

International Journal of Health Science

ISSN 2764-0159

vol. 5, n. 31, 2025

... ARTICLE 2

Acceptance date: 07/10/2025

MUSIC THERAPY IN THE CARE OF HOSPITALIZED CHILDREN: AN EMERGING TECHNOLOGY IN NURSING

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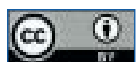
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Abstract: Play therapy is widely recognized as an effective approach in the treatment of children and is used by various professionals in physical and mental health care. Within this context, music therapy emerges as one of the play therapy options with great potential in the hospital environment, proving capable of mitigating the stress experienced during the hospitalization process. The objective is to demonstrate the importance of using music therapy in the care of children in a hospital setting. This is a narrative review using national and international databases. Nine articles were selected for full reading and content analysis, which highlighted the relevance of music therapy in care and how this tool can positively impact the context of hospitalized children. Music therapy accelerates pediatric hospital discharge, but requires further studies to be implemented in child health care.

Keywords: Music therapy; Pediatric nursing; Hospitalized children; Therapeutic use.

INTRODUCTION

Play therapy aims to promote improvements in the physical environment and in the way care is provided to hospitalized children. According to Falke (2021), this approach aims to reduce the negative impacts of childhood hospitalization, making the process more humanized and preserving the sociability of hospitalized children or adolescents.

The abrupt change in environment from their normal routine can affect their overall well-being, sometimes generating permanent consequences in the way these children deal with their illness (Barros; Lusstosa, 2009). Therefore, to minimize stressful

effects such as fear, anxiety, apathy, and depression associated with hospitalization, it is essential to implement strategies that make the hospital experience as pleasant as possible (Catapan; Oliveira; Rotta, 2019).

Hospitalization of children can be a deeply disturbing and traumatic experience, leading to several undesirable effects in both the short and long term. The disruption of the family environment, the loss of daily routine, and exposure to unfamiliar and often painful medical procedures are factors that contribute significantly to the child's emotional stress.

Studies show that the hospital environment can generate feelings of fear, anxiety, and insecurity, negatively affecting the child's psychological well-being. Abrupt changes in daily life and separation from parents and caregivers can exacerbate these feelings, leading to a hospitalization experience marked by emotional distress.

In addition to the immediate effects, hospitalization can leave lasting marks on the child's psychological development. The fear and anxiety experienced during hospitalization can result in psychological disorders such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), sleep difficulties, regression in previously acquired skills, and even behavioral problems.

Hospitalized children may develop an aversion to hospital environments and healthcare professionals, complicating future medical care. The continuous presence of parents, the humanization of care, and the use of play therapy are essential strategies to minimize these effects and provide a more comfortable environment for children in their moment of vulnerability.

Among the various play therapy techniques, music therapy has shown significant progress in the care of hospitalized children. Music therapy essentially consists of incorporating music into clinical therapy, providing several benefits during hospitalization. For example, it contributes to the stabilization of the patient's vital signs, as it stimulates relaxation and improves breathing, which, in turn, improves tissue oxygenation and promotes the release of hormones that contribute to well-being (Kobus *et al.*, 2022).

In general, several studies have pointed out that play therapy has stood out as an essential tool in the non-pharmacological management of the various consequences of child hospitalization. It should be noted that hospitalization can cause various symptoms in children, ranging from anxiety to non-cooperation with the care provided by the team (Johnson *et al.*, 2021).

This article aims to present scientific evidence for the use of music therapy in nursing care practice, promoting reflection on the topic, its main therapeutic benefits, and the challenges that need to be overcome in its implementation in the hospital routine.

METHODOLOGY

This is an exploratory narrative review aimed at describing and discussing the state of the art on certain studies, such as music therapy in the care of hospitalized children, from a theoretical and contextual point of view (Vosgerau; Romanowski, 2014).

To conduct this review, five distinct steps were followed: 1) formulation of the research question; 2) identification of studies through various sources; 3) selection of

the sample based on search and inclusion/exclusion criteria; 4) extraction of information relevant to the research question; and 5) numerical and thematic analysis of the data, followed by description and discussion. In addition, some elements of the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines were incorporated to develop the flowchart and checklist, with the aim of organizing the steps of identification, tracking, selection, and analysis of publications, ensuring the impartiality of the results.

The research question, study objective, and descriptors were clarified using the mnemonic combination PCC (acronym for Population/patient, Concept, and Context) - P (Population) - Hospitalized children; C (Concept) - Music therapy in nursing care; C (Context) - Hospital environment. Thus, the following guiding question is presented: What is the scientific evidence for the use of music therapy in nursing care for hospitalized children?

An electronic search was conducted for national and international scientific articles addressing music therapy in nursing care for hospitalized children. This search was performed in the following direct access databases: Latin American and Caribbean Health Sciences Literature (LILACS), Nursing Database (BDENF), and Publisher Medline (PubMed), accessed through the Virtual Health Library (VHL). The following Health Sciences Descriptors (DeCS) were used: "Music therapy," "Hospitalized child," "Pediatric nursing," and "Therapeutic use." To obtain more accurate results, the Boolean operator "AND" was used to relate these terms.

To select the studies that make up the final sample of the narrative review, the

following inclusion criteria were used: a) National and international scientific articles published in online databases between 2019 and 2024, with the purpose of identifying recent studies relevant to this article and addressing the study topic; b) Published in English, Spanish, or Portuguese; c) Articles with free access to full texts and relevant to this study. The following exclusion criteria were used: a) Articles published before 2019 or after 2024; b) Duplicate articles; c) Paid or restricted access articles; d) Articles that do not address the proposed theme.

The electronic search was conducted between February and March 2024, following this procedure: 1) Preliminary selection of articles by reading the titles; 2) Reading the abstracts of the articles for pre-selection; 3) Reading the full texts of the pre-selected articles; 4) Tabulation of the collected data; 5) Analytical reading of the content of the selected articles; 6) Discussion and analysis of the themes found. For the selection of articles, the titles were initially examined, followed by the abstracts. In order to determine the inclusion or exclusion of articles, the RAYYAN® electronic tool was used, which assisted in the automatic detection of possible duplicates. Subsequently, the data were submitted to content analysis, producing a synthesis and discussion of the final research sample.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Initially, 746 articles were found in the VHL database and its annexes (BDENF and LILACS), and no articles were found in the MEDLINE database. The collection was made after applying language filters (English, Spanish, and Portuguese) and the year range between 2019 and 2024.

Subsequently, the selected articles were added to the Rayyan® platform for duplicate detection, finding 736 duplicate articles, resulting in 10 articles selected for abstract reading. At this stage, one article was found that did not answer the research question. After exclusion, nine articles were selected for full reading and content analysis, which are shown in the figure and table below:



Figure 1. Flowchart of the search and screening of articles for the integrative review, Brazil, 2024. Source: Prepared by the authors.

Of the nine articles selected, five were available in Brazilian Portuguese and four were written in English. Most of these studies were qualitative in nature, including one quasi-experimental study and two integrative reviews. The studies had varying publication dates over the last five years, with one published in 2018, two published in 2019, one published in 2020, two published in 2021, one published in 2022, and two published in 2023.

In general, several studies have pointed out that play therapy has stood out as an essential tool in the non-pharmacological management of the various consequences of child hospitalization. It should be noted that hospitalization can cause symptoms in

Citation	Article Title	Summary
(Neta; Carvalho; Aguiar, 2019)	Music as a Therapeutic Aid for Hospitalized Children	Through testimonials, it was found that the use of music during the hospitalization process of children brings benefits ranging from comfort to physiological repercussions. It also demonstrated the benefits in adherence to treatment according to the view of nursing professionals.
(Manco <i>et al.</i> , 2023)	Strategies for Promoting Well-Being in Pediatric Palliative Care	It understood play therapy as an effective approach in the care of children in palliative care and the importance of music therapy in the expression of feelings, pain relief, emotional support, and stabilization of vital signs.
(Barcellos <i>et al.</i> , 2021)	Effects of music therapy on the physiological responses of preterm newborns on noninvasive ventilation: a quasi-experimental study	Through locus research, it was analyzed that music therapy promotes improvement in the vital signs of preterm newborns on noninvasive ventilation, especially in respiratory and heart rate, pain level, temperature, and saturation.
(Johnson <i>et al.</i> , 2021)	Examining the Effects of Music-Based Interventions on Pain and Anxiety in Hospitalized Children: An Integrative Review	Points to music therapy as a viable strategy to be used by nurses during pain management and reduction of anxiety and stress in hospitalized children.
(Archambault <i>et al.</i> , 2020)	Feasibility and preliminary effectiveness of a drum circle activity to improve affect in patients, families, and staff of a pediatric hospital	Demonstrated the benefits of drum circle activity in reducing anxiety and negative feelings in children in a pediatric hospital.
(Sousa; Silva; Paiva, 2018)	Nursing interventions in palliative care in Pediatric Oncology: integrative review	Points out the various interventions in palliative care for children with cancer, among which music therapy stands out as a means of increasing resilience in relation to living with the disease.
(Anggerainy; Wanda; Nurhani, 2019)	Music Therapy and Story Telling: Nursing Interventions to Improve Sleep in Hospitalized Children	Demonstrated the effectiveness of music therapy and storytelling in resolving sleep disorders in hospitalized children.

(Hakim <i>et al.</i> , 2023)	The effect of non-verbal music on anxiety in hospitalized children	The effects of Johann Sebastian Bach's non-verbal compositions were examined, concluding that they can significantly reduce anxiety levels in hospitalized children. Additionally, after the reduction in anxiety resulting from listening to non-verbal music, a decrease in vital signs was observed, including a reduction in systolic and diastolic blood pressure, heart rate, and respiratory rate per minute, which can speed up the healing and recovery process in children.
(Andrade; Migoto, 2022)	Neuro-palliative care technologies for children and adolescents: perspectives of nursing professionals	It pointed out the care technologies used by nurses for children in neuro palliative care, among which music therapy proved to be a consistent tool for pain management, acceptance of coping with problems, and promotion of self-esteem.

Table 1. Tabulation of articles used in the research, 2024.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

children, ranging from anxiety to non-cooperation with the care provided by the team (Neta; Carvalho; Aguiar, 2019; Johnson *et al.*, 2021; Hakim *et al.*, 2023;).

Scientific evidence also shows a variety of benefits regarding the specific use of music therapy in nursing care for hospitalized children, making it an effective tool for nursing staff to use in pediatric hospital care (Neta; Carvalho; Aguiar, 2019; Johnson *et al.*, 2021).

It is, therefore, a therapeutic approach that benefits both nursing professionals and children, as it is a strategy that facilitates the recovery process and promotes effective communication between the child and the healthcare team (Hakim *et al.*, 2023).

The latest scientific evidence reveals that when a person goes through an illness, their perception of reality can change in a unique way. That is, this experience involves a series of significant changes, both structural and emotional, encompassing sensations, emotions, discomforts, and uncer-

tainties that become part of their life, along with new interactions and connections that can impact their quality of life (Hakim *et al.*, 2023).

Thus, it is important to note that some illnesses or conditions faced during childhood, such as chronic conditions, require prolonged treatment, frequent medical appointments, or repeated hospitalizations, which can result in serious complications in child development, with major emotional/social impacts. In this sense, authors Hakim *et al.* and Johnson *et al.* agree that music therapy can be used as an important tool in nursing care.

Due to the changes in routine and the repercussions that hospitalization can have on children, it is necessary to implement more appropriate measures that promote child health and meet their physical and emotional needs. According to the study conducted by Andrade and Migoto (2022), there has been an increase in the therapeutic use of music in hospitals, which can be

seen as an integrative and complementary therapeutic option, aiming to improve care through the adaptation and welcoming of hospital spaces.

The use of music therapy has been employed with positive results by the multidisciplinary team as a way for children to collaborate with their care, understand their illness, and improve their signs and symptoms. Furthermore, according to Andrade and Migoto (2022), the results have shown practical benefits in nursing care, based on reports from nursing professionals.

According to Neta, Carvalho, and Aguiar (2019), music therapy can positively influence children's perceptions and can be effective in managing pain and stress by breaking the routines experienced by hospitalized children. The authors also revealed that music is a light technology, capable of developing and reaching potential members of the daily life of the pediatric hospital, so that musicality promotes the empowerment of the health team, favoring the consolidation of activities and the expansion of the value of care.

Complementarily, authors Manco et al. (2023) and Barcellos et al. (2021) also pointed out the effectiveness of music therapy in the positive clinical evolution of the vital signs of hospitalized children. These authors also showed that music can be used to express feelings and that it contributes to improving the quality of hospitalization and care provided to children.

In the quasi-experimental research by Barcellos and other researchers (2021), analyzing the physiological effects of music therapy on preterm newborns (PTNB) on non-invasive ventilation, there was a reduction of up to six incursions per minute in

relation to respiratory rate (RR) and a reduction of up to seven beats per minute in relation to heart rate (HR).

Regarding oxygen saturation, the study identified an average increase of 2%. Axillary temperature increased by 0.1°C after the intervention. On the pain scale, a reduction of one point was identified. Data such as these reveal that music therapy has beneficial effects, positively interfering with the physiological responses of PTNBs on non-invasive ventilation (Barcellos *et al.*, 2021).

Hankin and other collaborators (2023), in an experimental study (test/control) with hospitalized children, showed that listening to nonverbal music daily for 20 minutes after the second and third days significantly reduced the anxiety score and the number of breaths per minute of hospitalized children who received this intervention. The trend in anxiety scores was measured over three consecutive days, and vital signs, except for body temperature, decreased significantly in the test/intervention group.

Still on the subject of nonverbal music, using percussion sounds and drum rhythms, Archambault and other researchers (2020) evaluated in their study the feasibility and potential benefits of a drum circle activity aimed at improving the affective experience of patients, family members, and staff in a large pediatric hospital. Quantitative and qualitative analyses revealed a significant increase in positive affect and decreases in negative affect, suggesting the safety of the activity, as well as other potential benefits that contribute to improving the well-being of pediatric patients, family members, and hospital staff.

It should be noted that the use of music therapy in hospital settings also represents the inclusion of non-pharmacological methods as facilitators of care and promoters of well-being (Barcellos *et al.*, 2021). This practice aims to create nursing care plans that include music, with the goal of meeting the physical, social, and psychological demands of children.

In addition to the benefits already mentioned, the most recent evidence reveals that the use of music therapy is capable of reducing the levels of anxiety and negative feelings experienced by hospitalized children, altering their perception of their hospitalization and bringing resilience when facing such a process (Johnson *et al.*, 2021).

Nursing interventions using music therapy have also proven to be highly effective in helping children sleep during hospitalization. It is known that sleep and rest disorders are common in this situation, with sleep being a basic human need and essential for children's health and development/growth. Lack of adequate sleep can have negative impacts on children's health, and this problem can arise in the first days of hospitalization (Anggerainy; Wanda; Nurhaeni, 2019).

According to Anggerainy, Wanda, and Nurhaeni (2019), the use of music as a nursing care tool was effective in managing the sleep of hospitalized children, bringing them more comfort and, consequently, improving the sleep disorders they experienced. This instrument acts as an effective relaxation technique to promote sleep, because when listening to music, children feel relaxed and calm, which can help them cope with pain and reduce anxiety, making it easier to fall asleep.

Thus, based on these authors, it can be stated that music therapy improves scores on the sleep disturbance scale in hospitalized children, being effective in the treatment of sleep disorders in children. In addition, it is a safe, inexpensive, and accessible intervention that can improve the quality of sleep in children during hospitalization (Anggerainy; Wanda; Nurhaeni, 2019).

Recent studies also indicate that music has naturally calming properties, capable of relieving both anxiety and pain, promoting a state of relaxation. It can also divert attention from physical and emotional pain, reducing stress and facilitating sleep (Archambaut *et al.*, 2020; Sousa; Silva; Paiva, 2018; Anggerainy; Wanda; Nurhaeni, 2019).

In addition to the aspects already mentioned, it is important to emphasize that improving emotional aspects, such as children's self-esteem during hospitalization, can have a significant impact on their overall recovery. When a child feels more confident and accepts the process they are going through, they tend to cooperate better with hospital care and follow the healthcare team's instructions more closely, which can lead to a more effective and less traumatic hospital experience (Anggerainy; Wanda; Nurhaeni, 2019).

Music therapy, as highlighted by Hakin *et al.* (2023) and Andrade and Migo (2022), plays a crucial role in this context. In addition to providing emotional comfort, music can have tangible effects on the child's body and mind, helping to speed up the healing process and reduce hospital stays. This is because music has the power to calm, reduce stress, and even modulate immune system responses, thereby strengthening the body's ability to fight disease and recover more quickly.

Another important fact is that music therapy offers children a form of nonverbal expression and communication, allowing them to explore and process their emotions in a safe and creative way. This can be especially beneficial in a hospital setting, where children often face significant emotional and psychological challenges (Hakim *et al.*, 2023).

In short, by integrating music therapy as part of hospital and nursing care, not only are children's physical needs addressed, but their emotional and psychological health is also promoted, helping them to face the hospitalization process with greater resilience and optimism. Healthcare professionals, including nurses, doctors, and therapists, express a positive perception of the effectiveness and relevance of music therapy in the pediatric hospital setting. It is highlighted that its inclusion as a complementary tool to conventional treatments promotes benefits in relieving pain, anxiety, and stress, in addition to providing emotional well-being for children during hospitalization (Darrow *et al.*, 2016).

The study conducted by Johnson and other researchers (2021) revealed that many healthcare professionals recognize the potential of music therapy as a non-invasive and holistic form of intervention for the care of hospitalized children. They noted that music can serve as an effective distraction during painful and invasive procedures, reducing the need for sedation and improving the overall experience of the pediatric patient.

In addition, music therapy was considered by healthcare professionals to be a safe, non-invasive, and accessible approach that can be adapted to the individual needs

of children and integrated into different areas of clinical practice.

However, Andrade and Migoto (2022) point out that music therapy is still a scarce technology in Brazil, despite being efficient, as it has been much more widely used internationally in clinical practice protocols and routines. Nevertheless, these nursing professionals highlighted it as a powerful care intervention resource, impacting on the improvement of quality of life.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This article provided evidence-based notes that music therapy can be a powerful tool in nursing care for hospitalized children, as its effectiveness can be proven from the improvement of physical symptoms to the reframing of the hospitalization process. Music facilitates this process, accelerating recovery and, consequently, reducing hospitalization time.

It is important to note that most of the studies analyzed adopted a predominantly qualitative approach, with two integrative reviews and only one quasi-experimental study. Therefore, further exploration and in-depth studies on this topic are still needed to strengthen the scientific evidence that serves as the basis for healthcare practice.

It was also found that there is a lack of comparative case-control studies between children who experienced the use of music therapy and children who did not undergo this type of care intervention. Longitudinal studies could also be conducted to monitor the effects of music therapy over time, exploring its impact not only during hospitalization but also after hospital discharge.

It would be relevant to investigate the effectiveness of music therapy in different care settings and patient populations, as well as to explore its effects on healthcare staff, including nurses, doctors, and therapists. In addition, studies examining the mechanisms underlying the effects of music therapy and its cultural adaptation to the specific needs of children and hospital communities could also provide valuable insights.

Despite methodological limitations, this study provides valuable insights into the effectiveness and relevance of music therapy in pediatric hospital care, and it is suggested that future research that overcomes these limitations may contribute to a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the therapeutic potential of music therapy in the pediatric hospital setting.

In summary, music therapy presents itself as a promising intervention in pediatric nursing care, providing significant benefits that encompass both physical and emotional aspects of hospitalized children. Music has the power to humanize the hospital environment, making it less intimidating and more welcoming, which can promote recovery and reduce hospitalization time.

However, despite qualitative evidence and integrative reviews, there is still a gap in the scientific literature regarding robust quantitative and experimental studies that can consolidate these initial observations and provide more concrete data on the effectiveness of music therapy. Given this reality, it is essential that future research address these methodological gaps by conducting comparative and longitudinal studies that can more comprehensively assess the effects of music therapy over time and in different contexts.

In addition, investigations that explore the influence of music therapy on healthcare teams and that adapt their practices to the specific cultural needs of children and hospital communities are equally important. The development of evidence-based guidelines and protocols for the implementation of music therapy in pediatric hospital units could contribute to a more consistent and effective application of this intervention, enhancing its benefits and integrating it solidly into healthcare practice.

Finally, the development of evidence-based guidelines and protocols for the implementation of music therapy in pediatric hospital units could contribute to a more consistent and effective application of this therapeutic intervention in the care of hospitalized children.

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