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SELF-REGULATED LEARNING AND TENDENCY TOWARDS POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE AFFECT IN GIFTED GRADUATE STUDENTS IN MUSIC

Abstract: Although self-regulation of learning is considered one of the key predictors of educational success, its relationship with positive and negative affect in gifted music students has not been sufficiently investigated, and the existing findings are not unambiguous. This research raises the question of whether there is a connection between self-regulation in learning and the tendency to experience positive and negative affect in gifted music students. The aim of this research is to examine the relationship between self-regulation in learning and the tendency to experience positive and negative affect in gifted students. The study is based on contemporary theories of self-regulated learning and affective functioning, which assume that emotional states influence learning strategies and academic achievement. The research used a quantitative non-experimental correlational design. The sample was collected using the cluster method and consists of eighteen gifted, former students of the Music School "Josif Marinković" from Vrsac, Republic of Serbia, who are current or former students of music art. The instruments used were PANAS for measuring positive and negative affect, and an instrument for self-regulation in learning, which consists of a shortened version of the Scale for Measuring Metacognitive Learning Strategies METAS and a shortened instrument "Learning Goals and Strategies" for measuring self-regulation in learning. All instruments showed satisfactory internal consistency ($\alpha \geq 0.9$). Of the statistical methods, Pearson's, or Spearman's correlation coefficient was used to test the connection between negative and positive affect with self-regulation. The results suggest that there is a relationship between self-regulation in learning and positive affect, such that higher levels of self-regulation are associated with a greater tendency towards positive affect. On the other hand, the results indicate that there is no relationship between self-regulation in learning and a tendency towards negative affect. The results of the study highlight the importance of strengthening self-regulated learning strategies in music education and providing psychological support aimed at developing and nurturing positive affect in gifted music students. The study contributes to a better understanding of the relationship between self-regulation and affective functioning in gifted music students and provides empirical evidence for improving educational support in music education.

Keywords: giftedness, music education, negative affect, positive affect, self-regulation.

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Introduction

“For a gifted child who is also successful, music school becomes a 'new world' in which it is realized and developed, where it acquires skills and knowledge that distinguish it from other children and make him, in a certain way, special. At the same time, the teacher of the main subject (instrument or voice) is, of course, a key figure in that context, through which systemic, school and personal influences are 'refracted': The teacher is significant factor in the successful development of a gifted child and often has a turning point importance in all stages of formal music training”.
(Bogunovic, 2010, p. 308)

The Music School “Josif Marinović” from Vrsac, Republic of Serbia, has been continuously implementing the education process at three levels since 1998 in the form of preschool, primary and secondary school music education. Generations of students have grown and are growing on the path of professional musicians - instrumental and vocal performers, but they are also forming into educated audiences. The opinion of the employees is that it is considered a special success when a child completes the entire educational process at this School. In addition to the 13 instruments taught at the Primary Music School, the educational profile at the Secondary School refers to the direction of a musical performer of classical and jazz music. Students develop their potential for talent in the field of musical performance, as well as a possible professional orientation, through different approaches to education/self-education and encounter different challenges and social contexts. This paper deals with these gifted students and their self-regulation of learning and tendencies in positive and negative affect. The research involves gifted young people who have continued their studies in specialized music education.

Maksic (Maksić, 2015) defines giftedness as “A personality trait – a specific set of characteristics, among which the most important are high intellectual abilities, creativity, self-concept and certain personality traits, high motivation and dedication to a certain area of human activity, or work, the end product of which is an exceptional, eminent achievement, a product significant for its creator and his environment”. The same author (Maksić, 2015) believes that children's giftedness is the successful mastering of tasks set for children at school and at home, as well as success in ability tests and abilities for superior learning. Sometimes, the concept of giftedness emphasizes an above-average student, as in the definition: “Giftedness is a set of characteristics that enable an individual to consistently achieve significantly above-average performance in one or more activities in which he is engaged” (Koren, 1988).

Regarding musical talent, the characteristics attributed to musically gifted individuals are: a sense of rhythm, good coordination, a strong sense of pitch, an understanding of musical relationships, a strong musical memory, a quick response to rhythm, melody and harmony, as well as using music to express feelings and experiences and possessing a spontaneous and original creative impulse in composing and performing (Klemenović & Andre, 2008). Performance is often emphasized as an indicator of musical talent (McPherson, 1997).

Self-regulation in the context of learning involves assessing the need for a strategy, choosing a strategy, and quality control of strategy implementation (Mirkov, 2007). According to the results of factor research (Mirkov, 2014), 3 strategies of self-regulation of learning are obtained: a deep approach that relies on expanding and deepening knowledge, on elaboration; an achievement-oriented approach that is oriented towards high goals, good time organization; and a superficial approach, where there is actually no self-regulation, which relies on memorizing or “working through” the material and where the student does not know which strategy to apply.

In music learning, self-regulation is of great importance, as musicians do a significant amount of practice on their own (McPherson et al., 2017). In one study (Miksza, 2015), musicians who were instructed to practice with self-regulation made better progress than those who were instructed to

practice without self-regulation. At higher levels of musical competence, practice strategies, where self-regulation plays a large role, determine success more than the amount of practice itself (Bonneville-Roussy & Bouffard, 2015). Gifted individuals use more self-regulation than non-gifted individuals (Risemberg & Zimmerman, 1992; Tortop, 2015), while gifted individuals who are accomplished use more self-regulation than gifted individuals who are not accomplished (McCoach & Siegle, 2003).

One of the issues related to self-regulation is the emotional state that appears in the presence or absence of self-regulatory behavior. Affect can be measured in short-term phenomena (question: "How are you feeling right now?") or in longer-term ones, which are measured over years (question: "How have you been feeling in the past few years?") and then we are talking about traits or dispositions (Boyle et al., 2015). Research by Viale et al. (2007) shows that gifted students have higher scores on negative affect and lower scores on positive affect than non-gifted students. Also, as they get older, gifted students may show less self-confidence, less enjoyment, and a greater sense of boredom (Zeidner & Schleyer, 1999). On the other hand, there is evidence that higher levels of positive affect are associated with higher academic achievement (Efklides, 2019). Schatt (2011) suggests that increasing positive affect may contribute to academic success in music learning. Furthermore, accomplished musicians have been shown to have high levels of positive affect and low levels of negative affect (Ascenso et al., 2018). Even performance anxiety in musicians is not associated with low levels of positive affect (Hughes et al., 2006).

Self-regulation and affect may be related, with positive affect occurring when the self-regulation process is judged to be successful in achieving a goal, and negative affect occurring when the self-regulation process is judged to be unsuccessful in achieving a goal (Carver & Scheier, 2001). Negative affect has been shown to lead to the use of less effective learning strategies (Magno, 2010), although some research has not found this relationship (Papantoniou, 2012), while positive affect has been shown to lead to the use of more effective strategies during self-regulation (Papantoniou, 2012). In one study (Panebianco-Warrens et al., 2015), music students with higher levels of self-regulation had higher levels of positive affect, while students with lower levels of self-regulation had higher levels of negative affect.

Research problem and aim of the research

The problem, or rather the question, that this research addresses is whether self-regulation in learning is related to the tendency to experience positive and negative affect in gifted music students. This is a question that needs to be answered more clearly, given that the number of studies on this topic is small and that the results of the studies are mutually contradictory (Magno, 2010; Panebianco-Warrens et al., 2015; Papantoniou, 2012). Accordingly, the aim of the research is to examine the relationship between self-regulation in learning and the tendency to experience positive and negative affect in gifted students.

Research hypotheses

The research tasks concern determining (a) whether positive affect increases with increasing levels of self-regulation and (b) whether negative affect decreases with increasing levels of self-regulation. These tasks are based on a general hypothesis and two working hypotheses:

- General hypothesis: Self-regulation in learning is associated with experiencing positive and negative affect
- Working hypothesis 1: Self-regulation in learning and positive affect are positively correlated
- Working hypothesis 2: Self-regulation in learning and negative affect are negatively correlated

The study examines whether previous findings on the positive correlation between self-regulation and positive affect (Magno, 2010; Panebianco-Warrens et al., 2015; Papantoniou, 2012) will be

confirmed. It is also necessary to examine whether the negative relationship between self-regulation and negative affect, which was shown in two studies (Magno, 2010; Panebianco-Warrens et al., 2015) and not in one study (Papantoniu, 2012), also occurs.

Method

Sample

The sample consists of 18 (eighteen) current or former graduate students in the field of music culture, who have completed at least part of their primary and/or secondary education at the Music School "Josif Marinković" in Vrsac, where the researchers and authors of the study work. If we take Koren's definition of giftedness into account (Koren, 1988), which states that giftedness enables a person to continuously achieve above-average performance, then students who have enrolled in faculties in the field of music culture can be classified as gifted, because they have shown that they have a better overall result (the result consists of success during high school and performance on the entrance exam) than other candidates who applied. In order to further confirm that these are respondents who continuously achieve above-average performance from primary music education, we opted for a convenient sample (cluster) of respondents from the Music School "Josif Marinković in Vršac" in which we are working on, because there are directly available additional indicators of giftedness for the period of primary and secondary musical education in the form of school records - diplomas from competitions, school success and teacher assessments. Therefore, each respondent in the sample achieved, in addition to school success, very notable results in recognized national and international competitions in the field of music during primary and/or secondary education.

Variables

- Experiencing negative affect
- Experiencing positive affect
- Tendency towards self-regulated learning

Materials and instruments

The study assessed the affective dimensions of personality using the PANAS test (Watson & Clark, 1994), which measures positive and negative affect. A Serbian translated adaptation of the test was used (Mihic et al., 2014). PANAS, the Positive and Negative Affect Test contains 20 words that describe feelings in people, and for each of these 20 words, the respondent reports on a Likert scale from 1 (very little) to 5 (almost always) to what extent that feeling was expressed in him during the period of studying music. The reliability of the instrument for negative and positive affect is $\alpha \geq 0.9$.

To measure self-regulation, the self-regulation in learning instrument was used, consisting of 37 items from the Learning Goals and Strategies instrument by Goran Opacic and Snezana Mirkov (Opačić & Mirkov, 2010) and 21 items from the Metacognitive Learning Strategies Measurement Scale METAS by Biljana Sladoje Bosnjak (Sladoje Bošnjak, 2013). The questions are answered on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 – I strongly disagree, 2 – I somewhat disagree, 3 – I neither agree nor disagree, 4 – I somewhat agree, 5 – I completely agree. The instrument was selected based on research (Mirkov, 2014) showing that the selected items form an instrument with satisfactory metric characteristics, as well as that their factor structure can well describe the concept of self-regulation strategies in learning. The only difference in the items compared to the aforementioned research (Mirkov, 2014) is that, instead of the 38 items of the Goran Opačić and Snezana Mirkov Learning Goals and Strategies instrument (Opačić & Mirkov, 2010), 37 items were assigned, since, by mistake, when assigning the instrument, the item "I like the most such learning that really makes me think" was omitted. The reliability of the instrument for self-regulation in learning is $\alpha = 0.92$.

Procedures

All questionnaires were administered electronically, via the Google Forms internet platform. Respondents were provided with an internet link that took them to the questionnaire page. As part of the initial instructions, respondents were informed that their email address would not be linked to the answers they provided and that the data would be processed completely anonymously, as well as that they had the right to access the results, conclusions of the research and the scientific work. The data were collected during 2025.

Data analysis

After obtaining the raw results, the items from the Learning Goals and Strategies instrument (Opačić & Mirkov, 2010) and the Metacognitive Learning Strategies Measurement Scale METAS (Sladoje Bošnjak, 2013) were recoded. Two items were removed, for which it is not entirely clear whether they indicate a tendency towards self-regulation or not, these are the items: SR128 "I plan in advance and strictly adhere to the plan in learning/practice" and "SR125 Since I am not sure/what is really important, I try to write down as much as I can from the lecture". The results from the remaining items of the instruments Learning Goals and Strategies (Opačić & Mirkov, 2010) and the Metacognitive Learning Strategies Measurement Scale METAS (Sladoje Bošnjak, 2013) were combined into one variable Tendency towards self-regulation of learning (see the subheading "Variables" in the "Method" section).

Descriptive statistics described the distribution of respondents by propensity for self-regulation, positive and negative affect, using statistical measures: arithmetic mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum. In addition, the reliability of the scores of the tendency towards self-regulated learning variable was determined and the reliability of the PANAS test was verified (Watson & Clark, 1994).

Correlation analysis was used to test the research hypotheses. When it comes to the relationship between self-regulation and positive affect (working hypothesis 1), it was tested with Spearman's correlation coefficient, which is used when a variable is not normally distributed, which in this case is the positive affect variable. As for the relationship between self-regulation and negative affect (working hypothesis 2), it was tested using Pearson's linear correlation coefficient, which can be used when both variables are normally distributed.

SPSS software (IBM) was used for all statistical procedures.

Results

Score distributions, mean values, and dispersion of variables: positive affect, negative affect and self-regulation

All 18 respondents completed the questionnaires. The PANAS test showed excellent reliability, as Cronbach's alpha $\alpha \geq 0.9$ for negative and positive affect. In the experience of positive affect, the minimum is equal to the theoretical minimum of 10, and the maximum of 50 is equal to the theoretical maximum (Table 1). The Shapiro-Wilk test, $W(18)=0.88$, $p=0.03$, shows that positive affect during studying deviate from a normal distribution.

Regarding negative affect, the minimum is equal to the theoretical minimum of 10, while the maximum is lower than the theoretical maximum of 50 (Table 1). The Shapiro-Wilk test, $W(18)=0.94$, $p=0.27$, indicates that negative affect does not deviate statistically from a normal distribution.

When it comes to the variable of tendency towards self-regulated learning, first a few words about reliability. When analyzing the reliability of the instrument of self-regulation in learning, it was shown that by removing one more item, the reliability increases, namely item SR125 – “Since I am not sure what is really important, I try to write down as much as I can from the lecture”. This led to an increase in reliability from $\alpha = 0.91$ to $\alpha = 0.92$. Therefore, the scale of self-regulation taken from the research of Mirkov (2014) and corrected by removing three items and, by mistake, another item, shows excellent reliability. The minimum of the variable tendency towards self-regulated learning is further from the theoretical minimum of 1, on the other hand, the maximum is closer to the theoretical maximum of 5, and the average approaches the value of 4.00 (Table 1). The Shapiro-Wilk test, $W(18)=0.98$, $p=0.96$, does not indicate a deviation from the normal distribution of the variable tendency towards self-regulated learning.

Table 1: Means and dispersions of negative and positive affect and self-regulated learning

Variable	N	Min	Max	M	SD
Positive affect	18	10	50	36.77	11.93
Negative affect	18	10	41	24.22	10.27
Self-regulated learning	18	3	4.76	3.96	.46

Testing the correlation between experiencing positive affect and the tendency towards self-regulated learning

The hypothesis that experiencing positive affect and the tendency towards self-regulation in learning are related was confirmed, as shown by a statistically significant, fairly high Spearman correlation coefficient (Table 2), which is non-parametric and appropriate for the case where one variable is not normally distributed, namely experiencing positive affect.

Table 2: Correlation between positive affect and self-regulated learning

Variable	Self-regulated learning
Positive affect	.67**

** Correlation significant at the 0.01 statistical significance level

Testing the correlation between experiencing negative affect and the tendency towards self-regulated learning

Unlike the previous one, the hypothesis about the connection between experiencing negative affect and the tendency towards self-regulation during learning was not confirmed. Self-regulation during studying and negative affect during studying are not related. The Pearson correlation coefficient is close to zero (Table 3).

Table 3: Correlation between negative affect and self-regulated learning

Variable	Self-regulated learning
Negative affect	-.01

Discussion

In this part of the paper, we once again look back at the results, summarize them and compare them with previous research, and based on that, we present the conclusions of the research. In addition, it is very important to take into account the limitations of this research, which we will mention after summarizing and interpreting the results.

The general hypothesis of the research was that there is a connection between self-regulation in learning and the experience of positive and negative affect. The first working hypothesis, which states that there is a positive connection between self-regulation in learning and the experience of positive affect, was confirmed. Namely, there is a connection between the tendency to self-regulate in learning and the experience of positive affect, meaning that those gifted music students who experience more positive affect, they also have more self-regulatory behavior in learning. This is another in a series of studies (Magno, 2010; Panebianco-Warrens et al., 2015; Papantoniou, 2012) that show a positive connection between positive affect and self-regulation. This positive relationship can be explained by the fact that positive affect, such as feelings of strength and inspiration, encourage the use of cognitive capacities and the use of metacognitive strategies in learning (Papantoniou, 2012).

The second working hypothesis, which states that there is a negative association between self-regulation in learning and experiencing negative affect, was not confirmed. More precisely, the results indicate that there is no association between the tendency to self-regulate in learning and experiencing negative affect. When considering previous studies on the relationship between self-regulation and negative affect, where there are contradictory findings, the lack of a relationship in this study does not confirm the findings of Panebianco-Vorens and colleagues (Panebianco-Vorens et al. 2015) and Magno (Magno, 2010), but rather goes in the direction of the results of Papantoniou's research (Papantoniou, 2012). The lack of a relationship between negative affect and self-regulation can be explained by the fact that negative affect, such as discomfort and fear, can have different effects on self-regulation in learning depending on the person and the situation. More specifically, in some individuals and situations, negative affect inhibit self-regulation in learning by overloading working memory and reducing cognitive capacities, while in others, negative affect have no impact on self-regulation in learning or even stimulate it by increasing analytical skills and attention to detail (Papantoniou, 2012).

When we look at the results of this research as a whole, we see that the first working hypothesis was confirmed, while the second working hypothesis was not, so the general hypothesis received only partial empirical support, and cannot be fully accepted in its original form.

Contributions of the study

This study expands the repertoire of limited research on the topic of self-regulation in learning, positive and negative affect in gifted students, by further confirming some results of previous research, and introducing additional re-examination and a definite need for further research. The findings of this study once again confirm that self-regulation is associated with a tendency to experience positive affect, making this connection a consistent scientific finding. On the other hand, the lack of a connection between negative affect and self-regulation further calls into question previous findings that suggest that a greater tendency to self-regulation is accompanied by a lower tendency to experience negative affect (Magno, 2010; Panebianco-Warrens et al., 2015). In any case, it once again shows that it is important to nurture psychological well-being and positive affect in students, and to develop self-regulation skills in learning, because they are interconnected, so this is a call for practitioners in education of gifted music students to place additional emphasis on psychological support and self-regulation skills in learning.

Study limitations and implications for future research

Future research could further examine whether there is a link between self-regulation in learning and the tendency to experience negative affect, as research results remain contradictory, and the relationship between negative affect and self-regulation remains unclear. An additional guideline for future research would be to use a larger sample size in order to draw more reliable conclusions.

Conclusion

The aim of this research was to see what the connection is between the level of self-regulation in learning (assessment of the need for a learning strategy, strategy selection and quality control of strategy execution) and the tendency towards positive (feelings of enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, strength, etc.) and negative affect (feelings of discomfort, unhappiness, fear, tension, etc.) in gifted music students. What stands out is the repeated result of previous research that with a higher level of self-regulation in learning comes a greater tendency towards positive affect. No connection has been shown between the tendency towards negative affect and the level of self-regulation in learning. Once again, it is emphasized that the development and nurturing of positive affect and self-regulation skills in learning are important components of the education of gifted music students, as this research further empirically confirms that self-regulation in learning and the tendency to experience positive affect are interconnected.

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- *Introduction to Jazz Solfeggio* (Academy of Arts, Novi Sad, 2022) Monograph/Textbook
- *Duni vetre sa banatske strane* (*Blow, Wind from the Banat Side*) (Vršac, Jazstronic, 2012) – Authorial CD and accompanying sheet music/book.