appreciate music at all, how probably would you still continue your music studies and playing an instrument?*

When preparing the 2017 survey, the concept of musical grit was not yet the focus of the study. However, a combination of eleven statements of the survey, which all referred to aspects of grit, appeared highly correlated and gave a high Chronbach's Alpha value. We began to call this variable *Musical Grit* (.78*). Some statements that formed this variable were more about the ability to exhibit self-control (the perseverance side of grit), while the others were more about goal-orientation (the passion side of grit). The eleven statements of Musical Grit are listed here:

- *I can concentrate well even if there were distractions.*
- *I like to read, and thick books too.*
- *I like to get challenging, difficult tasks.*

- *I take care of those tasks I have promised to do (or decided myself) till they get ready, if only I can. It is not typical for me to leave tasks "unfinished".*
- *I don't give up and I persevere in practicing, if I don't learn immediately the difficult place of my playing exercise.*
- *I concentrate on practicing and refuse even to go to a nice party, if I'm going to have soon a challenging school exam or an important instrumental performance with a difficult piece.*
- *I'll probably continue my playing as a hobby when I reach the ninth class.*
- *Does this child concentrate well in playing together in a class even if there were some other temptations?*
- *Does this child concentrate well in writing/ mathematics even if there were some other temptations?*
- *How would you estimate his/her general grit (= perseverance and passion to reach long-term goals).*
- *How would you estimate his/her grit in music?*

The qualitative data from the interviews and writing tasks were analysed, using color-coding of themes to find various similar kinds of categories that gave information pertaining to the same phenomena. Axial coding was used to find links between the different categories. Finally, a saturation process made it possible to establish the final core categories (Charmaz 2006). The analysis of the quantitative data from the first survey helped to build different kinds of pre-models based on statistically significant correlations observed between the core concepts. The quantitative analysis at this point was exploratory and added to our understanding of the relatedness of different elements. The conceptual insight from these elements was then refined and deepened by the qualitative data.

Quantitative data from the 2021 cross-sectional survey was used to compare musical experiences and flourishing between students of high and low levels of school musical engagement. This last stage of investigation gave information about the prevalence of various aspects of musical flourishing among the students and allowed us to investigate whether increased school music engagement relates to these aspects.

Finally, as a synthesis of both qualitative insight and statistical analysis, a conceptual model was formulated that captured the essence of the ways in which the observed elements together constitute the positive music educational process.

Results: a new model of positive music education and grit

As a synthesis of all analyses, a model was created that groups the key features of a positive music educational process into four components: *hope, trust, received love* and *shared love* and addresses *musical grit* as a central feature relating to all these four components. In Figure 1, the main observed components of the model are presented in orange, while their linkages to the two major components of the grit theory (passion and perseverance) are presented in green. Meanwhile, the yellow "petals of a flower" have close resonance to the concept of flourishing. In the following, we describe the content of these features in detail, illustrate how they appear in the descriptions of the children, and show how they relate to each other based on the correlations. Results are presented as a dialogue of qualitative and quantitative data. At the end, we reflect upon their linkages to the prior studies and theories.

The Initial correlational analysis of the data from the first survey showed that musical grit was related to several aspects of learning to play an instrument. Musical grit correlated significantly with all measured ingredients of the musical skill development process (Table 3).

The sample size (79 children) of the 2017 survey was not big (Table 1), but the correlations gave a preliminary indication that to stay motivated and gritty in studying music you need a great variety of supportive features. In the following, we describe these supportive features in more depth.

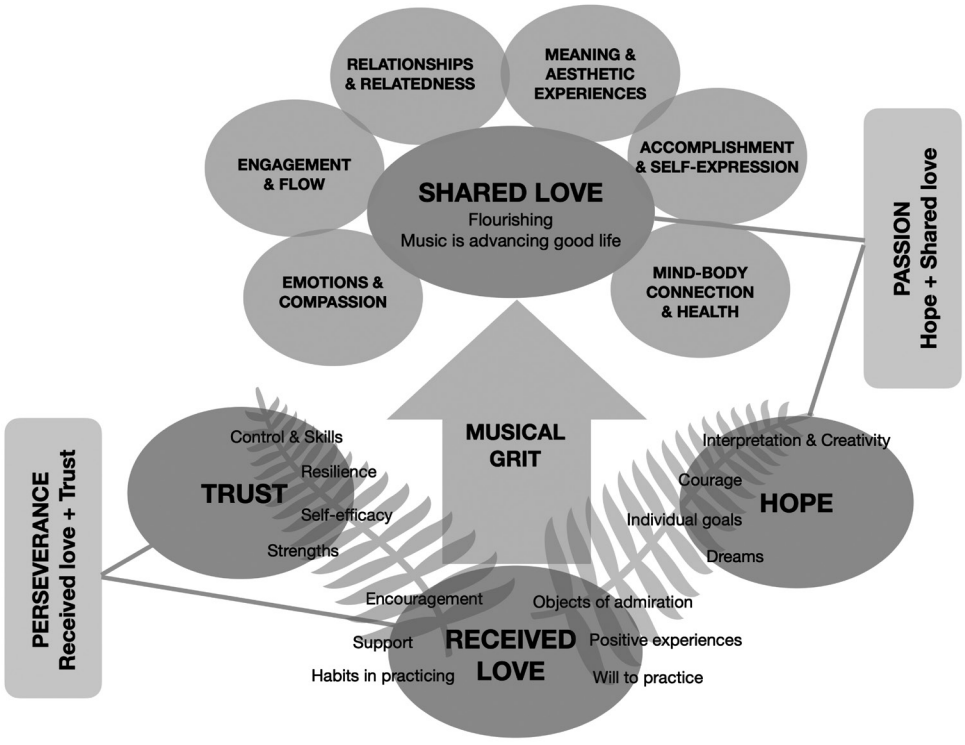

Figure 1. The model of positive music education and grit. In the learning process musical grit contributes to a more flourishing life and wellbeing.

Variable	Alpha	Mean	S.D.	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
1. Musical grit	.78	3.92	.58							
2. Trust – child's self-perceived musical ability	.79	4.11	.72	.49***						
3. Teacher's perception of the child's musical ability	.86	4.19	.73	.35**	.16					
4. Home support	.54	3.62	.57	.42***	.40***	.39***				
5. Social motivation to music	.80	4.05	.90	.64***	.53***	.08	.16			
6. Child's own will to continue with music studies	one question	3.88	1.24	.53***	.50***	.00	.11	.83***		
7. Hope: Having musical dreams	one question	1.50	.50	.26*	.08	-.04	-.05	.44***	.37***	
8. Child's perception of the teacher's supportiveness	one question	4.60	.69	.48***	.60***	.16	.45***	.44***	.32**	.06

n = 68 Child's perception of the teacher's supportiveness; n=77–79 other questions. * P < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.

Table 3. Correlations (Pearson) of Musical grit with the ingredients of musical skill development process.

Hope

The survey showed that many children have their own musical dreams or goals, but some of them don't. Musical dreaming correlated significantly with 1) being gritty 2) the child's own will to continue with music studies and 3) being socially motivated (Table 3). Having dreams can be seen as reflective of the passion side of grit. Those children who had their own musical dreams were socially motivated, but also personally determined to continue their studies (measured with the item *If your friends didn't appreciate music at all, how probably would you still continue with your music studies and playing an instrument?*) So, music to them was much more than just being popular among friends. The result showed that social motivation is a motivator behind musical passion, but not the only one.

Also, the qualitative data from the interviews showed that it was highly beneficial for the musical motivation if the child had music-related dreams or autonomously chosen goals. Without these there may not be a real inner motivation to continue musical studies. Children of the music classes had many kinds of musical dreams. Here are some examples:

- *I'd like to belong to a famous orchestra.*
- *I'd like to become famous for my playing and become very skillful.*
- *I would get fans.*
- *To become a skillful bassist… That I could play all the pieces from memory.*

The importance of hope resonates with prior literature. Hope is a predictive feeling concerning something that has not yet happened (Snyder et al. 2005) and being hopeful has been shown to predict success more than IQ or former success (Day & Wood 2010, 550–553). Hope is about expecting positive things to happen, having a positive attitude, optimism and being intrinsically motivated. One boy writes that for him playing itself is fun, relaxing, and calming. It seems to be almost a form of emotion regulation:

- *I started to have instrument lessons when I was eight and my instrument is the violin. Because playing is fun, relaxing, and calming, I practice at least 2–3 times a week, and it is very important that I practice.*

One girl writes how instrument lessons widen her expressive and artistic possibilities and help her enjoy playing in an orchestra even more.

- *I started to play when I was at the third class. I was very interested in playing and I got excited very easily. I like playing together very much. It sounds much better than playing alone. Without instrument lessons I couldn't play so well together as I can now. I have always liked to perform alone and together.*

Many children had also understood that attaining ambitious goals and dreams is not possible without hard work. It is hope that gives positive energy to practicing.

- *When I grow up, I would like to become a famous and good singer. I'd like to become famous, and for that I should found a band and practice a lot.*

Rewarding feelings and good memories build positive attitude and hope, i.e., foster an autonomous positive attitude and the feeling that music has given and gives good things. For this girl, playing itself was very meaningful and she was grateful to her instrument teacher. Autonomy seems to be especially motivating for children and this girl liked the possibility to choose what she played:

- *I have got very many experiences, memories, and skills from music class. The highlight was probably when I started to play. I had a wonderful instrument teacher who encouraged and let us, for example, choose the songs that were played.*

The relevance of autonomy is linked with the self-determination theory that treats autonomy as a basic human need (Deci & Ryan 2000). Autonomy means that doing is voluntary. If this autonomy is connected to a passion to reach an autonomously chosen goal or a personal dream, there is a certain direction in the efforts. If there is *hope*, there is also some optimism in going towards the self-chosen direction. So, in our emergent model the concept of hope describes a positive and beneficial attitude in a music educational process, where the aim is to fulfill hopes and musical flourishing.

Overall, our data showed that for many children in the music classes "hope" was about dreaming of becoming a skillful player or a famous musician, etc. But hope was also about expectations of gaining positive or enjoyable experiences through music. So, musical hope was essentially about having a good "music relationship" – a positive and curious attitude towards learning something new in music and getting good musical experiences. We then wanted to understand further what those rewarding musical experiences are that seemed to kindle passion, intrinsic motivation, and grit in music making. Here, we turn to the next component of the model, *shared love*.

Shared love

Musical grit and motivation for music studies seemed to be supported by opportunities to enjoy an entity that was labeled *shared love*. Overall, shared love can be considered to be a combination of the many rewards of music making – in essence, musical flourishing. We drafted and used the "Flourishing Through Music"–questionnaire to analyze the various dimensions of musical flourishing in more detail. A comparison between music class students and normal class students was conducted on the item level to see which aspects of musical flourishing were emphasized by each group (Table 4). The results showed that while music as a source of positive emotions and distraction was highly rewarding for both groups, music class students found music more important than normal class students in terms of social interaction, personal meaning, and achievement. These aspects are essentially reflective of grit (both the passion and perseverance aspects of it) and based on these findings it can be argued that music classes are a way of providing support for committing to a gritty activity.

Item	Class type	N	Mean	S.D.	T-value	df	Sig.
Music gives me positive emotions and good feeling.	music	133	5.86	1.45		293	.101 n.s.
	normal	162	5.56	1.60	1.65		.097 n.s.
It is rewarding to concentrate on music and to forget everything else for a while.	normal	131	5.56	1.61	2.02	291	.044 n.s.
	normal	162	5.15	1.81			.041 n.s.
I'm happy that I have music related friends and we can make music together.	music	131	5.20	1.89	5.53	291	<.001 ***
	normal	162	3.90	2.08			<.001 ***
Music gives content and meaning to my life.	music	133	5.35	1.53	3.52	294	<.001 ***
	normal	163	4.64	1.87			<.001 ***
Music offers me experiences of achieving and success.	music	133	5.22	1.66	3.51	294	<.001 ***
	normal	163	4.47	1.94			<.001 ***

Table 4. Comparison of music class students and normal class students on specific aspects of musical flourishing (May 2021).

The qualitative analysis of the children's experiences showed that music education had the capacity to offer various positive kinds of experiences, and this resonates with the work of Croom (2015), who acknowledges that listening to music and various musical activities hold the power to have positive reflections in all areas of PERMA. However, based on our qualitative data, there was also a need to modify and renew the PERMA model for our model, to better reflect children's musical experiences.

Our findings showed that music was a source of:

1) **emotions and compassion.** While the PERMA model contains positive emotions, our conception of musical flourishing contains emotions & compassion, to also include the appreciation of accessing all kinds of emotions in music.
   - *Yes, for example when I feel sad, I sometimes start to listen to music. And if I feel joyful, also then. So yes, it somehow helps.*
   - *If something bad has happened during the day, when you sing, you get away from all your problems.*

2) **engagement and flow.** We got a lot of data on experiences that fulfill the classical definitions (Csikszentmihalyi 1993) of a flow experience (complete involvement, sense of ecstasy, feeling of control, enough challenge but not too hard, no worries about oneself, timelessness and that making music feels rewarding). The word "flow" was therefore added as a pair for engagement.
   - *When it's my turn, I go before people to play and relax. I'm before the people and they look at me. I bow and the audience gives applause. My piece starts and usually I concentrate to rhythm and tones. If I make mistakes, I don't start to wonder about them or show facial expression.*
   … A clarinet gives a beautiful and cheery sound. You could listen to its tone for ages and ages.

3) **relationships and relatedness.** Experiences of relatedness are fundamentally rewarding experiences that can be received and shared through the making and enjoying of music. In music classes many children seemed to obtain many kinds of rewarding musical experiences and gained good possibilities to make music together.
   - *I like to play together, because the music sounds more versatile, and it is fun to play together.*
   - *We also sometimes play with friends, many of my friends play the guitar and I have two guitars at home, so it's nice to play together. Well, usually we stay at somebody's home.*

Relatedness (which also is a component of the self-determination theory) was only one aspect of shared love, but certainly one of the clearest wellbeing enhancers as indicated by the children's descriptions. The correlational analysis also showed that the social motivation for music studies was related to musical grit and trust – self-perceived musical ability. The importance of relatedness resonates with the findings of Lee et al. (2017) who reported that when Australian children in successful music programs described the positive things that musical activities offer them, the most often mentioned aspect were the relationships (as an element of the PERMA-model).

4) **meaning and aesthetic experiences.** Personal musical dreams seemed to be very meaningful for some kids. Also, the pure love for music and the beauty of it gave meaning to many kids, so aesthetic experiences were added to the category of meaning.
   - *I'd like to become a professional player.*
   - *Performing is nice. I like to play. I love music.*
   - *I like playing together. It is nice because instruments have different qualities, and it sounds fine.*

5) **accomplishment and self-expression.** Our qualitative data showed that the children not only enjoyed the aesthetic musical experiences but also wanted to create and offer them, so self-expression was added to the frame too. It is possible that self-expression is not a basic psychological need, but is still a motivator and wellness enhancer, both in life and in music making (Martela et al. 2019).

- I like performing. Then I can show what I have learned in a certain time.

- We get ideas in bands, and we do many kinds of music. We can express ourselves.

6) **mind-body-connection and health.** Our qualitative data also brought up experiences that did not quite match with the existing PERMA frame. We ended up adding mind-body connection and health to our conceptualization of musical flourishing. This finding resonates to some extent with the Frame of Flourishing by Lehtonen & Piippo (2022), which adds vitality to the PERMA-structure. The descriptions emphasized, for instance, that the children experienced music and rhythm with all their body:

- I like improjams, where everybody gets solos. Usually, I start the beat in some genre and my friend (a skillful bass player) starts with some riff.

- Usually, I mainly concentrate on music and to the entity. I focus somehow, strangely on the smoothness, let's say, I don't usually think about my steps at skating competitions.

Musical activities also seemed to support the children's resilience (mental health) during the pandemic.

- Always when I listened to music, I could concentrate on whatever I was doing. I don't know, somehow everything was just better for me when I listened to music.

In our conceptualization, the component of shared love refers to actions of both making music actively and just enjoying other peoples' art and musical work: creativity, admirable skills and touching interpretations. The component of "shared love" is about advancing good life in a two-way function, not only for oneself but also for others, and that might give intrinsic motivation to musical activities.

The study of Macintyre et al. (2017) showed that intrinsic motives played a major role in maintaining interest and motivation for the long-term music studies and that motivation for music is a complex blending of various motivations with different motivational intensities. In the same way, the shared love entity is about a variety of positive gratifications you can expect to experience or share when you make or enjoy music. And, when these elements are supported and enabled by music education, we can expect students to feel motivated.

Trust

The third component of "trust" and the fourth component of "received love" can be considered reflective of a shared entity, the perseverance aspect of grit. For building trust, you need supportive home and supportive teachers. Trust and the child's good music relationship is being built on "received love", which is not only about skillful teaching, and good support for the skills per se, but also support for the child's self-efficacy. It is also about giving access to good musical experiences that could be also socially motivational.

Based on our data it seemed that to stay motivated and gritty in studying music, children particularly need personal trust in their competence. Even if the teacher thinks that the student is talented and makes good progress, this doesn't mean that the child is motivated. There actually was a zero correlation between the teacher's perception of the child's musical ability and the child's own will to continue music and playing as hobby (Table 3). These findings show that for the child to have an intrinsic motivation to practice and make music, it is not the objective (teacher assessed) musical competence that matters, but it is more

about the child's own trust in the fact that musicality is his/her strength. Indeed, the child's own self-perceived musical ability correlated with 1) being gritty, 2) home support, 3) social motivation to music, 4) the child's own will to continue with music studies and 5) the child's perception of the teacher's supportiveness. Overall, the importance of personal trust resonates with the self-determination theory, which argues that competence is a basic human need (Deci & Ryan 2000).

The qualitative data strongly indicated that home support helps children in building their own trust:

- My whole family is musical, and all have played some instruments. My sister plays the piano and organ. My father and both my brothers play the guitar, and my mother plays the organ.

All kinds of encouragement appeared to help in building trust:

- I get praised of my playing by my instrument teacher, mother, father, schoolteacher, sister, and my relatives.

It also seems to be beneficial for building trust if the playing skills can be put into use. Trust and social motivation have a connection:

- My sister plays the double bass and piano, my mother has played the piano and my father plays the guitar for his own joy. I can use the skills that I have achieved at school and in instrument lessons.

- I try to practice my playing exercises as much as I can, but sometimes I forget it. My parents like to listen to, and they encourage me very much to play and to practice. I get praises from them for my playing. Usually, you get a very good feeling after a successful performance.

Grit is also about preserving one's own trust and optimism even if one faces adversities. This way, trust resembles the idea of a growth mindset (Dweck 2006).

Received love

This study showed that to be motivated and gritty in studying music, you also need received love. Home support is important in learning music. If parents value music, they want to give their children opportunities to experience music as well. If they have understood that good practicing habits are important, they stress that to their children. At this study 57,9% of the children with a multicultural background estimated that at least one of their parents plays some instrument well. The percentage was 67,2% among those families where both parents were of Finnish origin. The correlations showed that home support was related to 1) being gritty 2) teacher's perception of the child's musical ability 3) child's perception of the teacher's supportiveness and 4) Child's perceived musical ability – Trust.

"Received love" is about the whole culture of love and support that is needed to nurture the good. Based on the interviews we define it as supportive family, teachers, school, music institutes, the whole cultural life of the city and country, etc. A child's perception of the teacher's supportiveness was in connection with 1) being gritty, 2) Trust – a child's perceived musical ability, 3) home support, 4) social motivation to music and 5) the child's own will to continue with music studies. Here is one example in which a child writes about the supportiveness of his family, teachers, relatives, and friends:

- I got an idea to start playing double bass, because I liked music and my father and my sisters played bass. At first, I took part in a music carousel (a place where you can test different instruments) and people said there that there is a shortage of good bassists, so I started to play the bass. In playing music it is very nice that you can play just so well as you can, and nobody can say that you are lousy. When I study at a music class, I learn much more music and I make more and more progress. Music class has helped me to read a lot of music, rhythms, melody, and harmony, so I have been able to make my own musical pieces. I get very many praises from my friends, parents, cousins, teachers, and other people.

Earlier generations leave and put forward a heritage – show and teach younger generations those things that mean and have meant a lot to them. Providing resources and giving role models or objects of admiration is important. Material and economical support is also needed, as children need good instruments for practicing. Every new generation makes an own creative version of the musical culture (=shared love) but need to receive this valuable support first.

Discussion on links to prior theories

The components of the new model emerged from the data, but they resonate well with a set of prior theories that are originally developed outside of music educational context. In the following, we discuss how received love, trust, hope, and shared love dialogue with prior theories of grit, basic psychological needs and flourishing. We describe what is common but also show how the new music education -based model further renews these concepts.

Grit theories and our new model. The grit-model of "Optimal performance and health" by Datu (2021) displays a connection between grit and increased achievement (as a result of behavioral effort, adaptive motivation and cognitive resourcefulness) and elevated wellbeing (as a result of needs satisfaction, emotion regulation and positive cognitions). This OPAH model articulates the broader idea that achievement and wellbeing can dialogue but is not designed for the context of music education. The grit-theory (Duckworth 2019) isn't designed for displaying musical grit either, and it doesn't show any special connections between grit and well-being. The main components (received love, trust, hope and shared love) of our model provide a new conceptual organization to the two elements (perseverance and passion) of Duckworth's grit-theory as having possible sub-components. We renew the definitions of perseverance and passion from a music educational perspective. In our new model, perseverance can be understood as a consequence of received love and trust (in the work of developing control and skills). Musical passion is connected to hope and the possibility of being involved with the rewarding musical experiences of "shared love" (as a result of approaching or reaching individual musical goals). In doing so, our model builds a connection between musical grit and wellbeing more clearly than the grit theory of Duckworth.

BPNT (+ beneficence) and our new model. Our model also resonates with the Basic Psychological Need Theory (BPNT), which is a sub-theory of the self-determination theory, and has three components: autonomy, relatedness and competence. (Deci & Ryan 2012). *Hope* in our model is about positive attitude, optimism and the intrinsic motivation to approach an *autonomously* chosen goal. *Trust* is about believing in oneself and in the possibilities to fulfill one's own dreams and hopes. It is perhaps more about a "growth mindset" than merely *competence*. It is also about estimating the big picture: evaluating if support is adequate and the chosen goal is realistic. So, trust is both trust in oneself and trust in supportive people, adequate materials (having good instruments etc.), and supportive structures (received love). *Shared love* is about having access to those many kinds of good experiences that become possible because of music. One of such rewards for gritty work is the feeling of *relatedness* (being a member of a choir etc.). *Received love* and *Shared love* form a combination of mutual beneficence in music. Making music in an orchestra or a choir is not only about "giving" one's best as a musician. It is also about getting aesthetic enjoyment and sharing meaningful feelings, flow, relatedness, etc. This aspect of shared love further resembles *beneficence*, a concept that has been considered to be a possible new component of BPNT (Martela & Ryan 2020).

PERMA and our new model. The shared love component of our model is closely related to the concept of *flourishing*. However, while the PERMA model (Seligman 2003) consists of five components, the qualitative data of children's musical experiences lead us to formulate six components of shared love. Thus, we modified the PERMA model (Seligman 2003) to better fit the context of musical experiences. The contents of these components were also renewed to some extent.

Taken together, our model is a comprehensive, music-based conceptualization of how musical learning relates to musical wellbeing and how musical grit functions a core aspect that fosters this linkage. In addition to the above-mentioned theories, the model is in line with many other theories and concepts such as the flow–theory (Csikszentmihalyi 1993).

Conclusion

The Grit theory of Duckworth (2019) seems to not be adequate in explaining the phenomenon of musical grit. The new *model of positive music education and grit* stresses the importance of support (received love) in building perseverance and trust in our capacities to learn. It also stresses the educators' role in building learning challenges, meaningful social environments, and rewarding musical experiences (shared love) for nurturing hope, which ignites musical passion. There are versatile ways to enjoy music – actively or more passively. One of the observations in our study was that both music class students and the non-music class students received wellbeing through music, but aspects relating to personal meaning, achievement and social reward were greater among the children in music classes.

As a result of this study, a new theory was formed to portray an optimal kind of music educational process. A central aspect of the model is that it brings many aspects of both learning and wellbeing into mutual dialogue. Meeting and beating adversities and on the other hand getting rewarding experiences nurtures grit, which helps to attain flourishing. The reciprocal nature of learning and wellbeing is acknowledged in prior literature, but a contribution of this study is to provide a clarifying conceptual mapping, upon which many concepts from the prior literature can be projected and also brought into dialogue.

One critical notion about the role of grit as part of music educational processes must also be brought into this discussion. Grit is not always in the service of wellbeing (Adams–Miller 2017; Czerwiński et al. 2022; Lahti 2019). The precondition for grit to serve wellbeing is that the musical learning process is in balance, not obsessive. Learning compassion and self-compassion are features that are helpful in reaching such a healthy balance between seeking for perfection (eudaimonia), just enjoying life (hedonism), and preserving peace of mind. Learning music and learning to become gritty in a positive way in music is a big maturation process and is a part of human growth. Music educators should support their students in finding such a balance. The following words of one child express this seeking very well. She writes how she likes playing and isn't nervous when she performs. She gets a lot of support and praises from her family, teacher, and friends. But she struggles with the problem of learning self-compassion:

> *- If a magician could give me one special skill in music, that would be that I could learn to stand mistakes. Everybody, like me, makes mistakes, but I just can't stand them. So, my dream is that I could learn to cope with that.*

Music studies should also be able to foster wellbeing in a longer and wider perspective. This means, for example, that in educating future professional musicians it is important to be aware of their personal needs and to give such support in a way that "the needs of an individual and the needs of the world could meet" (Järvilehto 2013). Financial compromises – or simply seeking happiness through acceptance (or relatedness) has not always been beneficial in the evolution of arts and science. Our new model and its "shared love"-entity offers some explanations for what type of rewards can generate the passion and grit to make and enjoy music. There are many psychological aspects like these involved in positive music education that deserve attention. The questions of ethics and accessibility in education should also be part of the discussions when the aim is to build a good life. Public

support for many kinds of long-term hobbies may be an especially beneficial investment for the future in terms of fostering wellbeing in disadvantaged suburbs. Music can be a strength, an object of passion, and a source of shared love for the children of music classes. Music class activities are likely to provide "systemic benefits" in terms of building musical grit and musical flourishing because they provide a supportive structure and environment for a gritty culture, which facilitates long-term musical engagement and projects.

"Positive music education" aims to build good and advance a flourishing life through music. Our new model is an opening for bringing the concepts of learning and wellbeing into active and comprehensive dialogue. Yet, much more research is needed to understand in depth the processes that lead to a good life and wellbeing through music and music education. ■

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Appendix 1.
Items from the 2017 survey with Cronbach's alpha values

Child's self-perceived musical ability (.79*).
- *My tone ear is precise, and I sing with perfect tone purity.*
- *I consider my musical skills and musicality as my strength.*
- *I can usually perform well my playing exercises.*

Teacher's perception of the child' musical ability (.86*)
- *How do you estimate the child's general musicality?*
- *How good player this child is related to his/her classmates?*
- *How high level of playing this child might have achieved till the 9th class?*

Home support (.57*)
- *My family appreciates playing skills very much and encourages me strongly.*
- *My parents can play some instruments well.*
- *This family can give economic support to their child's music hobbies.*
- *My family takes me sometimes to concerts.*
- *My parents ensure that I make my schoolwork well and finish the tasks I have promised to do.*
- *How much support do you expect this child gets from his/her family for the playing as a hobby.*

Child's social motivation (.80*)
- *I'm always waiting eagerly for music-class performances.*
- *Playing together/ band playing is really fun!*
- *My friends appreciate good playing/musicianship.*
- *I enjoy of performing*

Child's own will to continue with music studies (intrinsic motivation)
- *If your friends didn't appreciate music at all, how probably you would still go on with your music studies and playing an instrument?*

Musical Grit (.78*)
- *I can concentrate well even if there were distractions.*
- *I like to read and thick books too.*
- *I like to get challenging, difficult tasks.*

- I take care of those tasks I have promised to do (or decided myself) till they get ready, if only I can. It is not typical for me to leave tasks "unfinished".
- I don't give up and I keep on persevere practicing, if I don't learn immediately the difficult place of my playing exercise.
- I concentrate on practicing and refuse even to go to a nice party, if I'm going to have soon a challenging school exam or an important instrumental performance with a difficult piece.
- I'll probably continue my playing as a hobby when I am at the ninth class.
- Does this child concentrate well in playing together in a class even if there were some other temptations?
- Does this child concentrate well in writing/ mathematics even if there were some other temptations?
- How would you estimate his/her general grit (= perseverance and passion to reach long-term goals).
- How would you estimate his/her grit in music?

Abstrakti

Sinnikkyyden ja kukoistamisen kokemuksia suomalaisissa peruskouluissa, joissa on tuettu pitkäjänteistä soiton harrastamista. Positiivisen musiikkikasvatuksen ja sinnikkyyden mallia rakentamassa.

Musiikkikasvatuksen positiivisia vaikutuksia voidaan tarkastella monitieteisesti. Tämän artikkeli lähestyy aihetta positiivisen psykologian näkökulmasta sinnikkyyden ja kukoistamisen teemoja painottaen. Tutkimus pyrkii edistämään käsitteellistä ymmärrystä musiikin oppimisen, sinnikkyyden ja hyvinvoinnin välisistä suhteista musiikkikasvatuksen kontekstissa. Monimenetelmäiseen tutkimukseen osallistui yhteensä 16 luokkaa ja 297 oppilasta neljästä eri koulusta, joissa on musiikkiluokkia. Kahta kouluista seurattiin vuosien 2016–2022 aikana keräten aineistoa kyselyiden ja haastatteluiden avulla, ja kaikki koulut osallistuivat kyselyyn vuonna 2021. Aineistoanalyysissa yhdistettiin kuvailevia ja vertailevia tilastollisia menetelmiä (kyselyt) sekä Grounded Theory -menetelmää (haastattelut ja kirjoitustehtävät). Tutkimuksen tuloksena syntyi malli, joka kuvaa musiikillista sinnikkyyttä ja kukoistamista tukevaa musiikkikasvatusprosessia. Avainkomponentit mallissa ovat vastaanotettu rakkaus, luottamus, toiveikkuus ja jaettu rakkaus. Malli resonoi aiempien sinnikkyyteen ja kukoistamiseen kytkeytyvien teorioiden kanssa, mutta syventää ja uudistaa näiden käsitteellistä sisältöä ja jäsentymistä musiikkikasvatuksellisesta näkökulmasta. Tällaista lähestymistapaa voitaisiin kenties kutsua "positiiviseksi musiikkikasvatukseksi". Toivomme, että tuloksemme rohkaisevat tieteidenvälistä dialogia ja lisäävät ymmärrystä siitä, millaisin lainalaisuuksin musiikin oppiminen ja hyvinvointi kytkeytyvät toisiinsa. ■

Avainsanat: sinnikkyys, musiikillinen sinnikkyys, positiivinen musiikkikasvatus, kukoistaminen, Soittostartti

Key words: Grit, musical grit, positive music education, trust, hope, positive psychology, shared love, flourishing