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### Social support as a mediator for musical achievement

**Abstract:** This article focuses on the issue of social support received by students of music schools in the context of their musical achievements. The theoretical part of this article contains the characteristics of factors related to the musical achievements of students; the support they receive from their environment is essential for their success in the process of musical education and their subsequent artistic career; in addition to their musical abilities and traits of personality. The research part is devoted to detailed analysis of the support level received by music school students and its correlation to their level of musical achievement. Social support is analysed with a view to its structure, distinguishing the following kinds of support: emotional, evaluative, informative and instrumental received from people who are significant to the music school student and indicates the essential presence of support in the process of musical achievement.

Moreover, as part of the presentation of the study, the authors introduce their original tool for measuring social support tailored to the realities of music schools – the Scale of Social Support of the Students of Music Schools (Gluska, 2011). This tool may be applied in the work of educational psychologists and teachers in music schools.

**Key words:** social support, musical achievements

#### Introduction

The issues related to the factors determining musical achievements and their mediators constitute one of the most important research areas in the field of the psychology of music. In addition to advancing theoretical understanding of the functioning of musically gifted students, this research has an important applicative significance and increases the chances for effective teaching and educational care in the environment of music schools.

Many factors affect the success of children and musically gifted youth. These factors are largely conditioned by individual predispositions. Many authors include musical abilities (Manturzevska, 1974; Hallam, 2008), environmental and biographical factors (Manturzevska, 1974; Creech, 2009; Welch, Ockelford, 2009) and personality traits (Lehmann, Sloboda, Woody, 2007). Individual characteristics, such as interests (Sękowski, 1989), motivation (O'Neill, McPherson, 2002), the ability

to deal with stage fright (Wilson, Roland, 2002), styles of learning and practising on the instrument (Mornell, 2009), are also important. Their constellation and level determine the success of a student's musical education and subsequent career.

Research models have assumed the following determinants of musical achievement: musical capabilities, a high level of motivation and questions connected with the family and the school. Particularly important factors that influence the level of satisfaction derived from the study of music and the level of musical achievement are the impact of family and of the school environment (Gembris, Davidson, 2002), and especially the social support obtained from the student's immediate environment (North, Hargreaves, 2008). Although the literature does not provide any research relating directly to measurement of the social support received by students of music schools, there are numerous descriptions of expected and recommended parents' behaviour which assume their supportive attitude, in a broad

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sense, towards their child/student (Manturzevska, 1974; Jaślar-Walicka, 1999; Creech, 2009; Welch, Ockelford, 2009).

The research presented in this article focuses on the attempt to identify what level of social support (emotional, instrumental, informative and evaluative) is received by current music school students and to what extent social support received from various social groups influences the level of musical achievements. The test procedure also required the construction of the authors' original tool – the Scale of Social Support of the Students of Music Schools (Gluska<sup>1</sup>, 2011).

### Theoretical justification of social support issues in the context of musical education

Social support is primarily a source of understanding and a sense of security for every human being. Nowadays, it is assumed that “social support is constituted by objectively existing and available social networks, which are distinguished by the fact that by the existence of ties, social interaction and affiliation, they serve as a helpful function to individuals and groups in a difficult situation” (Sęk, Brzezińska, 2008: 780). This definition builds upon earlier attempts to define the concept of social support, whereby the authors emphasise that the support is the assistance available to individuals in difficult situations or is the result of the fact that they belong to a social network (Sęk, Cieślak, 2006; Łuszczynska, 2004). Witnessing the numerous difficult situations which music students experience in the process of musical education (see Stachowicz, 1975; Statkiewicz, 1985; Lewandowska, 2010; Gluska, 2010) inspired the authors to initiate research into the question of social support in the context of musical education.

In the literature on the psychology of music and musical pedagogy, the concept of support is frequently used, yet merely in a colloquial sense, to emphasise an important and stimulating role that parents and teachers play for the student as well as on the level of his/her artistic achievements. In the literature on this subject, both academic studies and popular literature for the general public, one can find numerous examples describing the characteristics of a supportive teacher or parent (Manturzevska, 1974; Jaślar-Walicka, 1999; Konkol, 1999; Gembris, Davidson, 2002; Creech, 2009; Hallam, 2008; Welch, Ockelford, 2009; Ossowski, Gluska, 2011).

The most valued features of a supportive family include (Sierszeńska-Leraczyk, 2011) an active interest the family shows in supporting the musical development of the child, strong attachment to work, observing regular mealtimes and the fulfilment of household chores, as well as parents' engagement in the area of their child's activity.

A single theoretical concept explaining the attitude of parental involvement in the musical education of their child, taking into account three types of social support, has been presented by W. Grolnick (after: Creech, 2009), who distinguished the following:

- behavioural support – consists in parents' contribution in shaping proper behaviour concerning playing the instrument, monitoring the child's progress in learning through participating actively in his/her practicing, helping in carrying out domestic tasks, organizing daily study and rest times; parents perform the role of a sort of a home teacher,
- cognitive/intellectual support – involves arranging a variety of opportunities that help develop musical sensitivity, such as attending concerts, listening to recordings, discussing the interpretation of particular musical performances and participating in additional extracurricular musical activities addressed both to the individual child or to the whole group,
- personal support – consists in:
  - showing understanding and strong emotional involvement;
  - developing motivation for daily practice;
  - providing assistance in setting life goals and expectations;
  - manifesting satisfaction with the child's musical activity.

The above model, interesting in a cognitive sense, is suitable for application in artistic education. Its structure, which accounts for emotional, cognitive and behavioural aspects of this question, is highly valuable. A supportive attitude of parents allows the child to feel a strong sense of security, positively affects his or her emotional well-being, creates a sense of parental love and increases personal self-esteem.

Because a child's school years begin when he or she is at the age of six or seven and lasts for, approximately, the following 17 years, he or she will be significantly influenced by other people, particularly music school teachers and above all instrument teachers as well as musically talented peers. Thus, the support provided by teachers takes into consideration the perspective of developmental psychology which indicates the scope of abilities and psychophysical conditions specific for particular age and education stages of children and students.

The most important features of a teacher who supports the student in playing an instrument include:

- the ability to reduce a student's anxiety and tension when he or she prepares for public performances,
- the ability to create a friendly atmosphere and comfort in preparing the repertoire with mock performances as a follow-up,
- the ability to provide the conditions for a student to acclimatize himself or herself to the performance site (Hallam, 2009).

The above-mentioned features of a supporting master-teacher focus particularly on the aspect of preparation for public performances, which is inextricably linked with the area of the student's artistic achievements. Moreover, the relationship between a student and his or her instrument teacher has a unique character that is the result of frequent, regular and personal contact, thus providing the student with a sense of security, trust and understanding. Supporting the student's development is one of the fundamental objectives of a good school education, and results in the life-long well-

being of the graduate formed on the basis of school, social and civic competences (Gołębnik, 2008).

Peers constitute another important social group that can be a source of support for the music school student. A special role is played by the peer group in the period of adolescence when, among other functions, it replaces the family, stabilises identity and personality, shapes self-esteem and determines standards of behaviour and social competence (Obuchowska, 2000).

For individuals receiving professional musical education, their peer group forms a supporting environment naturally, as all the students of music schools experience similar difficulties related to their preparation for music lessons, programmes, concerts and competition auditions. Unfortunately, a class in a music school does not always facilitate the formation of sincere and close friendships. Fellow classmates may demonstrate behaviours expressing rivalry. However, the results of selected studies show that higher levels of achievement in the field of music are fostered by the supporting and motivating impact of the peer environment, not by competition (Austin, in: Lehmann, Sloboda, Woody, 2007). In addition, it was noted that closer friendships and stronger support are established among people who play different instruments because this reduces the sense of competition (Crozier, 2009).

Social support is a strong mediator of musical achievement. The analysis of the literature mentioned above was the source of inspiration for an attempt to assess the level of support that is actually experienced by music school children and students in Poland. This research applies the concept of social support formulated by Helena Sęk (2003), a renowned Polish researcher. The concept includes, among others, the following notions:

- emotional support – consists in developing conditions that allow a child to feel support demonstrated by one's presence and concern, a sense of real security, relief in times of stress and a sense of belonging. It also means teaching not only with encouragement, but also ensuring understanding and expressing willingness to provide help (Kmieciak-Baran 2000; Becelewska, 2005; Sęk, Cieślak, 2006);
- informative support (cognitive) – consists in an exchange of information, providing advice and tips that facilitate better understanding of the situation, taking into account the student's life situation and the problem itself as well as feedback concerning the efficiency of undertaking remedial measures and sharing one's own experience (Pommersbach, 1988; Sęk, Cieślak, 2006);
- instrumental support – consists in providing constructive advice with respect to further steps the person receiving support should take; in several cases the instrumental support is defined (in: Sęk, Cieślak, 2006) as a set of detailed instructions to follow in order to defeat the crisis;
- evaluative support – consists in informing the person who receives the support that he or she has great abilities and capabilities, is valued for particular skills or traits, that

his or her competences are important to a particular person or for a particular group of persons (House, after: Jaworska-Obój, Skuza, 1976; Kmieciak-Baran, 1995, 2000).

Interaction is the fundamental condition for the provision of support. It is therefore advisable to find persons who might be a potential source of support. Relations not only with parents and teachers are of particular value in musical education, but also with siblings. Instrument teachers also deserve special recognition. Noteworthy as well is the potential for support from the peers who attend the same school.

### Issues related to assessment and musical achievements

Achievements, either school-related or artistic, are closely related to evaluating the effects of teaching and educational interactions (Niemierko, 2007). In view of the multiplicity of elements constituting the student's educational success, assessing school-related achievements is consistently one of the most widely discussed topics in contemporary didactics and the psychology of education. The rigid criteria of school marks do not always reflect the actual level of students' knowledge and skills. In turn, school grades received in the process of education represent the main interpretation of the students' objective educational achievements.

The issue of school marks is an interesting one because achievement in music is difficult to measure, and its reception and evaluation are particularly encumbered with subjective feelings (Jordan-Szymańska, 1990; Manturzevska, 2006).

Over the last 70 years, teachers of music and specialists in musical instrument playing methodology, as well as artists/musicians taking on the role of jury members during competitions, have developed various criteria to help assess musical performances. These criteria relate to areas such as the playing apparatus, technical efficiency, compliance with the musical text, intonation, sound culture, musicality, phrasing, style of performance, music memory and mental strength, among others.

Nowadays, artistic education in Poland has a unified system of assessment in the subject of music, the provisions of which are contained in the *Regulation of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage of 8 April 2008 on the conditions and methods of evaluation, classification and promotion of pupils and conducting tests and examinations in public schools and artistic institutions*. This regulation governs the grading scale and their point values<sup>1</sup>. It provides a basis for constructing detailed criteria for assessment by school subject committees, which take into account the peculiarity of music classes and the variety of requirements that arise from different instrumental specialties. Attainment of a specific grade automatically reveals a student's level of achievement in the field of a given subject.

Unfortunately, despite the existence of numerous

<sup>1</sup> Assessment of artistic subjects is associated with the assignment of point values to a mark (grade), which extend on a scale from 0 to 25 points, where the range from 0 to 10 points is a failing grade, 11–12 points indicate an passing grade, 13–15 points mean a satisfactory grade, 16–20 points indicate a good grade, 21–24 points mean a very good grade and 25 points indicate an excellent grade.

detailed criteria, assessing music is not a simple task and remains biased. This is due to various psychological determinants that exist in the process of listening and evaluating music performances (Jordan-Szymańska, 1986).

It remains uncertain whether a student's level of musical achievement should be tied solely to the grade received in the main subject (playing a particular instrument) or whether it should be tallied according to the grades received in all music subjects (Manturzevska, 2006). This uncertainty exists because there are many intra-individual differences in terms of musical talent among students of music schools with a comparable level of musical talent. There are students who thrive in the areas of instrumental performance but who do not have the ability and motivation to learn the theoretical subjects of music. There are also reversed situations in which there are students who have broad theoretical and musical knowledge yet low competences in playing an instrument (Trainor, Hannon, 2013). Individual cases of this kind require different criteria for evaluating and categorizing students' achievements. School marks should necessarily support the motivation to learn.

In summarising the theoretical considerations on the issue of music school students' artistic achievements, it is worth noting that success in the field of artistic performance fully depends on the various properties and predispositions of an individual, personal traits, motivation to succeed and receiving support from the family and school.

### Objective of the study and the research hypothesis

The main objective of this research is to understand the relationship between the level of social support received by music school students from their families, siblings, instrument teachers, other teachers and peers from the music school and the level of their musical achievement expressed by grades and prestigious competition awards.

Detailed research questions are of complementary or disjunctive character. Questions of complementary character include:

- What is the level of musical achievement of music school students?
- What is the level of emotional, informative, instrumental and evaluative support received by music school students?
- What is the level of various types of support received by music school students?
- What is the level of support received by music school students from various social groups?

Questions of disjunctive character include:

- Is there any correlation between the level of support received from various social groups and musical achievement?

In the literature on this subject (Creech, 2009; Welch, Ockelford, 2009) it was assumed that the supportive attitudes of people in the children's environment have a positive effect on his/her motivation to learn music and fulfil obligations related to musical education thus increasing the level of artistic achievement.

The present research assumed the null hypothesis indicating the lack of correlation between social support received by music school students and the level of artistic achievement.

### Characteristics of research tools

#### The Scale of Social Support of the Students of Music Schools by A.A. Gluska-Nogaj

To examine social support, the Scale of Social Support of the Students of Music Schools was constructed (Gluska, 2011), which takes into account the specificity of learning in music schools. A model for the construction of this scale was the Social Support Scale by Krystyna Kmiecik-Baran (2000). Its theoretical basis was derived from the model of social support by Helena Sęk (2008) and House (after: Jaworska-Obój, Skuza, 1986).

The scale is based on four dimensions of social support (Sęk, 2008; Jaworska-Obój, Skuza, 1986; Kmiecik-Baran, 2000). Owing to such an approach the results of present research can be compared with the results previously discussed by other authors. The present study attempts to show an empirical sense to four kinds of support:

- emotional support – transferring positive emotions, supporting, reflecting an understanding of the situation and calming emotions so that the student senses that there are people who understand how he or she may feel during public performances and who are aware of their fatigue but that also happiness may be evoked by dealing with music. Sample statements from the questionnaire concerning emotional support are as follows:

- *They understand what duties are imposed on me in the music school*

- *They understand that examinations and performances are important but stressful events for me;*

- instrumental support – providing specific instruction on further proceedings; this may be a kind of material assistance, for example, sharing sheet music and recordings with the student or assisting in the process of selecting an instrument:

- *They offer me interesting recordings to listen to*

- *They help me in acquiring information regarding scholarships, courses and competitions;*

- informative support – providing specific information, advice and tips to foster a better understanding of the situation, such as detailed discussion of issues requiring improvement and modelling the student's performance competence in the area of playing the instrument:

- *They provide me with valuable advice which helps me when I practice or perform in the competitions*

- *They suggest how to avoid failure in concerts and in everyday practice;*

- evaluative support – imparting an understanding to the supported person that they have great potential, abilities and competence; that they are prized for certain skills or qualities and that they are important to others – for example,

by assigning responsible parts in a band or highlighting the contribution of the student's individual work in the preparation of pieces of music:

- *They entrust me with responsible functions and tasks to perform*

- *They appreciate my engagement in practicing and playing my instrument.*

After preliminary evaluation of the significance of items with the use of comparative judgement, a pilot study was performed on the group of 60 students of high music schools and in the selection of items with respect to their discrimination significance 16 statements emerged (from among 36), 4 in each scale corresponding to the kind of social support (see Gluska, 2011). Respondents provided answers using the Likert scale, where particular figures denote the following sentences: (4) – strongly agree; (3) – rather agree; (2) – rather disagree; (1) – strongly disagree; (0) – not applicable.

Based on the literature on this subject and data from observations, five social groups constituting sources of support were delineated. These people/groups include: parents, siblings, the the instrument teacher (main subject teacher), the remaining teachers, and peers from the music school (Gluska, 2011).

The reliability of the scale was calculated by taking into account both the overall score and the detailed results of each type of support received from each source of support. Cronbach's alpha for the overall result was 0.95 and, for the individual subscales, the reliability ranged from 0.70 to 0.90 (Gluska, 2011).

The inner relevance of the tool was estimated on the basis of the correlation matrix of each test subscale with the overall result. The results of the correlation for the four types of support ranged from 0.79 to 0.88, and the correlation results, taking into account the five sources of social support, ranged from 0.72 to 0.80 (Gluska, 2011).

In addition, calculations were made which verified the criterion relevance based on the correlation of the four types of social support of this scale with the same four types of social support included in the Social Support Scale by Kmiecik-Baran (2000)<sup>2</sup>. The overall result of correlation was 0.70, and the results of the correlation between individual scales ranged from 0.47 to 0.88 (Gluska, 2011).

### **The procedure for measuring the level of musical achievement**

The grade for the main subject in the student's last exam was analysed together with the information about the student from the instrument teacher or from the instrumental section supervisors in addition to an analysis of possible awards, laurels and musical achievements outside of school. This formed the basis for the assignment of the student (by the author of the research and selected teachers from schools where the research was conducted) to a group of people with high, average or low levels of musical achievement.

The group demonstrating high musical achievement consists of students who earned at least 22 points for their achievements in the category of main instrument (this corresponds to grade A), have a good reputation confirmed by the instrument teacher or instrumental section supervisor concerning their individual musical development and were awarded with various honourable mentions and diplomas certifying their participation in competitions and auditions. The group demonstrating average musical achievements comprises students who received grade B in the category of the main instrument (16 to 20 points) and the opinion of the instrument teacher or the supervisor of the section confirmed their average level of achievement with regard to their performance skills. The group demonstrating the low level of achievement included students who earned 15 points or less in the category of their main instrument, which is equivalent to grade C or less, and who, according to the teachers, demonstrate a low level of musical achievement. In statistical analysis, students with the grade equal to 21 points were not taken into consideration since in the opinion of numerous teachers, it was difficult to determine whether these students have high or average musical achievements.

Students completed the personal questionnaire, which contained socio-demographic data such as the level of education (lower secondary school or high school), type of school (OSM – General Education Music School or PSM – State Music School), chosen instrumental speciality (string, keyboard or wind instruments), and gender.

### **The research method and characteristics of the subjects**

The study was conducted from January to March of 2011 among music students from Polish lower secondary schools and music high schools in Bydgoszcz, Toruń, Gdańsk-Wrzeszcz, Szczecinek, Słupsk, Gorzów Wielkopolski, Kraków, Łódź and Grudziądz. All tests were carried out in group form, in the presence of the author of the study, with the assistance of people to support supervision of the independent execution of tasks by the students.

Respondents were asked to fill out a sheet with the Scale of Social Support of the Students of Music Schools, and a Personal Questionnaire (containing basic socio-demographic data). The research took place in appropriately prepared classrooms. For the researcher, all the research participants were anonymous but, in reality, the students were encoded in such a way that their instrument teachers or instrumental section supervisors could express their assessments of the achievements of individual students filling out a sheet of the Student Achievement Questionnaire.

The sample consisted of 317 music school students aged 14 to 20 years, representing three instrumental specialties. The selection of the test sample was intentional. Among the students surveyed, girls represented 65% of the respondents (207 individuals) and boys 35% (110 individuals); the division into students from lower

<sup>2</sup> This tool was selected as an external criterion because it takes into account the same types of support as the authors' tool, which are emotional, instrumental, informative and evaluative support. The verification of criterion relevance, taking into account the sources of support, was not included because the selection of people that could be a potential source of support for the music school student is unique due to the nature of this type of school.

secondary school and high school was even, as was the division of students into instrument specialties (string, key, wind instruments). In addition, the socio-demographic variable – having siblings – was monitored (256 individuals [or 80%] had siblings, of which 41% [or 107 individuals] declared that their siblings had studied at music school or still studied at the time of the survey).

### Research results

STATISTICA software was applied to analyse the statistical data. An analysis of the normal distribution proved the necessity of applying non-parametric tests. Answers to complementary questions were received on the basis of the analysis of the results with the use of basic statistical descriptions, while the answers to disjunctive questions were obtained on the basis of a Kruskal-Wallis test.

#### The level of achievement of music school students

Music schools are popularly recognised as educational institutions where the children who study there demonstrate a higher level of abilities, capabilities and competences in the scope of music. However in actual practice, considerable differences are present among these talented persons as to the level of their artistic and performance achievement.

To obtain an answer to the research question: *What is the level of musical achievement of music school students?* it seems necessary to analyse the information received from instrument teachers and supervisors of instrumental sections concerning the level of musical achievements of the subject students. Their answers indicated that 33% of students ( $n=106$ ) belong to the group demonstrating high level of musical achievement, 59% of students ( $n=156$ ) belong to the group demonstrating average level of musical achievement and 17% of students ( $n=55$ ) belong to the group of low level of achievement.

An analysis of the above-mentioned results reveals that the dominant group in music schools consists of students who demonstrate an average level of achievement. The second largest group of subjects include students exhibit high level of musical achievement. The least numerous group consists of students displaying a low level of musical achievement.

Moreover, the above question can be answered by taking into account the system of classification by points for the instrument. Analysis of basic descriptive statistics reveals that the mean value result indicates grade B ( $M=19.74$ ;  $SD=2.87$ ). The coefficient of variation shows that the group of students in music schools is homogenous ( $V=14.53$ ), but at the upper limit of normal, with diversity at the limit. The dominant value ( $Mo=20$ ) indicates that grade B, equalling 20 points was the most frequent grade received by students.

Comparing the results of the research sample to the population of music school students in Poland one can relate to the results of the confidence interval. With a 5% probability of error, it can be stated that the mean results of

the population of music school students within the scope of the points earned by the students of music schools for playing the instrument range from 19.42 to 20.01 points (on scale from 0 to 25), which equals grade B, in the upper limit of normal.

On account of the fact that norms have not been designed to date, the subjects' answers on the Likert scale were transcoded, with respect to four categories, where the result ranging between 1.0-1.5 means the lack of social support; the result 1.51-2.75 means weak support of social support and the result 3.51-4.0 means very good level of received support. The analysis of the basic statistical data allows us to answer the research question: *What is the level of emotional, instrumental, informative, evaluative support and the general level of social support received by music school students?*

Students of music schools declared a good level of received emotional support ( $M=2.99$ ;  $SD=0.42$ ); while evaluative support ( $M=2.49$ ;  $SD=0.44$ ) and instrument support ( $M=2.35$ ;  $SD=0.45$ ) they reported on a low level. A significance of differences test between mean values (significance level  $p<0.001$ ) and an analysis of the skewedness of the distribution [which was far more left-skewed in the case of emotional (-0.46) and evaluative (-0.33) support than in the case of other types of support, namely informative (0.06) and instrumental (-0.01)], confirm that there are statistically significant differences between both pairs of tests.

However the coefficient of variation indicates slight differences within the subject group with regard to received support. The general result, for all kinds of support ( $V=14.71$ ) indicates homogeneity of the subject group in regard to the variable; yet within the upper limit of normal. The greatest variation is noticeable with respect to instrumental support ( $V=19.78$ ) and informative support ( $V=18.56$ ). It can be stated that the students receive the level of social support at the similar level, while the difference is noticeable with respect those kinds of support which directly relate to undertaking musical activities.

With a 5% probability of error, it can be stated that the mean results of the population of music school students is characterised by receiving a strong level of emotional (2.95; 3.04) and evaluative (2.79; 2.89) support and a low level of instrumental (2.21; 2.31) and informative (2.34; 2.44) support.

#### The level of support within each type of support that music school students receive from different social groups

An analysis of statistical data concerning social support received from parents, siblings, instrument teachers, remaining teachers and peers from music school allows the next research question to be answered: *What is the level of support within each type of support that music school students receive from different social groups?*

The most significant level of social support students receive from instrument teachers ( $M=3.29$ ;  $SD=0.50$ ) and parents ( $M=3.08$ ;  $SD=0.59$ ). They also receive support from

their music school peers ( $M=2.77$ ;  $SD=0.56$ ). In contrast, the support from siblings ( $M=2.56$ ;  $SD=0.67$ ) and remaining teachers ( $M=2.47$ ;  $SD=0.59$ ) is received at the lower level.

With a 5% probability of error, it can be stated that the population of music school students is characterised by a good level of social support from teachers of the main subject (3.29; 3.24), parents (3.02; 3.15) and peers (2.72; 2.81). The support from the other social groups remains at the average level (siblings 2.47; 2.64), (other teachers 2.41; 2.54).

### The level of various kinds of social support received from various social groups.

Another analysis characterizing the present test will allow an answer the question *what level of emotional, informative, instrumental and evaluative support music school students receive from various social groups?* Due to the very large number of variations only the most significant results are presented.

An analysis of the means and coefficient of variation and skewedness of distribution allows one to notice characteristic differences in receiving various kinds of social support from parents, siblings, teachers and peers. Music school students indicated that the most valued informative support they receive comes from their instrument teachers ( $M=3.57$ ;  $SD=0.52$ ;  $V=14.77$ ; skewedness  $-1.51$ ). They receive almost equally strong emotional support from instrument teachers ( $M=3.50$ ;  $SD=0.55$ ;  $V=15.73$ ; skewedness  $-1.38$ ) and a good level of emotional support from their parents ( $M=3.47$ ;  $SD=0.55$ ;

$V=15.93$ ; skewedness  $-1.41$ ) and peers from the music school ( $M=3.29$ ;  $SD=0.63$ ;  $V=19.34$ ; skewedness  $-1.28$ ). A significant variation of answers occurs in the case of peers' answers.

Parents, instrument teachers and peers from music school provide significantly stronger support than siblings and remaining teachers (as proved by the tests of significance of difference between means which equals  $p<0.001$ ).

### Confirmation of the hypothesis of correlation between social support and musical achievements.

Now that we have discussed the basic statistical data, it is time to verify the hypothesis that *the students demonstrating varied musical achievements differ as to the level of social support they receive from different social groups*. Achievements are often the essence of music education. They indicate the level of music ability and competence of a music school student in a direct way. However, they are dependent on many factors – not only musical ones – but also on individual and environmental factors. Therefore, in this study, an attempt has been undertaken to indicate how the social support received by the students coincides with a low, average or high level of artistic achievements.

Due to the very large number of possible combinations between the four dimensions of social support and five social groups, Table 1 presents results only those that are statistically significant.

Table 1: Social support versus the level of musical achievement

SOCIAL SUPPORT	Kruskal-Wallis test value (H)	Level of significance (P)	Mediana test Chi square	df	value (p) for multiple comparisons (bilateral) ACHIEVEMENTS		
					LOW	AVERAGE	HIGH
SOCIAL SUPPORT FROM INSTRUMENTAL TEACHER	19,92	<0,0001	12,54	2	L	0,02	0,00
					A	0,02	0,27
					H	0,01	0,27
EVALUATIVE SUPPORT FROM OTHERS TEACHERS	6,92	0,03	5,15	2	L	0,03	0,03
					A	0,03	1,00
					H	0,03	1,00

An analysis of data reveals that the music school students demonstrating various levels of musical achievements differ significantly among themselves with respect to the range of all kinds of social support received from instrument teachers. A multiple comparison analysis indicates that the social support received from instrument teachers is significantly lower for students demonstrating a low level of musical achievement in comparison with students characterized by average or high level of achievement. An analysis of mean values reveals that the higher the level of achievements the higher the level of the support declared by students (low achievements  $M=3.05$ ; average achievements  $M=3.35$ ; high achievements  $M=3.4$ ).

Moreover, the music school students demonstrating a varied level of musical achievement differ significantly with respect to the range of evaluation support from other teachers. Students demonstrating low musical achievement receive significantly less evaluative support from the other teachers than the students characterised by average and high level of musical achievement. An analysis of mean values shows that the higher the level of achievement, the higher the level of evaluation support from the other teachers as declared by the students (low level of achievements  $M=2.25$ ; average level of achievements  $M=2.7$ ; high level of achievements  $M=2.55$ ).

The analyses presented partly confirm the hypothesis which assumes that *students demonstrating varied level of musical achievements differ with respect to the social support received from various social groups*. Students demonstrating different level of musical achievement differ as to the level of social support received from different social groups. This refers to the level of support received from instrument teachers and evaluation support received from other teachers. The higher the level of achievement, the higher the level of support, although there are significant differences between students presenting low level of achievement and the group of students demonstrating average and high level of musical achievement.

### Interpretation of results

Social support is a variable for which the results are a pioneering dimension in research in the area of music psychology in Polish literature. The analysis measuring the levels of particular types of support received by music school students indicates that students receive higher levels of emotional support followed by evaluative support, while the level of informative and instrumental support is received at a considerably lower level.

In analysing the level of support received from different social groups, it can be seen that music school students receive the most support from their instrument teachers and parents. They receive slightly less support from their music school peers and from their siblings, and by far the least support is received from their other teachers. These data confirm the crucial role of the supportive attitude of the family in the process of development and education of children and young people (Dołęga, 2002).

The vast majority of students stressed that their main subject teacher is the best source for all professional information. This is an extremely important finding, which should be disseminated widely among music school teachers. Their attitude may significantly determine the approach to students and their motivation for achievement. Informative support as well as informative and evaluation support considerably influence the wellbeing of young people and future artists (Hallam, 2009).

Moreover, the level of musical achievement significantly differs among students according to the level of social support they receive. The strongest variation is seen in all types of support received from instrument teachers. The higher the level of achievement of music school students, the higher the level of social support from instrument teachers. Instrument teachers with whom students have frequent, regular and personal contact are perceived by music school students as those who provide them with by far the most support. This support includes both showing understanding and providing specific instruction and professional help. The results appear to be consistent with the literature on this subject, which commonly advocates the importance of a supportive attitude of instrument teachers to ensure the successful education of the child in music school (Jaślar-Walicka, 1999; Hallam, 2009; Creech, 2009).

Students with low levels of achievement declare a much lower level of evaluative support received from teachers other than their instrument teachers compared to students with average and high levels of musical achievement. This may be associated with a sense of low self-esteem, which stems from the belief that studying at music school obliges them to greater achievement in terms of musical performance. On the other hand, teachers, being aware of the lack of musical achievement, may underestimate other competences of these students and thus show them less evaluative support in the other areas of education.

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