



# Music Therapy: Improving Social Participation Skills in Children with Autism

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## Introduction

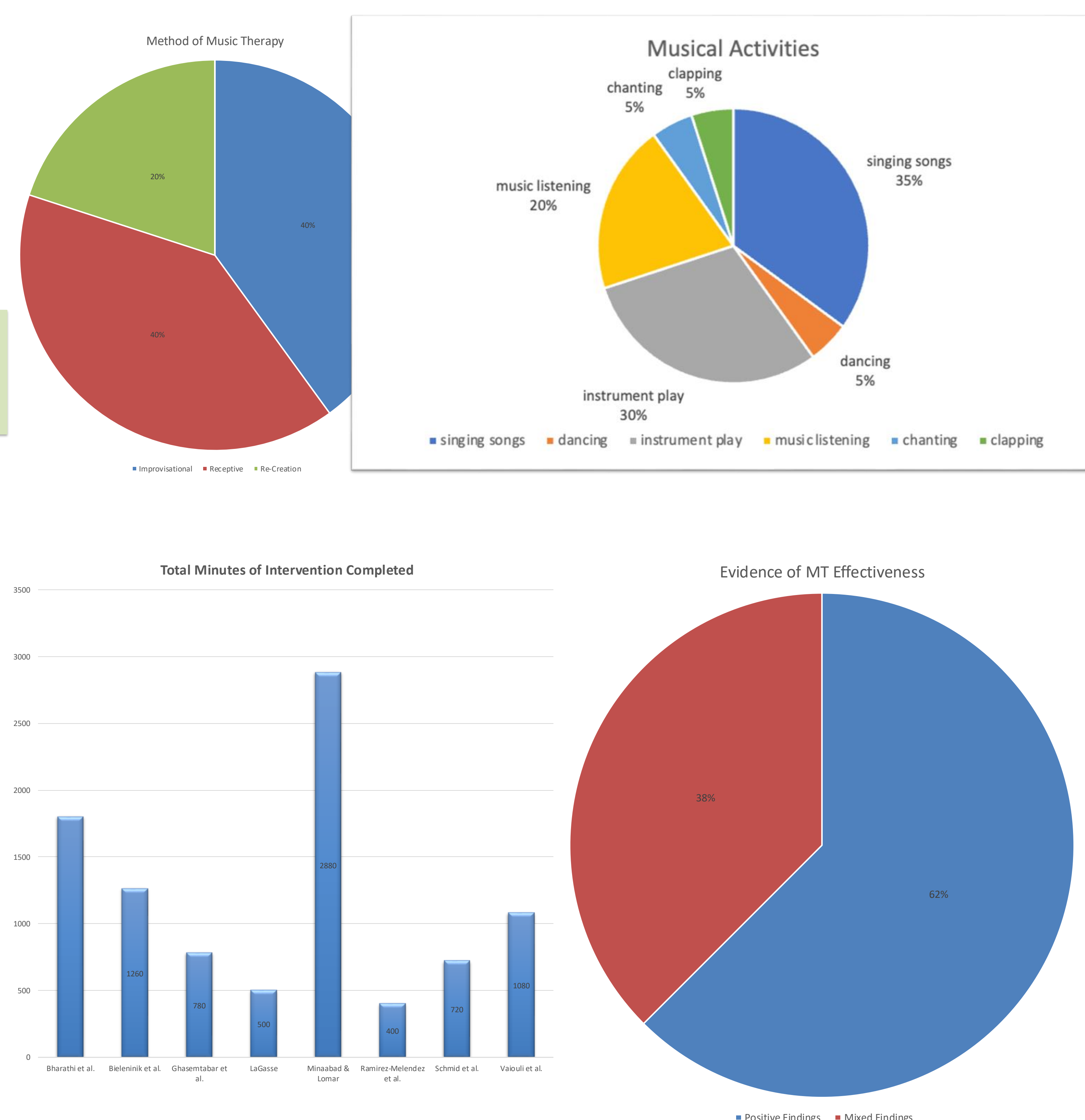
- Deficits in social skills is a hallmark sign of children with autism.
- Music therapy is an emerging practice that provides an environment for children with ASD to interact with peers, which produces positive, nonmusical social outcomes.
- Ongoing evidence-based research will provide professionals with the resources necessary to provide standard level of care as new information emerges.
- The objective of this scoping review is to summarize current evidence of music therapy for children with ASD, demonstrate that MT has potential to provide therapeutic effects in ASD intervention, and identify the long-term impact of MT treatment on the social participation skills of children with autism.

## Methods

A scoping review research design was conducted. To be included in the review, papers needed music therapy for autistic children. Articles were included if they were: peer reviewed articles, published between 2014-2024, written in English, conducted with human participants, contained music therapy as the intervention, and used social participation outcome measures. PubMed, Embase, PsycInfo, and Scopus were the databases searched. Data was extracted by an independent reviewer using a charting system of variables that included: author, year of publication, study design, aim of the study, population, methods, outcomes, results, and key findings.

## Results

- Eight articles: two RCT's three quasi-experimental studies, one pilot study, and two mixed methods designs.
- Four themes: MT intervention, duration/frequency, follow-up, and effectiveness.
- Participants in the studies:
  - Age: 4-12 years
  - Diagnosis of autism, severity varied
  - Sample size: 3-364
  - 75% boys



## Discussion

The findings support current literature, indicating MT interventions positively influence social participation skills in children with autism. poor classification of the type and duration of MT produces challenges to identifying the types of music that provide the best efficacy. The duration of MT interventions was varied, making it difficult to determine optimal duration for greatest improvement. Although there were no negative outcomes alone represented in the evidence, 38% of the articles produce mixed findings. Five articles included a follow up study which produced the same positive results: the effectiveness of MT was consistent up to the follow up phase. The long-term effect on the overall positive outcomes still lacks evidence-based research.

## Limitations

- English articles only
- Small sample size
- Detailed and specific inclusion criteria

## References

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