



Achievement and Goals in Private Music Learning: Pathways to Motivation and Musical Growth

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DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.47134/jpn.v3i2.2235>

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Received: 14-10-2025

Accepted: 28-11-2025

Published: 12-12-2025



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Abstract: This study examines how achievement orientations, goal setting practices, and motivational factors shape students' engagement and musical development in private music learning. Using a qualitative design, data were collected through observations and semi structured interviews with twelve students aged eight to seventeen studying various instruments in one-to-one lessons. The findings show that mastery and performance orientations emerge through structured tasks, diagnostic-based sequencing, and individualized guidance. Clear short term and long term goals enhanced students' focus and supported consistent practice routines, while teacher support and joyful learning principles helped sustain motivation when students faced technical challenges. Motivational barriers generally stemmed from task difficulty, unmet expectations, or irregular home practice but were mitigated through gradual task breakdown and targeted instruction. The study concludes that aligning achievement orientations, structured goal setting, and motivational supports is essential for maintaining engagement and promoting continuous musical growth in private music education.

Keywords: Achievement Orientation, Goal Setting, Motivation, Private Music Learning

Introduction

Private music learning presents a unique environment in which students' achievement, motivational patterns, and personal goals interact to shape their musical development. Within this setting, motivation plays a central role in sustaining engagement and encouraging persistence in practice routines. It is widely understood as the process that initiates and maintains goal-directed behaviors, making it a key determinant of progress and accomplishment in music learning (Zou & Nasri, 2024). Earlier research highlights that younger learners often depend on external influences, particularly parental support and peer encouragement, to maintain consistent practice habits, which subsequently influences their musical achievement and growth trajectories (Song et al., 2021).

The motivational processes that underpin private music learning are well explained through the Self-Determination Theory, which posits that autonomy, competence, and relatedness are fundamental psychological needs that promote intrinsic motivation and sustained engagement (Bogunović et al., 2023). When these needs are adequately met, students are more likely to participate in deliberate, structured practice and demonstrate resilience when facing technical or interpretive challenges (Valenzuela et al., 2020). Learning

environments that limit students' autonomy tend to reduce motivation, hinder the development of musical skills, and limit long-term growth.

Achievement goals also contribute substantially to shaping students' persistence and quality of learning in music education. Goals that are specific, meaningful, and challenging are associated with enhanced self-regulated learning, more strategic practice habits, and greater focus throughout the learning process (Miksza & Brenner, 2022). Previous studies consistently show that students who prioritize mastery-oriented goals demonstrate deeper engagement, stronger intrinsic motivation, and greater satisfaction in learning compared to those who adopt performance-oriented or avoidance-focused goals (Ben-Amram & Davidovitch, 2024; Sánchez-Cardona et al., 2021; S. Yu, 2023). While performance goals may encourage competitive effort, they also carry risks such as anxiety and diminished well-being, especially when emphasis shifts toward avoiding failure (Ikeda, 2022; Scherrer et al., 2020). Work avoidance goals, in turn, are associated with minimal effort, low motivation, and poorer learning outcomes (J. Yu et al., 2023). Beyond goal types, the intentional act of setting goals, particularly those that are concrete and measurable has been shown to improve focus, persistence, and academic outcomes across educational contexts (Frumos et al., 2024; Schippers et al., 2020; Sides & Cuevas, 2020).

The broader educational context also shapes motivational pathways in private music learning. Curricular innovations that emphasize problem-based learning, creative exploration, and developmental feedback have been found to enhance engagement and strengthen motivation (Huang & Zhang, 2021). Community-based musical programs, including orchestral models inspired by El Sistema, further demonstrate how supportive environments can cultivate musical expertise and foster a growth-oriented mindset among learners (Brown et al., 2023). These findings collectively indicate that meaningful achievement in private music education is influenced not only by individual effort but also by pedagogical strategies, social support systems, and clearly defined goal structures.

Despite the substantial literature on motivation and achievement goals in general educational settings, research that specifically examines how these constructs operate in private music learning remains limited. Existing studies predominantly focus on classroom-based music instruction, large-ensemble programs, or formal curriculum frameworks, leaving fewer insights into individualized learning environments where student–teacher interactions, goal clarity, and personalized feedback play defining roles. This underscores the need for a deeper understanding of how motivational dynamics and goal structures function specifically within one-on-one instruction and how they contribute to students' musical growth in private learning contexts.

The present study aims to address this gap by exploring how achievement and personal goal-setting shape students' motivation and influence their musical development in private music learning environments. By examining these interrelated elements, the study seeks to provide a clearer understanding of the pathways that support sustained engagement, skill acquisition, and meaningful musical progress.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design to investigate how achievement and goal setting shape students' motivation and musical development within private music instruction. A qualitative approach was selected because it allows researchers to explore participants' subjective experiences, personal meanings, and interpretive processes in depth, especially within individualized learning environments such as private music lessons (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Sembiring, Maulana, & Surya, 2025).

Participants consisted of twelve students aged eight to seventeen who were enrolled in private music lessons at Favore Music in Bandung and in individual home based lessons. These students studied a variety of instruments including piano, drum, and bass. They were selected using purposive sampling based on criteria that included active participation in private music study, regular attendance, and willingness to reflect on their learning goals and experiences.

Data were collected through observation, semi structured interviews. Observations took place during routine private lessons to capture authentic learning behaviors, teacher student interactions, and expressions of goal oriented practice within the instructional setting (Hong, 2022; JIN & WEBB, 2020). Semi structured interviews were conducted to explore students' perceptions of achievement, motivation, and the challenges they encountered throughout their learning process (Hsu et al., 2023).

The data analysis followed the interactive model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which consists of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing (Khairany et al., 2024; Miles et al., 2018). During data condensation, interview transcripts and field notes were coded and organized to identify meaningful units of information. The data were then arranged into structured displays that supported pattern recognition and analytical clarity. In the final stage, emerging insights were synthesized to generate coherent interpretations grounded in the empirical material. To strengthen analytical depth, thematic analysis was also used to identify recurring themes that represented the central dimensions of students' motivational and goal related experiences (Wilson & MacDonald, 2019).

Trustworthiness was ensured through triangulation of data sources, including observation, interviews, and documentation, to enhance credibility (Manda, 2023). Prolonged engagement within the research setting and iterative member checking during interviews further reinforced the dependability and confirmability of the study findings.

Result and Discussion

Achievement Orientations in Private Music Learning

The findings indicate that students in private music instruction display diverse achievement orientations, particularly mastery oriented and performance oriented tendencies. These orientations develop through structured learning tasks, technical work, and the instructional design applied by the teacher. During the initial meetings, diagnostic assessments were conducted to identify each student's baseline musical abilities. The assessments included fundamental skills such as basic notation reading, technical control specific to each instrument, coordination required in performance, and responsiveness to

tempo. The results of this assessment guided the teacher in sequencing instructional material and determining the appropriate level of challenge for each learner.

A strong mastery orientation was evident among many students, especially when they worked on tasks that required steady and continuous effort such as sight reading, learning musical passages with varied tempi, and studying pieces section by section. Students demonstrated a consistent intention to improve their skills gradually. This tendency reflects mastery goals that emphasize competence development and the value of learning progress itself. The teacher strengthened this orientation by dividing pieces into smaller parts, drawing attention to technical and musical details, and allowing students to repeat challenging sections at a manageable pace. The use of joyful learning principles contributed to an atmosphere where students did not feel pressured. They were able to approach challenging material step by step, supporting recent perspectives that highlight the importance of positive learning environments in facilitating musical growth and reducing performance anxiety during technical tasks (Sembiring et al., 2025).

Performance oriented tendencies were also observed, particularly when students were given measurable targets such as completing a sight reading passage within a designated time, meeting accuracy standards in technical exercises, or performing a piece according to agreed criteria. In such situations, performance goals served as motivational triggers that encouraged students to demonstrate their abilities. Students often perceived successful achievement of these goals as evidence of improvement, reinforcing their confidence and sense of progress. This pattern aligns with the idea that goal clarity and structured expectations can strengthen focus and encourage sustained effort within individual music practice settings (Mawang et al., 2020).

The instructional decisions made by the teacher played a crucial role in guiding and balancing both orientations. Students received clearly defined learning targets that were challenging yet attainable. They were encouraged to work at a comfortable pace during early stages of practice before transitioning to more demanding tasks. Once certain milestones were achieved, students were also encouraged to choose pieces or repertoire that aligned with their personal interests. This blend of structured instruction and autonomy supported both mastery and performance oriented tendencies by maintaining motivation and encouraging meaningful engagement.

Students' responses to increasingly complex notation, tempo adjustments, and technical demands further highlighted their achievement orientations. Those with mastery tendencies were more patient in refining difficult passages, while students with performance tendencies showed heightened determination when preparing to demonstrate their progress. The consistent application of joyful learning ensured that both orientations developed in a constructive and sustainable manner. This prevented learning pressure from becoming counterproductive and helped maintain students' musical growth over time. The findings support the idea that learner centered and supportive instructional conditions can guide achievement orientations toward productive engagement and long term development.

Overall, the patterns observed in private music learning emphasize the importance of accurate diagnostic assessment, individualized sequencing of instructional material, proportional learning targets, and a supportive instructional climate. These findings demonstrate that mastery and performance orientations do not operate as opposing tendencies. When guided by responsive, encouraging, and pedagogically intentional teaching practices, both orientations can complement one another and contribute to deeper and more sustained learning engagement in private music education (Sembiring et al., 2025)

Goal Setting Practices and Their Influence on Learning Engagement

Students with a mastery oriented tendency, as identified in the previous subsection, generally set goals that focus on improving musical skills and deepening their understanding of the material. These students aimed to refine accuracy, improve control in technical exercises, understand more complex notation, or complete specific sections of a piece. Their learning behavior reflected this orientation. They tended to break down the material into smaller segments, repeat difficult passages, and progress step by step. This pattern aligns with principles of self regulated learning, where students manage and plan their learning processes in an active and intentional manner.

Students who demonstrated a performance oriented tendency preferred goals that were concrete and measurable. They responded strongly to targets such as completing a full piece at a designated tempo, meeting technical accuracy standards set by the teacher, or finishing assigned exercises within an agreed timeline. Clear and structured goals helped these students maintain focus and track their progress more effectively. This behavior reflects the idea that goal clarity and measurable achievements support sustained direction and effort during practice.

In practice, the teacher supported both types of goal orientation by designing short term and long term goals tailored to each student's level. Short term goals typically focused on mastering specific musical elements such as phrasing, articulation, rhythm patterns, or small sections of a piece. Long term goals were related to performing full pieces, improving fluency, or achieving higher technical capability. This structured progression helped students follow a clear learning path and understand the stages required to reach their objectives. As a result, students demonstrated more consistent engagement throughout their lessons.

The use of joyful learning principles, as noted earlier in the findings, contributed to the success of goal setting. The learning environment remained supportive and comfortable, enabling students to work toward their objectives without feeling pressured. Even when goals were challenging, teacher demonstrations, guided repetition, and gradual sequencing allowed students to approach their targets in manageable steps. This contributed to a learning process that was goal oriented but still enjoyable and sustainable.

Overall, goal setting influenced how students organized their practice routines, monitored progress, and approached musical tasks. Clear and well structured goals made the learning process more directed, helped students maintain engagement, and aligned closely with the achievement orientations described in the previous subsection.

Table 1. An example of a table (font size 10pt)

Aspect	Key Points	Influence on Engagement
Short term goals	Small song parts and specific rhythm tasks	More focused practice
Long term goals	Complete songs and higher tempo targets	More consistent practice
Mastery oriented students	Goals for improving skills	Gradual and repeated practice
Performance oriented students	Clear and measurable targets	Stringer focus and discipline
Teacher support	Structured goals with guidance	Clear direction and steady engagement

Motivational Drivers and Barriers in the Learning Process

The findings indicate that students’ motivation in private music learning is shaped by several key factors that closely relate to their achievement orientations and goal setting practices. When learning goals are clear and aligned with the student’s current ability level, students tend to show stronger engagement because they understand the direction of their progress. This pattern is particularly visible among mastery oriented students who respond positively to gradual improvements in their technical and musical skills.

Teacher support also plays a central role in strengthening motivation. Structured lesson sequences, clear demonstrations, and a comfortable learning atmosphere help students feel more confident when approaching new material. The use of joyful learning principles contributes to this process by creating a supportive environment that encourages students to remain involved even when facing more challenging tasks.

On the other hand, motivational barriers arise when students encounter technical demands that exceed their initial abilities, such as complex notation or sections requiring advanced coordination. These obstacles tend to be more prominent among performance oriented students who often expect faster results. Motivation may also decline when practice sessions do not lead to noticeable progress or when external commitments disrupt the students’ learning routines.

Despite these challenges, motivation can be restored when teachers provide more targeted strategies, such as breaking down complex material into smaller segments or reducing the practice tempo. Such instructional adjustments help students stay on track without losing the drive to continue practicing. Overall, students’ motivation in private music learning is influenced by the clarity of their goals, the quality of instructional support, the comfort of the learning environment, and their ability to address challenges in manageable steps. These interconnected factors ultimately shape how consistently students remain engaged in the learning process.

Implications for Private Music Education

The findings of this study offer several important implications for private music education. Clear and well structured learning goals were shown to help students practice with greater focus while enabling teachers to monitor progress more effectively. This result aligns with studies indicating that clearly defined goals enhance student concentration and engagement in music learning (Suci, 2023).

Differences in students' achievement orientations highlight the need for flexible instructional strategies. Students with a mastery orientation benefit from progressive, process oriented learning, whereas performance oriented students respond more effectively to concrete indicators of achievement. These findings reinforce earlier research showing that achievement orientations directly influence students' practice strategies and self regulation (Min, 2020; Sembiring et al., 2025).

Student motivation was also found to increase when the learning environment was comfortable and non intimidating. The joyful learning approach applied by teachers helped students manage challenging material with greater confidence. Previous studies similarly emphasize that emotional support and positive learning climates significantly impact motivation and musical development (Hurriyati et al., 2022). This study adds that in private lesson settings, the quality of direct interaction between teacher and student has a stronger influence compared to group based instruction.

In private learning contexts, motivation tends to emerge more from students' personal progress and the instructional support they receive. This underscores the importance of personalized materials and flexible teaching strategies to optimize student motivation. Overall, the primary implication of this study is that private music education should emphasize clear learning goals, adaptive instructional approaches, and a supportive learning environment. These elements work together to strengthen the effectiveness and sustainability of students' musical development.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that achievement orientations, goal setting practices, and motivational dynamics operate together to shape students' engagement and musical progress in private music learning. The findings highlight the importance of structuring clear and attainable goals, sequencing learning tasks gradually, and maintaining supportive teacher–student interactions to strengthen motivation across mastery and performance oriented learners. Practically, private music educators are encouraged to adopt flexible instructional strategies, integrate joyful learning principles, and conduct regular formative assessments to ensure goals remain aligned with students' abilities and developmental needs. Future research may expand these insights by examining parental involvement, home practice environments, or digital learning tools as additional factors influencing motivation and achievement in private lessons. Longitudinal studies or comparative analyses across different musical instruments and instructional models may also deepen understanding of how motivational pathways develop over time. Together, these implications provide direction for improving instructional effectiveness and sustaining meaningful musical growth in one-to-one learning contexts.

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