

# Synergistic effect of *Samulnori* performance and *Ajaeng* playing on music therapy (<https://youtu.be/QHiciJTTY0w>)

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to evaluate the synergistic effect of *Samulnori* and *Ajaeng* combination in music therapy. *Samulnori* is the Korea's most successful traditional music. The *Ajaeng*, Korean traditional string instrument, generally plays the bass part in ensemble music. However, we have tried a new kind of musical style. (As you can see in the Youtube, <https://youtu.be/QHiciJTTY0w>). *Samulnori* and *Ajaeng* combination of our style have not been tried by any other musicians in Korea. Results from this study showed that *Samulnori*-induced excitation and *Ajaeng*-induced dynamics probably contributed to the synergistic effect of *Samulnori* and *Ajaeng*.

**Keywords** *Samulnori* and *Ajaeng* combination, Music therapy, excitation, dynamics

## INTRODUCTION

Music has been together in human life for a long time. Joy and sadness, life and death have always been expressed in music. When everyone is inspired by the outside condition, people will feel happy or sad (Juncai, 2022). Music is often characterized somewhat paradoxically by joyful experiences of troublesome emotions, such as sorrow (Vuoskoski, 2017). Music is the emotional language of people, which controls people's emotions to the maximum through physiological and psychological means, leads people to released their inner thoughts to music, and eventually plays the role in escape, depression, and empathy (Juncai, 2022). Music characteristically approves access to diverse levels of emotional nuances and intensities with simultaneous self-reflection, detachment (Frijda, 2007). At the principal level in the hierarchical organization, music has a basic beat, the tactus, often described as an underlying pulse of a musical work (Cooper and Meyer, 1963; Lerdahl and Jackendoff, 1983; London, 2004; Large *et al.*, 2015). With the rhythm of music, people's parasympathetic nervous system will be stimulated continuously (Juncai, 2022). Musical rhythm refers to patterns of stress and timing of individual acoustic events (Parker *et al.*, 2022). The beat, while not necessarily the slowest or fastest rhythmic component of a musical work, is often the most perceptually salient level of metrical organization—the level at which listeners and dancers behaviorally entrain to music, such as tapping their feet or nodding their heads (Cooper and Meyer,

1963; Lerdahl and Jackendoff, 1983; London, 2004; Large *et al.*, 2015).

Music therapy is not only an art, but also a type of science, interpersonal process, or therapy (Juncai, 2022). Music-based interventions is a meaningful nonpharmacological engagement used in the therapy of psychiatric and behavioral disorders, and the positive curative effect on depression has been watched (Qishou *et al.*, 2020). In addition, music therapy has been applied to enhance various diseases in different research fields, such as rehabilitation, public health, clinical care, and psychology (Devlin *et al.*, 2019). Music therapy and music based-intervention give various chances for self-expression, cooperative group activities, imagination, and synchronized sensory motor experiences (Malchiodi, 2005). Besides, there is fact that music therapy and music based-intervention have helpful impacts on mood (Maratos *et al.*, 2008; Shuman *et al.*, 2016), stress (Pelletier, 2004), self-esteem (Sharma and Jagdev, 2012), motivation (Ross *et al.*, 2008), emotional expression (Baker *et al.*, 2007), and social cohesion. The various effects of music therapy are coming from many fields. It is even argued that music therapy should be provided at various treatment stages because it can improve the related health outcomes of cancer patients (Friederike *et al.*, 2020).

## SAMULNORI AND AJAENG

Percussion has a long history in medicine (Roman *et al.*, 2021). *Samulnori* is a representative percussion ensemble of Korean folk music. It is a performance consisting of *Janggu* (hourglass drum), and *Kkaenggwari* (small gong), Buk (Korean drum, barrel shaped drum), and *Jing* (large gong), and both the performer and the audience freely communicate with each other and participate together. *Samulnori* is a performance that creates the most popular and diverse

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variations with the ensemble of four traditional Korean percussion instruments. It feels more familiar because the composition of the instruments is simple, anyone can easily participate in the performance, and they can be replaced anytime, anywhere. Active music therapy, including improvisational, re-creative, and compositional, is defined as playing musical instruments, singing, improvisation, and lyrics of adaptation (Qishou *et al.*, 2020). *Samulnori* is a music activity of active participation with improvisation.

*Ajaeng* is a stringed instrument used in state-designated events such as the Lotus Lantern Festival (*Yeondeunghoe*, 燃燈會) and *Palgwanhoe* (八關會) in the 11th century Goryeo Dynasty. *Ajeng* has changed with a long history and tradition. The sound box was increased to create a greater sound effect, and the low-pitched band was enlarged to continue the afterglow deep and long.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Goethe said, "The sound of drums has a power that cannot be expressed by human emotions." We think it's because of the subtle feeling of driving the human body-friendly rhythm and emotions that only percussion instruments have. The feeling of a percussion instrument is as important as its sound,' says Talley and O'Connor (1992). Percussion instruments are both trained, as well as listening and tactile skills. (Anna, 2016). *Samulnori* is a total activity that exchanges feelings and shares energy while watching, listening, and breathing with each other. In addition, *Samulnori* provides more musical and sensual stimulation with the relaxation and tension principle of rhythm and beat. Moreover, *Samulnori* is not a solo performance. Other ensembles are similar, but in the case of *Samulnori*, all participants often play all instruments. Learn the basic rhythm by learning *Janggu* (Hourglass drum), and learn *Kkaenggwari* (small gong), *Buk* (Korean drum, Barrel shaped drum), and *Jing* (Large gong). Performers play one or a few of them, but the accompanying performance of a person familiar with all instruments has a different depth of harmony. The depth of empathy is different. The distinction between me and others disappears. When many people are together, it increases the synergy of empathy. It's possible with four people, but the more people you play with, the more exciting it is. In the word "exciting," the word "overwhelming" means "it is difficult to endure or endure because the degree or amount is excessive." In other words, it's called "self." When the excitement rises, the shoulders automatically move up and down, humming, and chirping. The harmony of the four percussion instruments is also a fantastic harmony. Many instruments are like that, but percussion is more immersive than the listener. You often fall into a trance. If you learn it yourself and leave yourself in the rhythm of percussion, you can meet the time to escape psychological pain. *Ajaeng* and *Samulnori* are perhaps awkward but perfect harmony. You can see the harmony between the most percussive stringed instrument and the most detailed percussion instruments. From the heavy and slow *ajaeng* rhythm, it leads to light and fast *Samulnori*, and the speed of things is heightened by meeting the rough tone of *ajaeng*.

In this work, a verse of Jindo Arirang resonates sadly when the performance stops for a while. Then, through all the instruments and chirping, the climax catharsis is achieved. In other words, it creates a synergy effect. The harmony of percussion, string, rest, and folk songs expresses the four seasons of emotion and shows the joys and sorrows of life,

making the listeners feel at their peak in various emotions. We think that although the role of *Ajaeng* in this work is a string instrument, it gives a synergy effect of music therapy through dynamic participation such as percussion. Just as tuberculosis, which kills two million people every year, has a greater synergy effect on tuberculosis treatment when two are used, in addition to using only one treatment (Yoko *et al.*, 2013).

Through solidarity and cooperation, the energy of co-prosperity is emitted, and this intense wave becomes a synergy that creates greater power. The collaboration between *Samulnori* and *Ajaeng* will exert greater power from a music therapy perspective. So, we hope that this combination will be a new alternative approach to music therapy.

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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