

STUDENTS' OPINIONS ON THE EFFECTS OF LISTENING ACTIVITIES IN MUSIC HISTORY COURSE

(Research article)

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the effects of music listening activities conducted within music history courses in institutions that provide professional music education on students' academic achievement. Within the scope of the research, the effects of these listening activities on students' listening habits, interpretation skills, and performance in other courses were investigated. In this study, the general survey model, one of the quantitative research methods, was employed, and data were collected from undergraduate students receiving professional music education through a questionnaire form. The data were analyzed and interpreted using descriptive statistical methods. The findings of the study indicate that music listening activities significantly contribute to students' general musical taste, daily music-listening habits, aesthetic perspectives, and motivation to discover new works. A large proportion of the students reported that the works they listened to within the course had a positive effect on their other classes. Positive effects of music listening activities carried out in music history courses were observed on students' performances in choir, orchestra, form analysis, ear training, harmony, and individual instrument lessons. In this regard, it is recommended that music education programs be enriched to support students' academic achievement and that students be provided with more diverse music listening experiences. Future research should examine the long-term effects of these activities and their reflections on different student groups in greater detail.

Keywords: Music history, music, listening activities, academic success

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1. Introduction

Music history courses play a vital role for students receiving professional music education. These courses not only introduce students to past musical developments and works but also help them understand the fundamental elements that shape today's musical world. Primarily, learning music history provides students with a broader perspective. Knowledge of past musical movements, composers, and works nurtures students' creativity and offers valuable sources of inspiration. Furthermore, studying musical understanding across different eras and cultures broadens students' musical vision and encourages them to think more deeply about musical aesthetics.

In the curricula of institutions offering professional music education, the music history course is typically included within the first four semesters of the eight-semester undergraduate program. As one of the core theoretical courses in professional music education, the music history course covers the development and transformation of music as a communicative art from ancient times to the present, the structural evolution of musical instruments, and the stylistic reflections of these processes on musical practice. Çevik (2009) emphasizes that music history, while encompassing a significant portion of humanity's cultural history, also represents the evolutionary chain of musical development throughout time. Understanding and internalizing these processes and transformations are crucial for students to enhance their interpretative and analytical abilities throughout their educational journey.

According to the Ministry of National Education (MEB, 2004), music history courses aim to equip students with competencies such as recognizing the cultural values and traditions underlying the music they perform and study, analyzing the works they play, distinguishing between instruments, identifying composers and musical eras, and performing works according to their stylistic characteristics. Undoubtedly, for a student in professional music education to be considered competent, they must possess a sound understanding of the historical evolution of music, the influence of social and political events on musical development, and the stylistic and performance characteristics of musical periods, as well as the ability to identify a piece's era, form, and composer. Although studies indicate that both students and instructors acknowledge the importance of this course, data suggest that its educational efficiency remains limited, often due to the assignment of non-specialist instructors, restricted use of learning materials, and teaching methods that fail to address diverse learner needs.

As Karagöz (2008) notes, while the chronological structure of music history courses is generally fixed, the teaching methods employed by instructors vary considerably. Similar to other history-based courses, music history is often taught through teacher-centered, lecture-based approaches. Given the subject's information-heavy content, such methods frequently result in short-term memorization rather than meaningful and lasting learning. Consequently, the course tends to achieve only the lowest cognitive objectives (knowledge level), without enabling students to reach understanding, application, or analytical levels (Saygı & Bilen,

2016). Students, being passive participants in this approach, may develop negative attitudes toward the subject. Achieving the desired quality in music history education requires diversified learning environments and methods (Uçaner & Şentürk, 2013). Gürgen and Öztopalan (2015) found that concept mapping techniques, which actively engage students in the learning process, had positive effects on learning outcomes. Similarly, Döger (2021) reported that the use of smart boards increased students' motivation and interest in music history, making the class more enjoyable and facilitating better comprehension through visual and interactive learning. Additionally, Karagöz (2008) highlighted the positive effects of integrating visual and auditory materials, which make students more active participants during lessons.

Music, as an art form, contributes significantly to human development and plays a key role in reinforcing experiential learning (Yapalı, Çakır İlhan & Sever, 2025). Music listening activities serve as an effective means of enhancing students' focus and engagement in the classroom. Lavignac (1939) suggested that exposing students to musical works broadens their intellectual horizons, stimulates their motivation to study, and, by improving their listening skills, helps them better understand musical dynamics through imitation of works and virtuosos. In this context, music listening activities can be used as a pedagogical tool; however, it is equally important to cultivate students' listening skills. Listening habits can be classified as active and passive listening. In passive listening, music functions merely as a background element, with little or no focused attention (Özdemir & Can, 2019). Copland (2009) defined passive listening as the most basic form of listening, aimed primarily at pleasure rather than learning or comprehension, offering no real contribution to musical development. Conversely, active listening places music at the center of attention. During active listening, the listener must focus entirely on the music without distractions. Martinez (2015) emphasized that repeated listening to specific elements or concepts within music can improve listening habits, allowing for deeper musical analysis and critical evaluation. Although the importance of quality listening in music education is often emphasized, research indicates that it is not sufficiently prioritized in practice (Tekeli, 2013). Therefore, music listening activities should be regarded as an essential and inseparable component of music education. Incorporating active listening exercises and opportunities to develop aesthetic awareness within music history lessons is crucial. The present study aims to explore the extent to which music listening activities in music history courses affect students' academic achievement in relation to various variables. The main research question is formulated as follows: "What are the students' views on the effects of listening activities in music history courses?"

The aim of this study is to examine the effects of music listening activities conducted within the scope of music history courses included in the existing curriculum of institutions providing professional music education on students' academic achievement. In line with this aim, the following research questions were formulated:

- What are the effects of music listening activities on students' listening habits?

- What are the effects of music listening activities on students' interpretation skills?
- What are the effects of music listening activities on students' performance in other field-related courses?

2. Method

2.1. Research design

This study aimed to describe the contribution of in-class music listening activities to the academic achievement of undergraduate students receiving professional music education. The general survey model, one of the quantitative research methods, was employed in the study. "Survey models are research approaches that aim to describe a situation that existed in the past or still exists as it is. The event, individual, or object subject to the research is defined within its own conditions and as it exists. No effort is made to change or influence them in any way" (Karasar, 2006). In the study, students were expected to respond to and explain the questionnaire items prepared by the researchers.

2.2. Participants

The study group consisted of 62 undergraduate students enrolled in the professional music education programs at Sivas Cumhuriyet University and Karabuk University, all of whom had completed the Music History course during the 3rd and 4th semesters with successful achievement.

2.3. Data Collection

In this study, a questionnaire form prepared by the researchers was used as the data collection tool to determine the contribution of in-class music listening activities to the academic achievement of undergraduate students enrolled in professional music education programs. Consisting of clearly formulated items that participants could easily understand and response options appropriately selected to accurately capture the intended data, the questionnaire is a frequently preferred method for collecting data from large sample groups due to its efficiency in terms of time and cost (Özüsağlam, Atalay & Toprak, 2009). The questionnaire form, developed by the researchers in consultation with experts, included 20 items designed to identify the effects of music listening activities within the scope of the Music History course on students' listening habits, interpretation skills, and performance in other field-related courses.

2.4. Data Analysis

In this study, a questionnaire form prepared by the researchers was used as the data collection tool to determine the contribution of in-class music listening activities to the academic achievement of undergraduate students enrolled in professional music education programs. With expert opinions obtained during the development process, the questionnaire

included 20 items designed to identify the effects of music listening activities within the Music History course on students' listening habits, interpretation skills, and performance in other subject-area courses.

3. Findings

This section includes the data gathered through the data collection tool used in the study.

3.1. Findings on the Effects of Music Listening Activities on Students' Listening Habits Effects of the Works Listened to Within the Scope of the Course on Students' General Music Preferences

Table 1. Effects of the Works Listened to Within the Scope of the Course on Students' General Music Preferences

	f	%
Not at all	3	4,8
Little	3	4,8
Partly	12	19,4
Much	22	35,5
Very Much	22	35,5
Total	62	100

As shown in Table 1, in response to the question "To what extent do you think the musical works listened to during this course have influenced your overall musical appreciation?", 4.8% (f=3) of the students answered not at all, 4.8% (f=3) answered a little, 19.4% (f=12) answered partly, 35.5% (f=22) answered much, and 35.5% (f=22) answered very much. The findings indicate that a large majority of students (71%) believe that the music listening activities conducted as part of the music history course had a high level of influence on their general musical appreciation. This suggests that the musical works presented during the course contributed to broadening students' musical perception, enhancing their aesthetic sensitivity toward different styles and periods, and enriching their overall musical culture.

Table 2. The Effect of the Musical Works Presented in the Course on Students' Daily Music Listening Habits

	f	%
Not at all	2	3,2
Little	9	14,5
Partly	22	35,5
Much	15	24,2
Very Much	14	22,6
Total	62	100

As shown in Table 2, in response to the question "To what extent do you think the musical works listened to during this course have contributed to your daily music listening habits?",

3.2% (f=2) of the students answered not at all, 14.5% (f=9) a little, 35.5% (f=22) partly, 24.2% (f=15) much, and 22.6% (f=14) very much. A considerable portion of the students (35.5%) stated that these activities partly influenced their listening habits, indicating that this group gained a certain level of awareness regarding their listening behaviors; however, this awareness has not yet fully developed into a consistent and established habit.

Table 3. The Effect of the Musical Works Presented in the Course on Students' Aesthetic Perspectives

	f	%
Not at all	1	1,6
Little	3	4,8
Partly	13	21
Much	23	37,1
Very Much	22	35,5
Total	62	100

As shown in Table 3, in response to the question “To what extent do you think the musical works listened to during this course have provided you with an aesthetic perspective?”, 1.6% (f=1) of the students answered not at all, 4.8% (f=3) a little, 21% (f=13) partly, 37.1% (f=23) much, and 35.5% (f=22) very much. The data indicate that a large majority of students (72.6%) believe that the works presented during the course greatly contributed to developing their aesthetic perspective. The high proportion of “much” and “very much” responses suggests that the listening activities enhanced students' aesthetic sensitivity, deepened their artistic perception of different musical periods and styles, and positively influenced the way they evaluate music.

Table 4. The Effect of the Musical Works Presented in the Course on Students' Discovery of New Repertoire

	f	%
Not at all	1	1,6
Little	2	3,2
Partly	12	19,4
Much	21	33,9
Very Much	26	41,9
Total	62	100

As shown in Table 4, in response to the question “To what extent do you think the musical works listened to during this course have influenced your desire to discover new musical works?”, 1.6% (f=1) of the students answered not at all, 3.2% (f=2) a little, 19.4% (f=12) partly, 33.9% (f=21) much, and 41.9% (f=26) very much. Regarding the question “To what extent did you explore other works by the composer based on a piece from a particular period that you liked among the works listened to during this course?”, 4.8% (f=3) of the students responded not at all, 14.5% (f=9) a little, 32.3% (f=20) partly, 30.6% (f=19) much, and 17.7% (f=11) very much. In response to the question “To what extent did you explore similar works from the same period as the piece you liked among the works listened to during this course?”,

9.7% (f=6) of the students answered not at all, 8.1% (f=5) a little, 33.9% (f=21) partly, 30.6% (f=19) much, and 17.7% (f=11) very much. The findings indicate that the listening activities conducted within the music history course have not only contributed to students' in-class academic performance but have also strongly enhanced their musical curiosity, tendency to explore, and habit of discovering new repertoire.

Table 5. The Effect of In-Class Listening Activities on Students' Classical Music Listening Habits

	f	%
Not at all	2	3,2
Little	3	4,8
Partly	17	27,4
Much	22	35,5
Very Much	18	29
Total	62	100

As shown in Table 5, in response to the question "To what extent did the listening activities conducted within this course affect your classical music listening habits?", 3.2% (f=2) of the students answered not at all, 4.8% (f=3) a little, 27.4% (f=17) partly, 35.5% (f=22) much, and 29% (f=18) very much. The findings indicate that a large majority of students (64.5%) believe that the listening activities conducted as part of the course had a high level of influence on their classical music listening habits. The fact that the combined proportion of much and very much responses reach a high percentage (64.5%) suggests that the in-class listening activities increased students' interest in classical music, enhanced the frequency with which they listen to this genre, and helped them develop a more conscious and informed listener profile.

3.2. Findings on the Effects of Music Listening Activities on Students' Interpretation Skills

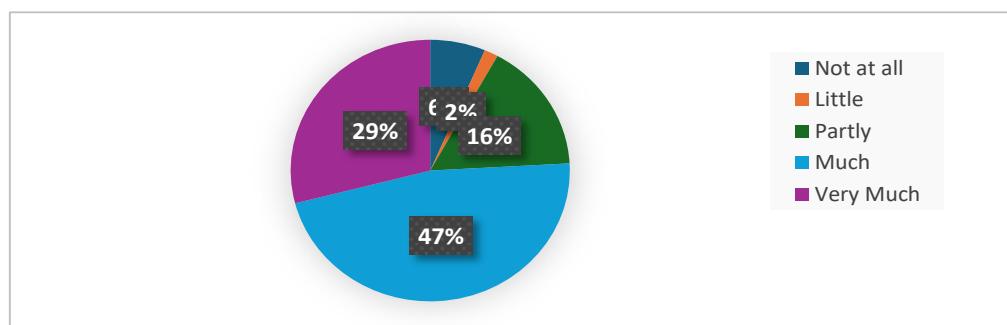


Figure 1. The Effect of In-Class Listening Activities on Students' Interpretation Activities

As shown in Figure 1, in response to the question "To what extent do you think the works you listened to in this course influenced your interpretation activities?", 6.4% (f=4) of the 62 students answered not at all, 1.6% (f=1) a little, 16.1% (f=10) partly, 46.8% (f=28) much, and 29% (f=18) very much. For the question "To what extent did the works you listened to in this

course help you express period-specific stylistic differences more comfortably in your interpretation activities?", 4.8% (f=3) of the 62 students answered not at all, 3.2% (f=2) a little, 19.4% (f=12) partly, 46.8% (f=29) much, and 25.8% (f=16) very much. In response to the question "To what extent did the works you listened to in this course affect your perception of musicality in your interpretation activities?", 4.8% (f=3) of the 62 students stated not at all, 3.2% (f=2) a little, 17.7% (f=11) partly, 41.9% (f=26) much, and 32.3% (f=20) very much. For the question "To what extent do you think the works you listened to in this course created awareness in your interpretation activities?", 4.8% (f=3) of the 62 students responded not at all, 4.8% (f=3) a little, 17.7% (f=11) partly, 46.8% (f=29) much, and 25.8% (f=16) very much. When the findings are evaluated as a whole, it is evident that the majority of students believe that the works they listened to within the music history course had a strong and significant impact on their interpretation skills. The fact that the combined proportion of much and very much responses ranges between 67% and 75% across all questions indicates that the listening activities substantially supported students' interpretative processes.

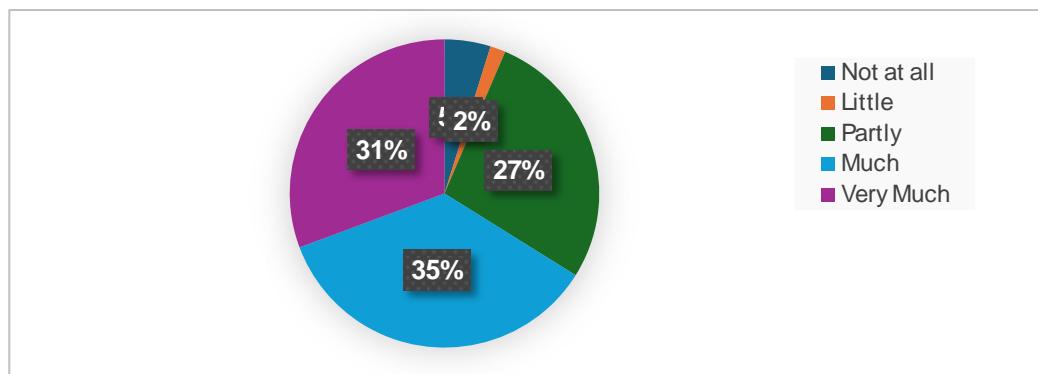


Figure 2. The Effect of In-Class Listening Activities on Students' Interpretation Activities

As shown in Figure 2, in response to the question "To what extent do you think there has been an improvement in your interpretation activities as a result of the works you listened to in this course?", 4.8% (f=3) of the 62 students answered not at all, 1.6% (f=1) a little, 27.4% (f=17) partly, 35.3% (f=22) much, and 30.6% (f=19) very much. The findings indicate that a large majority of students (65.9%) believe that the works they listened to in the music history course led to a noticeable improvement in their interpretation activities. The fact that the combined proportion of much and very much responses reaches a high level (65.9%) shows that the listening activities created a concrete and significant advancement in students' interpretative processes.

3.3. Findings on the Effects of Music Listening Activities on Students' Performance in Other Field Courses

In response to the question "To what extent do you think the works you listened to in this course affected your other courses within the program?", 4.8% (f=3) of the 62 students answered not at all, 4.8% (f=3) a little, 25.8% (f=16) partly, 37.1% (f=23) much, and 27.4% (f=17) very much. The findings indicate that a large majority of students (64.5%) believe that

the works they listened to in the music history course had a highly positive impact on their other courses within the program. The fact that the combined proportion of much and very much responses reaches a strong level of 64.5% shows that the listening activities not only contributed to theoretical knowledge but also supported students' performance in other field courses.

Table 6. The Effect of In-Class Listening Activities on Students' Performance in Other Field Courses

Class		f	%
Choir	Not at all	5	8,1
	Little	6	9,7
	Partly	19	30,6
	Much	17	27,4
	Very Much	15	24,2
	Total	62	100
Orchestra	Not at all	7	11,5
	Little	5	8,2
	Partly	15	26,4
	Much	18	29,5
	Very Much	16	26,2
	Total	61	100
Form Analysis	Not at all	6	10,2
	Little	5	8,5
	Partly	8	13,6
	Much	23	39
	Very Much	17	28,8
	Total	59	100
Ear Training/Solfeggio	Not at all	8	12,9
	Little	10	16,1
	Partly	18	29
	Much	13	21
	Very Much	13	21
	Total	62	100
Harmony	Not at all	4	6,9
	Little	9	15,5
	Partly	14	24,1
	Much	18	31
	Very Much	13	22,4
	Total	58	100
Instrument	Not at all	2	3,2
	Little	9	14,5
	Partly	11	17,7
	Much	18	29
	Very Much	22	35,5
	Total	62	100

As shown in Table 6, according to student opinions, the effects of the listening activities conducted in the music history course on their performance in various field courses are as follows: Choir course: 8.1% (f=5) not at all, 9.7% (f=6) a little, 30.6% (f=19) partly, 27.4% (f=17) much, 24.2% (f=15) very much. Orchestra course: 11.5% (f=7) not at all, 8.2% (f=5) a little, 26.4% (f=15) partly, 29.5% (f=18) much, 26.2% (f=16) very much. Form analysis course: 10.2% (f=6) not at all, 8.5% (f=5) a little, 13.6% (f=8) partly, 39% (f=23) much, 28.8% (f=17) very much. Ear training course: 12.9% (f=8) not at all, 16.1% (f=10) a little, 29% (f=18) partly, 21% (f=13) much, 21% (f=13) very much. Harmony course: 6.9% (f=4) not at all, 15.5% (f=9) a little, 24.1% (f=14) partly, 31% (f=18) much, 22.4% (f=13) very much. Individual instrument course: 3.2% (f=2) not at all, 14.5% (f=9) a little, 17.7% (f=11) partly, 29% (f=18) much, 35.5% (f=22) very much. The findings indicate that the listening activities carried out in the music history course have a broad and significant impact on students' performance across different field-specific courses. The consistently high percentages of much and very much responses in all courses reveal that these listening activities provide a direct and meaningful contribution to students' performance in applied music courses.

4. Conclusion and Discussion

The responses to the question regarding the influence of the works listened to in the course on students' general musical taste show that a substantial majority (71%) experienced a positive impact. This finding suggests that the selected repertoire meaningfully supports the development of students' musical preferences.

In terms of daily music-listening habits, 58.1% of the students indicated notable improvement, which reflects the role of course-related listening activities in enriching everyday listening practices. Similarly, 72.6% of the students reported gaining a stronger aesthetic perspective, demonstrating the contribution of music history instruction to aesthetic awareness and artistic sensitivity.

The motivation to explore new works was also strengthened, as 75.8% of the participants expressed increased interest in discovering new repertoire. Nearly half of the students (48.3%) stated that they researched additional works by composers or sought similar pieces, indicating that the course promotes musical curiosity and independent exploration.

Classical music-listening habits were positively affected as well, with 64.5% reporting noticeable improvement. This points to the course's role in cultivating informed and intentional listening habits in classical music.

Regarding interpretive abilities, the majority of students (75.4%) emphasized that listening activities enhanced their interpretation skills. Improvements were also reported in expressing stylistic characteristics (72.6%), musicality (74.2%), and interpretive awareness (72.6%), underscoring the pedagogical value of listening-based learning in performance-related

domains. Additionally, 65.9% felt that their overall interpretative development benefited from the course.

Students perceived significant positive effects on their performance in other courses within the program (64.5%), suggesting that listening activities reinforce broader academic and practical competencies. The influence extended to specific courses, including choir (51.6%), orchestra (55.7%), form analysis (67.8%), ear training (42%), harmony (53.4%), and individual instrument performance (64.5%).

Taken together, the findings reveal that listening activities implemented within the music history course provide substantial benefits across multiple areas of learning, from musical taste and listening habits to performance and theoretical understanding. These results align with previous studies highlighting the importance of listening in musical and cognitive development. The improvement in musical taste and daily listening habits corresponds with Lavignac's (1939) emphasis on listening as a means of expanding musical horizons, while the shift toward active, intentional listening echoes the distinction made by Özdemir and Can (2019). The enhancement of aesthetic sensitivity and curiosity toward new works supports Çevik's (2009) assertion that music history contributes to artistic awareness. Students' inclination to research additional repertoire is consistent with Martinez's (2015) findings on the role of repeated listening in developing analytical listening skills.

The pronounced impact on interpretive skills aligns with Döger's (2021) work, showing that enriched listening environments make learning more concrete. Karagöz's (2008) findings on the value of audiovisual materials in fostering active participation further reinforce the instructional strength of listening practices. Moreover, the positive influence on other field courses demonstrates that music history functions not only as a theoretical discipline but also as an integral component supporting cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects of music education. This study underscores the importance of incorporating varied and structured listening activities into music education programs to promote comprehensive musical development.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests and Ethics

The data for this study were collected with the approval of the Ethics Committee of Sivas Cumhuriyet University, Social and Human Sciences Ethics Board, dated 27.02.2023 and numbered E-50704946-100-269692.

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