



MUSIC THERAPY AND HEALTHCARE: INSIGHT FROM GHANA

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ABSTRACT: *Music has long played a significant role in emotional healing, psychological stability, communication, and holistic well-being across cultures. Despite the growing global recognition of music therapy as a complementary healthcare intervention, its awareness and integration into healthcare delivery in Ghana remain limited. This study examined the therapeutic role of music and the prospects of integrating music therapy into healthcare practice in Ghana. The study employed a descriptive mixed-methods design involving both quantitative and qualitative approaches. A total of 115 participants comprising patients, physicians, hospital administrators, musicians, traditional healers, parents, educationists, artists, and students participated in the study. Data were collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Quantitative data were analysed using frequencies and percentages, while qualitative responses were analysed thematically. The findings revealed that respondents strongly acknowledged the importance of music in emotional regulation, relaxation, pain management, anxiety reduction, and overall well-being. Although awareness of professional music therapy programmes in Ghana remains relatively low, respondents demonstrated strong support for its integration into healthcare and educational systems. The study concludes that music therapy possesses considerable potential for holistic healthcare delivery in Ghana and recommends increased public awareness, professional training, institutional support, and policy integration to promote its sustainability and effectiveness.*

KEYWORDS: Music Therapy, Healthcare, Healing, Complementary Medicine, Holistic Health.



INTRODUCTION

A natural phenomenon that possesses the power to affect feelings, emotions, and impact humans holistically via orchestrated sound and silence, which many refer to as the food of the soul, is music (Weinstein-Foner, 2025). Though what is described as music may differ from culture to culture, characteristically, every phenomenon that is described as musical is governed by sound and silence, which draws attention and appeal to consumers. As indicated by MacFarquhar and Richards (1983), “Music is employed in eliciting aesthetic response in a listener through vocal and instrumental sounds with degrees of rhythm, melody, harmony, and pitch dynamics (p.451). Agreeably, music has always been a very instrumental element of human civilization, creating a unique presence in history. Practically, music has had a multi-purpose face in both traditional and non-traditional activities of human endeavour. Critical consideration of human existence from the perspective of rites of passage, undoubtedly, portrays the various functions of music and its related activities in the stages of life (i.e., from birth to death). Particularly in the performance of rites and rituals, which usually lead to pacification and healing, music has persistently been employed as a tool for communication and a link or bridge to the soul of man and the ancestral world where the traditionalists haunt for assistance in achieving an objective of saving life and warding off unwanted omen which works against society. The notion of life-saving and clearing of bad omen was essentially aimed at ensuring good health and a conducive environment for human habitation. Largely, “Music has been distinguished as an artistic and therapeutic medium (Cl, 2010). The earliest known evidence for this phenomenon comes from descriptions of therapeutic musical interventions in cuneiform writings in Mesopotamia from 4000 BC as expressed by Spintege et al. (1992). Another early example can be seen in the Old Testament of the Holy Bible (1 Samuel 16: 23), where David cured the despondent king while posing as a kinnor. Despite the growing global recognition of music therapy as a complementary healthcare intervention, its professional practice, awareness, and institutional integration within Ghana remain relatively limited. Although music occupies a central position in Ghanaian cultural and spiritual life, limited empirical studies have examined its therapeutic application within formal healthcare systems. This study therefore investigates the therapeutic role of music and the prospects of integrating music therapy into healthcare delivery in Ghana. The study contributes to existing scholarship on music therapy, holistic healthcare, and African indigenous healing practices.

Notwithstanding the strong presence of music in the provision of habitable ambience and healthy physical presence of society members, the Ghanaian healthcare provision over the years, particularly after the arrival of the colonial masters, has been purely orthodox (ie, Western medical practice). Though prior to the arrival of the westerners, Africans had a variety of indigenous healing processes that comprehensively dwelt on the use of herbal medicine in spiritual healing rituals that do not employ music, but are frequently used within such rituals that employ music (Feierman & Janzen, 1992). Surely, a typical African society of old and even current survived on a blend of beliefs of the physical and the intangible world. Nzewi (2002) explains that Africans survived due to their ability to match the religious and the secular, the spiritual and the mundane, the intangible and the material realities. Furthermore, he explains the conditions precedence of a person who can become a healer in the African setting:

In certain African cultures, a person who will eventually become a healer is supernaturally selected through signs such as sickness. The signs, which often result in strange behaviour or physiological ill health, manifest irrespective of age and gender. When diagnosed, preparing



or capacitating the person to become a healer could entail the medical-musical theatre of "opening of the inner eyes". (p.1)

The traditional African attitude towards music and its usage as an integral part of daily activities, ritual, and culture as a whole comes in different forms. Indeed, one would not better agree to the fact that music in traditional Africa is the science of being the art of living with health. As Nzewi still reiterated:

Music is the intangible resonance of which the human body and soul are composed: The human body is the quintessential sound instrument; the human soul is the ethereal melody. A matching of human souls is the foundation of African harmonic thought and sound. Musical harmony is the consonance of complementary inter-dependent melodies and timbres - vocal or instrumental. Dissonance occurs when independent melodies, souls, or tone or pitch levels fail to harmonise in accord with a culture's normative idioms of interaction in life and music. Complementation of souls or the consonance of matching melodies generates healthy resonance - a healing energy. (p.3)

This is to reiterate the fact that music and its elements are inseparably bound to every facet of human endeavour, from the genesis to the revelation of the rite of passage of humans.

Today, music is urgently and frequently employed in the context of modern medical therapy. It is observed and can also be found in the writings of Conrad et al. (2007), that psychiatry, psychology, obstetrics and paediatrics are some of the fields where music has been proven to be therapeutically beneficial. This benefit has also been extended to perioperative settings, where it is useful as an adjuvant therapeutic measure in premedication areas, operating rooms, and intensive care units. According to Davis (1999), the American Music Therapy Association (AMTA, 2014) expresses the view that music therapy can be well-regarded as the clinical and evidence-based use of music interventions to accomplish individualised goals within a therapeutic relationship by a credentialed professional who has completed an approved music therapy programme. Indeed, with the existence of medicine, music therapy has also existed, though relatively new in our part of the world. Arguably, the idea of music as a healing stimulus that affects health and behaviour is as old as the writings of Pythagoras and Plato (Storr, 1996).

For thousands of years in Ghana, spiritual transformation and healing rituals centered on sound, have been a part of human existence. Nonetheless, the professional practice of music therapy and the deliberate use of music to promote health and well-being are relatively recent phenomena in the country. The 2014 founding of the Ghanaian Music Therapy Association (MTAG) lends credence to this claim. With the help of Mawuyrami Ocloo's innovative work and letters of support and endorsement from the World Federation of Music Therapy (WFMT) and the AMTA, the MTAG (Music Therapy Association of Ghana) was established. The Ministry of Health in Ghana authorised the practice of music therapy as one of the health professions due to its significance in the field of medicine. However, despite increased interest in music therapy as an alternative treatment strategy, there is still a lack of understanding about its impact on Ghanaian healthcare. The purpose of this study was to investigate and analyse people's perceptions of music therapy, its effectiveness, including awareness, and its integration into modern healthcare practices in Ghana.



REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The literature discusses views of individuals and professionals in the fields where sound and for that matter, music is effectively employed to attain paramount objectives, particularly in the area of healthcare. This is to identify and bring to bear the instrumentality of music and sound in the activities of individuals, professionals, and institutions aimed at providing quality healthcare, which leads to healing, relief, and comfort to the suffering individual.

The Existence of Traditional Music Therapy

Fundamentally, the term Tradition could be attributed to a daily or frequent process that is identified with a particular set of people, organisations, and individuals to achieve a purpose. Tradition is undoubtedly embedded and deduced from culture, which includes the use of sound generated from chordophones, idiophones, earophones, and membranophones, which harmonise to create music. Music in every culture and tradition represents a thought that could best be interpreted and imbibed by the owners. The composition, interpretation, and employment of music in a peculiar traditional activity surely provide meaning and answers to certain pertinent cultural or traditional issues, predominantly in the use of musical activities and healing rituals. Comprehensively, civilizations worldwide hold the belief that music has therapeutic properties that impact humans and their activities in the environment. When music is employed with a belief background, it typically carries a component of religious activity with vital cultural significance (Perry & Polito, 2021). Therefore, it is crucial to establish the fact that African Sound Therapy identifies its origins in diverse cultures of the African continent, each with its unique healing practices. Music is also considered a means of communication with the gods and ancestors. In this regard, ancient African societies understood the importance of music in their rituals and rites (<https://guimeds.com/sound-therapy/>). Furthermore, the sound of instruments such as drums, mbiras, kalimbas, and koras played a central role in the healing rituals. Like Willow (2020) indicates, from Ancient Egyptian Temples to Kirtan in modern yoga centers, from indigenous shamanic traditions, through Christian liturgy to New Age affirmations, sound, in the form of rhythmic drumming, chanting, prayer, and singing, has been used to create unitive experiences and bring about psychological and spiritual transformation. As reiterated by Perry and Polito (2021), music in the form of drumming, singing, dancing, and chanting over the years has been utilized in rituals to treat psychological disorders, promote spiritual growth, heal ailments, and prevent future illnesses. Regarding the use of music in medicine, it is seen that the blend has always existed and continues today. Unlike today, in ancient times music was more commonly belief-based, and attention was mainly paid to humans and the soul (Mollaoğlu & Mollaoğlu, 2023).

Music in Traditional Healing in Africa

Naturally, human beings due to our composition, fall prey to numerous ailments irrespective of the geographical location. Correspondingly, there are several means of curing these ailments which in the African terrain include local preparations and ritual processes employing music and its related activities. Clearly, the import of the use of music in traditional healing procedures is largely intangible and therefore seemingly employs the bases of faith. Consequently, an important question that arises concerning the use of traditional music in alleviating pain, discomfort, and other health-related conditions is: how instrumental is music in traditional healing practices in Ghana and by extension, Africa?



Indeed, one could not better allude to the fact that, beyond faith, extensive study has demonstrated that music affects the body and brain physiologically. Again, the work of Hamza et al. (2023) expresses that brainwave patterns can be altered by the vibrations produced by sound instruments, leading to a profoundly calm and stress-relieving condition. Also, Nzewi (2002) contends that African musical instruments have a harmonic resonance that is therapeutic and contemplative. Music of traditional Africa is perceived as the science of being and the art of living with health. Additionally, Music is the intangible resonance of which the human body and soul are composed, the human body is the quintessential sound instrument, and the soul is the ethereal melody. Comprehensively, traditional music is the primary activity driving the musical traditions that originate from and are transmitted through oral, aural, and improvisational means, and that reflect the values, beliefs and identity of a specific culture, region, or community as intimated by Davies (2015). Furthermore, Chaitanya et al. (2021) provide the main types of African traditional healing as divination, spiritualism and herbalism. They explain these types of African traditional healing:

Divination is the process of seeking guidance or knowledge from supernatural sources, such as ancestors, spirits, or gods, through various methods, such as throwing bones, reading palms, or interpreting dreams. Spiritualism is the practice of communicating with or invoking the spirits of the dead, the living, or the unborn, through rituals, prayers, or offerings. Herbalism is the use of natural substances, such as plants, minerals, or animal parts, to treat diseases, enhance health, or protect against harm. (p.46)

Considering the place of music in traditional healing, Adu-Gyamfi and Anderson (2019) explain that traditional healing is the service of healing that involves magico-religious acts and concepts. Thiza, and Singh-Pillay (2022) also highlight that the magico-religious notions of traditional healing emphasise the use of diverse ways and strategies to communicate with and manage these forces, such as divination, rituals, symbols, or music.

African traditional medicine, which comprises three levels of specialisations (divination, spiritualism, and herbalism), is defined as one of the holistic health care systems. The traditional healer provides healing services based on culture, religious background, knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs prevalent in his or her community (Chaitanya et al., 2021). Undoubtedly, Africans seem to have persisted because of their capacity to reconcile the spiritual and the mundane, the intangible and the material worlds, and the interdependence of the physical world and active immaterial or supernatural forces. Traditional healers are mostly a spiritual group that believes in ancestral veneration. According to Obeghare and de Villiers (2021), they perform various rituals to communicate with their ancestors and are so organised that they share different roles in different ceremonies depending on the rites being performed. They use traditional music during ceremonial rites and rituals to communicate and connect with the ancestral world. Again, Obeghare and de Villiers (2021) indicate that these activities enable them to conduct healing and divination. As a result of their diverse spiritual experiences, African traditional healers develop strategies for healing that are impressively influenced by carefully selected music and related activities.

Willow (2020) opines that sound has been understood as the source of creation, a way to petition ancestors for assistance, and a means of healing and shifting states of consciousness by various cultures. Largely, traditional music is believed to have multiple purposes in the communities in which it is created and performed. This includes invocation of spirits, facilitation of communication, and connection with ancestors, as well as provision of



entertainment. Emphatically, the act of exorcism is identified as a crucial part of traditional African healing. This is because it is very instrumental in the entire process of driving evil spirits or demons from the ailing individual. Africans have the belief that some illnesses could be caused by demonic spirits posing as humans. This evil possession is thought to be the cause of ailments like mental illness, among others. In such situations, it is accepted that the community's traditional leader or priest can only perform exorcisms. Giménez and Fernández (2018) had earlier indicated that the processes involve a variety of customs, which sometimes require prayers with the rosary, dancing, drumming, singing, and using biblical passages to bring about healing, well-being, and comfort.

Further, Nzewi (2002) postulates that the African science of musical sound in healing prescribes raw (nature's) harmonics that generate more healing resonance than refined or synthetic harmonics. Drums made of animal skin and wood, clay, calabash, and shell, and robust string or metal (cast iron/bronze) instruments are rich in healing harmonics. They are commonly preferred for playing healing music. In African Medi-cure practice, music is particularly researched for dealing with mental or spiritual sicknesses. In other situations, music generates and maintains the mental-physical state of being that is needed to administer physiological treatment. Through music, the community comes together, which in turn gathers the spiritual energy needed for the sick to receive healing and reintegrate into a caring human community.

Therapeutic Music in Scientific Perspective

Music, fundamentally a combination of sound with a variety of frequencies and silence orchestrated largely by humans, though birds and other creatures could also be naturally credited, holds properties of healing which have been emphatically known since antiquity. Yet, its use in music therapy became a scientifically supported approach after World War II (Dobrzynska et al., 2006). Music therapy's broad scope of practice has proven that it is possible to be effectively employed in many departments of medicine, rehabilitation, and education, especially in instances where other medical treatments fail (for example, in the case of advanced dementia or palliative care). Healthcare settings, including mental health, forensics, nursing homes, rehabilitation, and oncology, have all used music therapy as a therapeutic intervention (Agres et al., 2021). Although the term music therapy sometimes unprofessionally refers to any form of music usage as an intervention in healthcare settings. Essentially, Magee (2019) agrees that music therapy must be delivered by a trained music therapist who is a certified and competent therapist with the necessary knowledge in psychology, medicine, and music.

In the United States, music therapists are required to complete One Thousand Two Hundred (1200) hours of clinical training and pass the certification exam by the Certification Board for Music Therapists (Kerry et al., 2019). In practice, Music therapists use evidence-based music interventions to address the mental, physical, and emotional needs of an individual. Nick (2020) postulates that therapeutic music is used as a solo standard treatment and co-treatment with other disciplines to address the needs in cognition, language, social integration, psychological health, and family support of an individual. Additionally, Kerry et al. (2019) have the view that music therapy has been used to improve various diseases in different research areas, such as rehabilitation, public health, clinical care, and psychology. Above all, the healing process to regain comfort usually comprises application of phenomena, which in this study include sound and vibration. Factually, just as noise toxicity has detrimental effects



on structures and organisms, including humans, sound can effectively be used to heal, largely employing the psychoacoustic principles of resonance and entrainment, where Resonance describes the effect of frequency on another. The vibration of sound causes a change in the frequency of a cell, muscle, or organ. Entrainment is the process by which periodic rhythms cause major body pulse systems (heart rate, brain waves, and breath) to naturally speed up or slow down by these acoustic processes, sound causes a physiologic effect on the body (Goldman & Goldman, 2017). Indeed, Agostini et al. (2025) indicate that the composition of the human body, as evidenced by scientific research indicating a comprehensive amount of water (about 70%) vis-à-vis the performance of sound in water, emphasises the impact of sound on the cells to attain a positive effect on the body's make-up. In this perspective, Tomatis, the father of psychoacoustics as cited by Goldman and Goldman (2017) asserts that “sound is a nutrient for the body, thereby being useful to calm, stimulate, and balance the nervous system” (p.14).

Most importantly, it is worth noting that organisms have their own vibratory rate, and similarly, objects in the universe have different unique resonance frequencies. For instance, if a wineglass is tapped, it emits a ringing sound determined by its size, shape, and thickness. In like manner, due to the flexible nature of the human body, the cells are easily excited by sound vibration. For example, the effect of resonance on the human bone is verified when a 'C' tuning fork is struck and positioned next to another 'C' tuning fork. The second tuning fork will begin to resonate together with the first tuning fork. Meaning that, the sound wave from the first tuning fork has imparted some of its energy to the second one. If the stem of the struck tuning fork is placed on a metal, glass, or wooden object, this object will begin to vibrate. Meaning, when a struck tuning fork is placed on top of one's head, the impact felt is a true confirmation of the fact that the bone is an excellent conductor of sound (Simon, 2007).

In clinical practice, the creation of procedures and assessing therapeutic effectiveness are frequently linked activities. The progress of music therapy, particularly Western music therapy, as opined by Mastnak (2023) allows for a distinction between a period of model development and a subsequent stage of model testing in diagnosis-specific settings. Consequently, Randomised control trials have evolved into a standard of good practice that is broadly consistent with the concepts of evidence-based medicine. In recent times however, scientific theoretical considerations recommend meta-methodology research to investigate the suitability and limitations of such pre-defined approaches. This is substantiated by the truth theories, complexity sciences, and scientific aesthetics (Mastnak, 2023).

METHODS AND PROCESS

This study employed a descriptive mixed-methods research design to examine the therapeutic role of music and the prospects of integrating music therapy into healthcare delivery in Ghana. The mixed-methods approach enabled the researchers to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data for a broader understanding of respondents' perceptions, experiences, and awareness concerning music therapy (Clark & Creswell, 2008). We relied on both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were obtained through questionnaire administration and semi-structured interviews, while secondary data were gathered from scholarly books, journal articles, conference proceedings and other relevant literature on music therapy, sound healing, African traditional medicine and healthcare practices. The target population for the study



comprised patients, physicians, hospital administrators, musicians, artists, traditional healers, parents, educationists, and students within selected communities and institutions in Ghana. A total of one hundred and fifteen (115) participants were involved in the study. Out of this number, one hundred (100) respondents participated in the questionnaire survey, while fifteen (15) participants were purposively selected for interviews based on their knowledge, experiences, and relevance to the study. Purposive sampling techniques were used to select participants who possessed relevant knowledge, experience and exposure to music, healthcare, education and healing practices. Convenience sampling was additionally employed where accessibility to respondents became necessary. Data were collected using close-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire items were designed mainly in Yes/No response format to gather quantitative data on respondents' perceptions regarding music, healing and music therapy. The interview sessions generated qualitative data relating to respondents' personal experiences, opinions, and perspectives on music therapy and healthcare practices in Ghana as indicated in the work of Arnason (2003). Again, quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires were analysed using frequencies and percentages. The analysed data were subsequently presented in tables for easy interpretation. Qualitative data obtained from the interviews were analysed thematically, and relevant excerpts from respondents were integrated into the discussion to support and explain the quantitative findings.

To ensure validity and reliability as directed by Cohen et al. (2017), the research instruments were carefully designed in relation to the objectives of the study and reviewed by experts in music and healthcare-related disciplines before administration. Ethical considerations such as voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity and informed consent were strictly observed throughout the study. The mixed-methods approach adopted for the study was considered appropriate because it provided both statistical evidence and descriptive insights into the relevance of music therapy as a complementary healthcare intervention in Ghana.

DATA PRESENTATION

The table presents the quantitative data obtained from respondents regarding the therapeutic role of music and the integration of music therapy into healthcare delivery in Ghana.

Table 1: Respondents' Perceptions on Music and Music Therapy

	QUESTIONS	YES%	NO%
1	Do you often listen to music?	88	12
2	Are you selective about the type of music that you listen to?	87	13
3	Does music have a role in shaping an individual's identity?	80	20
4	Do you have any particular music genre that you connect to relaxation or healing?	78	22
5	Have you ever observed any positive effects of music therapy on others?	78	22
6	Have you ever used music intentionally to improve your mood or well-being?	79	21



7	Have you ever discussed music therapy with a healthcare professional before?	30	70
8	Do you believe that music therapy can enhance the quality of life of patients?	93	7
9	Does music have a role in reducing social anxiety and improving self-esteem?	69	31
10	Does music have a role in pain management?	67	33
11	Can therapeutic music reduce the need for medication in medical settings?	60	40
12	Do you think music therapy can be effective in treating physical or mental conditions?	86	14
13	Are you aware of any existing music therapy programmes in Ghana?	29	71
14	Would you be open to participating in a music therapy programme if it were available?	92	8
15	Is music therapy a feasible alternative in Ghanaian medical settings?	57	43
16	Do you support the inclusion of music therapy in the standard healthcare practices in Ghana?	94	6
17	Is there room for improvement in integrating music therapy services with healthcare services?	87	13
18	Do you think music therapy has a positive impact on the overall health and well-being of individuals in Ghana?	75	25

The qualitative responses obtained from respondents further reinforced the quantitative findings of the study. Several participants described music as an important emotional and psychological support mechanism in their daily lives. One respondent, a university student, stated:

Whenever I feel stressed or emotionally disturbed, I listen to calm music because it helps me relax and think clearly again.

Similarly, a healthcare worker observed that:

Music has a calming effect on patients, especially those who experience anxiety, emotional trauma, or prolonged illness. Sometimes patients become emotionally stable when soothing music is played around them.

A traditional healer also indicated that music has historically formed part of indigenous African healing practices:

In our tradition, healing is not done in silence. Drumming, singing and chanting are all part of the healing process because music affects the spirit and emotions of the patient.

Another respondent, a musician, emphasised the psychological influence of music by stating:



Different kinds of music affect people differently. Some music can motivate people, while others can help reduce sadness and loneliness.

Regarding the integration of music therapy into healthcare systems, many respondents expressed strong support for institutional recognition of music therapy in Ghana. One educationist remarked:

Music therapy should be introduced in hospitals and schools because it can help improve emotional well-being and mental health, especially among young people.

A hospital administrator similarly stated:

Although music therapy is not common in Ghanaian hospitals, I believe it has the potential to complement healthcare delivery if professionals are properly trained.

However, some respondents also highlighted challenges associated with awareness and professional development. A respondent noted:

Most people in Ghana do not know that music therapy is a professional healthcare practice. Many only see music as entertainment.

These qualitative responses support the quantitative findings of the study by demonstrating that respondents generally perceive music as an important therapeutic and emotional resource. The responses further reveal growing public acceptance of music therapy despite the relatively low awareness of its professional practice within Ghanaian healthcare systems.

Data Analysis

The findings in Table 1 indicate that respondents have a strong affinity to music. About 88% of respondents stated that they often listen to music, while 87% indicated that they are selective about the type of music they consume. Furthermore, 78% reported that they associate certain genres of music with relaxation and healing, whereas 79% acknowledged intentionally using music to improve their mood and emotional well-being. The high percentages recorded in this section suggest that music forms an important aspect of the daily lives of many individuals. The findings imply that music is not merely consumed for entertainment purposes but also serves emotional and psychological functions. Respondents' selectiveness regarding music genres further indicates that different forms of music produce varying emotional and therapeutic effects on listeners.

The study further revealed that 80% of respondents believed that music contributes to shaping individual identity, while 69% agreed that music plays a role in reducing social anxiety and improving self-esteem. Additionally, 67% of respondents indicated that music contributes to pain management. The findings demonstrate that music contributes significantly to emotional development, identity formation, and psychological well-being. This suggests that music functions as a social and behavioural tool capable of influencing human thoughts, emotions, and interpersonal relationships positively.

The data further revealed that respondents generally perceive music therapy positively. About 93% of respondents believed that music therapy can improve patients' quality of life, while 86% agreed that music therapy can effectively support the treatment of physical and mental conditions. Additionally, 60% indicated that therapeutic music can reduce the need for



medication in some medical situations. The high percentages recorded indicate growing confidence in music therapy as a complementary healthcare intervention. The findings imply that respondents acknowledge the healing potential of music in reducing stress, anxiety, pain, and emotional trauma. This confirms scholarly positions that music therapy contributes positively to holistic healthcare delivery. Despite the positive perceptions regarding music therapy, the findings revealed low awareness of professional music therapy services in Ghana. Only 29% of respondents stated that they were aware of existing music therapy programmes in the country, while 71% indicated no awareness. Similarly, only 30% reported having discussed music therapy with healthcare professionals before. This finding suggests that music therapy remains relatively underdeveloped and under-recognised within Ghanaian healthcare systems. The low level of awareness may be attributed to limited professional training opportunities, inadequate public education, and insufficient institutional support for music therapy practice in Ghana.

The findings further revealed strong support for the integration of music therapy into mainstream healthcare practice. About 94% of respondents supported the inclusion of music therapy in standard healthcare delivery, while 87% believed that there is room for improvement in integrating music therapy services into healthcare systems. Furthermore, 92% indicated willingness to participate in music therapy programmes if such services were made available. These findings indicate that respondents are highly receptive to the incorporation of music therapy into healthcare delivery in Ghana. The results therefore suggest that music therapy has the potential to become an effective complementary healthcare approach capable of supporting conventional medical treatment and promoting holistic well-being.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Music and Emotional Well-being

The findings of the study revealed that respondents strongly associate music with emotional regulation, relaxation, mood improvement, and psychological well-being. A significant percentage of respondents indicated that they intentionally use music to improve their emotional state and reduce stress-related conditions. This finding confirms the widely acknowledged role of music as an emotional and psychological support mechanism within human society. Scholars such as Sacks (2006), Toader et al. (2023) and Yu et al. (2026) have argued that music possesses a unique capacity to stimulate emotions, memory, and psychological responses due to its direct influence on neurological functioning. Similarly, Levitin (2011) explains that music activates multiple areas of the brain associated with emotion, cognition, and memory processing. The present findings therefore reinforce the scientific and psychological understanding that music contributes significantly to emotional balance and mental wellness.

Within the African context, music has historically functioned not only as entertainment but also as a communal tool for emotional healing, stress relief, spiritual cleansing and social bonding (Robinson, 2015). Traditional Ghanaian societies employ music during funerals, festivals, naming ceremonies and religious rituals as a means of emotional expression and communal therapy. The findings therefore suggest continuity between indigenous African healing traditions and contemporary music therapy practices.



Therapeutic Functions of Music

The study further revealed that respondents perceive music as an important therapeutic tool capable of reducing anxiety, improving self-esteem, assisting pain management, and enhancing patients' quality of life. The overwhelming support for music therapy demonstrates increasing public recognition of the healing potential of music. This finding aligns with the work of Bruscia (2000), who describes music therapy as a systematic intervention process through which music is used to restore, maintain, and improve physical, emotional, psychological, and social functioning. Likewise, research by Edwards (2011) indicates that music therapy contributes positively to stress reduction, emotional recovery, rehabilitation, and mental health treatment.

The respondents' perception that music may reduce dependence on medication in some healthcare situations also reflects contemporary developments in complementary and alternative medicine. Recent healthcare studies (Clements-Cortés et al., 2026; Lan et al., 2026; Morris, 2025; Xu et al. 2025; Zhi et al., 2024) have increasingly recognised non-pharmacological interventions such as music therapy, meditation and mindfulness as important complementary approaches to holistic healthcare delivery. The findings therefore suggest that music therapy possesses considerable potential for supporting healthcare systems through emotional stabilisation, behavioural regulation and psychological support services.

Music Therapy and Holistic Healthcare

Another important finding of the study is the strong support for integrating music therapy into mainstream healthcare systems in Ghana. Respondents generally acknowledged the importance of holistic approaches to healthcare that address not only physical illness but also emotional and psychological well-being. The concept of holistic healthcare emphasises the treatment of the whole person rather than merely addressing physical symptoms. According to Schramme (2023), the World Health Organisation's definition of health extends beyond the absence of disease and includes physical, mental and social well-being. Music therapy therefore fits appropriately within modern holistic healthcare frameworks due to its multidimensional therapeutic benefits.

Furthermore, the findings resonate with African indigenous healthcare philosophies, as indicated by Adu-Gyamfi and Anderson (2019), where healing traditionally incorporates music, dance, spirituality, storytelling, and communal participation. In many Ghanaian traditional societies, drumming, chanting, and ritual performances have historically served therapeutic and spiritual functions. The study therefore highlights the possibility of integrating indigenous African healing philosophies with contemporary music therapy approaches.

Awareness and Institutional Challenges in Ghana

Despite the positive perception of music therapy among respondents, the study revealed relatively low awareness of professional music therapy services and programmes in Ghana. Many respondents indicated limited exposure to trained music therapists or institutional music therapy services within healthcare facilities. This finding suggests that music therapy remains underdeveloped within Ghanaian healthcare and educational systems. The absence of specialised training programmes, inadequate policy support, and limited public education may account for the low awareness levels identified in the study. The situation reflects broader challenges confronting creative arts therapies within many African countries (Meyer, 2014).



Although music occupies a central position within African cultural life, its formal recognition within healthcare institutions remains limited (Martin, 2013). The findings therefore point to the need for stronger interdisciplinary collaboration among healthcare professionals, music educators, psychologists, policymakers, and universities.

Prospects for Integration into Healthcare Systems

Notwithstanding the identified challenges, the findings revealed strong public willingness to embrace music therapy as a complementary healthcare intervention. Respondents overwhelmingly supported the inclusion of music therapy within healthcare institutions and educational systems. The findings therefore present important implications for healthcare policy, music education, and professional development in Ghana. Universities and training institutions may consider developing specialised programmes in music therapy to prepare professionals capable of working within hospitals, rehabilitation centers, schools, psychiatric facilities and community healthcare systems.

Additionally, public awareness campaigns and interdisciplinary healthcare collaborations would help improve societal understanding of music therapy and facilitate its acceptance within conventional healthcare practice (Sena Moore, 2015). The study therefore positions music therapy as a promising interdisciplinary field capable of contributing significantly to healthcare delivery and national well-being in Ghana.

CONCLUSIONS

The study examined the therapeutic role of music and the prospects of integrating music therapy into healthcare delivery in Ghana. The findings revealed that music plays a significant role in emotional regulation, relaxation, pain management, social interaction and overall psychological well-being. Respondents demonstrated strong awareness of the positive influence of music on human life and largely acknowledged the therapeutic value of music in healthcare provision. The study further established that although music therapy remains relatively underdeveloped and insufficiently recognised within Ghanaian healthcare systems, there is strong public support for its integration into mainstream healthcare practice. Respondents expressed willingness to participate in music therapy programmes and supported the inclusion of music therapy within healthcare and educational institutions. The findings also revealed that limited awareness, inadequate professional training opportunities, and insufficient institutional support remain major challenges affecting the growth of music therapy in Ghana. Despite these challenges, the study confirms that music therapy possesses considerable potential as a complementary and holistic healthcare intervention capable of improving the quality of life of individuals. The paper therefore concludes that deliberate efforts should be made by healthcare institutions, educational authorities, policymakers, and the government to promote awareness, research, professional training, and policy support for music therapy in Ghana. The integration of music therapy into healthcare delivery and educational curricula would contribute significantly to holistic healthcare provision and national well-being. Finally, the study contributes to existing scholarship on music therapy and highlights the need for further empirical and interdisciplinary research into the application of music therapy within African healthcare systems.



The findings of the study suggest the need for deliberate efforts toward the promotion and integration of music therapy within Ghanaian healthcare and educational systems. Healthcare institutions should consider incorporating music therapy into mainstream healthcare delivery as a complementary approach to improving patients' emotional, psychological, and physical well-being. There is also the need for universities and tertiary institutions to introduce specialised training programmes in music therapy to produce qualified professionals capable of working in hospitals, rehabilitation centres, schools, and other healthcare settings. Furthermore, public awareness campaigns should be organised by healthcare agencies, educational institutions and cultural organisations to educate the public on the therapeutic benefits and professional relevance of music therapy. Government and policymakers should also develop supportive policies and institutional frameworks that encourage the integration of music therapy into healthcare delivery and educational curricula in Ghana. The study further recommends stronger interdisciplinary collaboration among musicians, healthcare professionals, psychologists, traditional healers, educators and researchers to promote the effective application of music therapy. Finally, further empirical and interdisciplinary studies should be conducted within African contexts to expand scholarly knowledge and support evidence-based practices in music therapy and holistic healthcare. Indeed, the study was limited by the relatively small sample size and the concentration of participants within selected communities and institutions in Ghana. The findings therefore may not fully represent the perceptions of all healthcare practitioners and citizens across the country. Future studies may employ larger samples and broader geographical coverage for deeper empirical validation.

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