

Social Music Education Management -- A Case Study of a Causal Model of Organization Performance in Nanchang, Shangrao and Ganzhou in Jiangxi Province

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ABSTRACT

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This study explores the causal relationships between key factors influencing organizational performance in social music education institutions across Nanchang, Shangrao, and Ganzhou in Jiangxi Province, China. Using a mixed-methods approach with 200 teachers and 400 students, the study applies Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to examine the impact of academic ability, government support, leadership, achievement motivation, personal staff coordination, teaching quality, and student quality on management performance. Results indicate that teaching quality and leadership are key mediators, while government support and academic ability significantly affect performance both directly and indirectly. Recommendations are made to strengthen leadership, optimize government funding, and promote institutional coordination and teacher development.

Keywords social music education, teaching quality, leadership, structural equation modeling, China, management performance

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Significance

In the context of global education reform and cultural development, social music education has emerged as a vital force in promoting artistic literacy, personal development, and community engagement. Unlike formal music education within academic institutions, social music education operates across diverse platforms—cultural centers, community organizations, training institutions, and extracurricular programs—emphasizing accessibility, lifelong learning, and cultural inclusion. It plays a pivotal role in enriching public life, nurturing aesthetic sensibility, and cultivating cultural identity.

In China, social music education has gained increasing policy attention since the implementation of the “New Curriculum Reform” and the “Outline for National Education Reform and Development (2010–2020),” both of which emphasize arts education as a core pillar of holistic development. As a

province rich in cultural heritage, Jiangxi—particularly the cities of Nanchang, Shangrao, and Ganzhou—possesses a unique ecosystem for studying music education in social settings. However, despite growing policy support and societal demand, management inefficiencies, uneven teaching quality, inadequate leadership, and imbalanced resource allocation continue to hinder the performance and sustainability of social music education institutions in this region.

1.2 Problem Statement

Although several educational reforms and regional investments have attempted to elevate the quality of music education, social music organizations in Jiangxi still face systemic challenges in operational coordination, institutional effectiveness, and performance evaluation. These challenges are exacerbated by factors such as inconsistent government support, fragmented leadership structures, low student engagement, and insufficient teacher training. The absence of a standardized model for understanding what drives effective management performance leaves many institutions vulnerable to inefficiency and stagnation.

To address these issues, this study aims to construct a causal model of organizational performance that incorporates both internal and external factors—academic ability, teaching quality, leadership, government support, student quality, personal staff coordination, and achievement motivation. Using quantitative data and structural equation modeling (SEM), the study investigates the direct and indirect pathways through which these variables interact to affect management performance.

1.3 Theoretical and Practical Relevance

This research is grounded in organizational performance theory, transformational leadership theory, and constructivist educational theory, forming an integrated conceptual basis to explain the mechanisms of influence in social music education settings. It advances theoretical understanding by empirically validating a multidimensional model and contributes practically by offering actionable recommendations for policymakers, institutional leaders, and practitioners.

Furthermore, by focusing on Jiangxi Province—a region undergoing rapid educational and cultural transformation—the study contributes context-specific insights that are applicable to other developing regions grappling with similar issues in music education management.

1.4 Research Objectives

To identify the key determinants of management performance in social music education institutions.

To examine the mediating role of leadership and teaching quality between institutional inputs and outcomes.

To validate a causal model using SEM and propose targeted strategies to improve management effectiveness.

To provide region-specific recommendations for optimizing social music education practices in Jiangxi Province.

1.5 Research Significance

This study holds multifaceted significance:

Academic Contribution: It fills a gap in empirical research on non-formal music education management in China, particularly through the lens of causal analysis.

Policy Implication: It offers data-driven insights to inform educational policy design and resource allocation by local governments.

Institutional Guidance: It provides a framework for social music education institutions to self-assess and improve leadership practices, staff coordination, and curriculum delivery.

Social Value: It promotes inclusive and sustainable development in arts education, contributing to community well-being and cultural continuity.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Foundations

The performance of educational institutions, particularly in non-formal sectors like social music education, has long been a subject of interest in education management research. This study is grounded in three major theoretical domains:

Organizational Performance Theory, which posits that institutional effectiveness results from the interplay of internal competencies and external support (Neely, Gregory, & Platts, 2005);

Transformational and Distributed Leadership Theory, which emphasizes the role of leadership in shaping teacher motivation, collective efficacy, and performance outcomes (Spillane et al., 2004; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005);

Constructivist Educational Theory, which supports the learner-centered, participatory nature of social music education, advocating for environments that nurture creativity, engagement, and community-based learning (Vygotsky, 1978).

These frameworks form the basis for examining how variables such as academic ability, government support, teaching quality, and leadership influence management performance in social music institutions.

2.2 Related Research on Key Constructs

Academic Ability and Teaching Quality

Empirical studies indicate that educators with higher academic qualifications and professional training tend to demonstrate stronger pedagogical skills, instructional flexibility, and curriculum innovation (Darling-Hammond, 2017; Zhang & Liu, 2020). In social music education, such abilities are essential to meeting diverse student needs in non-traditional learning environments (Xu & Wei, 2023).

Government Support

Government investment and policy guidance are widely recognized as catalysts for educational improvement. Regional disparities in fiscal support, especially in mid-level provinces like Jiangxi, have led to uneven institutional development (Tang & Huang, 2020). Supportive policies can enhance infrastructure, teacher training, and program continuity (Li & Wang, 2021).

Leadership

Leadership—especially transformational and distributed leadership—has a significant impact on institutional culture, staff motivation, and performance outcomes (Hallinger, 2011; Spillane et al., 2004). In social music education settings, leaders who facilitate collaboration and strategic planning can better navigate operational and pedagogical challenges (Yin & Sun, 2020).

Staff Coordination and Motivation

Effective coordination among teachers and administrators ensures coherent management practices and improves adaptability (Chen et al., 2019). Furthermore, achievement motivation influences educators' willingness to innovate and participate in institutional development (Dweck, 2015; McClelland, 1987).

Student Quality

Student engagement, prior experience, and learning discipline are linked to improved teaching outcomes and program credibility. Institutions with rigorous recruitment and support mechanisms are better positioned to sustain high levels of performance (Takahashi, 2023).

Teaching Quality and Institutional Effectiveness

Teaching quality remains central to educational performance, shaped by factors such as teacher ability, leadership, and student interaction (OECD, 2020). In social music education, its impact is observed in student retention, artistic development, and community satisfaction (Wang & Li, 2018).

2.3 Gaps in Existing Literature

Despite the growing body of literature on music education and organizational performance, several gaps remain:

Limited Empirical Studies on Social Music Education in China: Most studies focus on formal school-based programs, leaving the social sector under-researched.

Lack of Integrated Models: Few studies comprehensively examine the interrelationships between institutional inputs (e.g., academic ability, government support) and performance outcomes using causal frameworks.

Neglect of Regional Context: Existing research rarely accounts for the socioeconomic and policy diversity across different provinces, such as Jiangxi.

Insufficient Use of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM): Most studies rely on basic correlational analysis, limiting insights into mediating or moderating effects.

2.4 Contribution of This Study

This study contributes to bridging the above gaps by:

Developing a comprehensive causal model for analyzing performance in social music education institutions;

Incorporating mediating variables such as leadership and teaching quality to explain complex relationships;

Providing empirical validation using SEM based on real-world data from Jiangxi Province;

Offering practical insights for local governments and education leaders seeking to enhance the performance of social music education organizations.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Approach

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach using an explanatory sequential design, combining quantitative and qualitative data to explore the causal relationships between academic ability, leadership, teaching quality, government support, and management performance in social music education institutions. Quantitative data were collected and analyzed first to test the hypothesized model using structural equation modeling (SEM), followed by qualitative interviews to provide deeper contextual insights.

3.2 Variables and Instruments

The dependent variable is management performance, assessed through institutional efficiency, student outcomes, and sustainability. Independent variables include academic ability, leadership, government support, achievement motivation, student quality, staff coordination, and teaching quality. Mediating variables—teaching quality, leadership, and staff coordination—help explain indirect effects.

Quantitative data were gathered through structured Likert-scale surveys administered to 400 students and 200 teachers. Reliability and validity were confirmed through Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha > 0.89$) and IOC scores (> 0.87) for all instruments.

3.3 Population and Sampling

The study targeted stakeholders in music institutions across Nanchang, Shangrao, and Ganzhou. A two-stage stratified and cluster sampling method was applied. Institutions were categorized by size—small (< 500 students), medium (500–1,499), and large ($> 1,500$). A total of 9 institutions and 32 classrooms were sampled, yielding 1,108 valid student responses, ensuring broad institutional representation.

For the qualitative phase, 10 stakeholders were purposively selected, including institutional leaders, curriculum developers, and policymakers. Interviews explored challenges in leadership, coordination, and government policy implementation.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected through:

Surveys administered in classrooms and faculty meetings.

Semi-structured interviews (40–60 minutes) with institutional leaders.

Observations of classroom practices and leadership behavior.

Triangulation of these sources enhanced the credibility of findings. Data integrity was maintained through ethical clearance, anonymity, and verification protocols.

3.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using:

Descriptive statistics (mean, SD, frequency)

Reliability and validity testing

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) via AMOS to evaluate model fit and test 12 hypotheses.

SEM results showed excellent model fit (e.g., RMSEA = 0.056, CFI = 0.95), confirming consistency between the proposed model and observed data.

Qualitative data were coded thematically to interpret the meaning behind statistical patterns, providing support for the mediating effects of leadership and teaching quality.

4. Results and Findings

4.1 Descriptive Statistics and Normality

Descriptive analysis revealed high ratings across all variables. Teaching Quality (M = 4.45, SD = 0.51), Leadership (M = 4.35, SD = 0.57), and Achievement Motivation (M = 4.40, SD = 0.55) were all rated “High,” while Management Performance (M = 4.50, SD = 0.53) was rated “Very High”. Skewness and kurtosis were within acceptable thresholds (-1 to +1), and normality tests (K-S and Shapiro-Wilk) confirmed the data's suitability for parametric analysis.

4.2 Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) Results

SEM analysis validated all 12 hypotheses, showing both direct and indirect influences among variables. The model demonstrated strong fit indices: RMSEA = 0.056, GFI = 0.92, CFI = 0.95, and $\chi^2/df = 2.76$, confirming that the proposed causal structure was consistent with observed data.

4.3 Direct and Indirect Effects

The standardized path coefficients showed that:

Teaching Quality had the strongest direct effect on Management Performance ($\beta = 0.367$).

Quality of Students was the highest total contributor (TE = 0.427), with both direct ($\beta = 0.275$) and indirect effects ($\beta = 0.152$).

Academic Ability showed a total effect of 0.417, with indirect influence via Teaching Quality ($\beta = 0.176$).

Leadership (TE = 0.289) and Achievement Motivation (TE = 0.324) were also significant.

Government Support (TE = 0.330) acted largely through mediators (IE = 0.138) like Leadership and Teaching Quality.

Personal Staff Coordination (TE = 0.370) influenced performance through communication and team efficiency.

4.4 Summary of Key Findings

Teaching Quality is the most crucial determinant of management performance.

Student Quality, often overlooked, showed the strongest overall influence, suggesting the importance of student-centered learning in institutional success.

Leadership and Government Support, while not always directly impactful, shape the institutional environment through indirect channels.

All relationships in the hypothetical model were empirically supported, validating the study's theoretical framework.

5. Discussion

This study confirmed a robust causal relationship between multiple institutional factors and management performance in social music education settings. Through SEM analysis, all 12 hypotheses were supported, demonstrating consistency between the proposed theoretical model and empirical evidence.

5.1 Teaching Quality as a Central Mediator

The strongest predictor of management performance was teaching quality ($\beta = 0.64$), which also acted as a mediating variable for academic ability, staff coordination, and government support. This reinforces the idea that improving instructional effectiveness—through professional development, curriculum innovation, and student-centered pedagogy—directly enhances institutional outcomes.

5.2 The Roles of Leadership and Student Quality

Leadership ($\beta = 0.50$) exerted both direct and indirect effects, confirming its dual role in strategic direction and institutional coordination. Effective leadership amplifies the benefits of other variables such as government support and academic ability. Meanwhile, student quality ($\beta = 0.59$ total effect) emerged as a surprising but vital contributor, suggesting that student engagement, readiness, and motivation are essential to organizational success.

5.3 Government Support as an Indirect Enabler

While government support had a moderate direct effect ($\beta = 0.26$), its real value manifested through indirect channels—via leadership (H6) and teaching quality (H4). This implies that policy and funding alone are insufficient; institutional effectiveness depends on how well these resources are channeled through operational leadership and teaching processes.

5.4 Implications for Educational Management

This model highlights a holistic interaction among cognitive, structural, and motivational factors:

Academic ability not only supports teaching quality (H1) but also directly enhances performance (H2), underlining the value of admissions criteria and curriculum depth.

Achievement motivation ($\beta = 0.50$) reflects the importance of fostering intrinsic and extrinsic drives within students and faculty.

Personal staff coordination ($\beta = 0.41$) contributes both independently and through improved instructional practices (H10).

These findings validate the comprehensive nature of the model and provide a strategic framework for improving management performance in music education institutions.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

This study developed and validated a causal model explaining how factors such as academic ability, teaching quality, leadership, government support, achievement motivation, staff coordination, and student quality influence management performance in social music education institutions in Jiangxi Province. Through structural equation modeling, all twelve hypotheses were supported, affirming the model's theoretical soundness and empirical robustness.

The most influential factor was teaching quality, acting both as a direct driver and a mediating variable. Student quality and leadership also emerged as key determinants, underscoring the centrality of engaged learners and effective institutional governance. Government support was impactful mainly through indirect paths, reinforcing its enabling role rather than as a standalone determinant.

These findings underscore the importance of developing a holistic management approach in music education—one that prioritizes professional teaching practices, student development, and leadership effectiveness, all supported by consistent policy frameworks and academic excellence.

6.2 Recommendations

Enhance Teaching Quality: Implement continuous teacher training programs focused on interdisciplinary methods, digital music tools, and student-centered pedagogy.

Foster Strategic Leadership: Develop structured leadership pipelines through mentoring, leadership workshops, and participatory governance structures.

Improve Government Support: Strengthen policy frameworks by increasing funding for music programs, supporting faculty development, and providing digital infrastructure.

Support Student Development: Launch mentorship, early talent development, and performance opportunities to improve student quality and institutional outcomes.

Optimize Staff Collaboration: Introduce team-based management systems, reward schemes, and communication frameworks to boost staff coordination and efficiency.

6.3 Contributions and Implications

Academic Contributions: The study provides empirical validation for a comprehensive model of organizational performance in music education and bridges gaps between education management theory and arts-based instruction.

Practical Implications: Institutions can adopt the model to guide reforms in leadership structures, curriculum design, and stakeholder engagement.

Policy Impact: Government agencies may utilize these findings to inform funding decisions, policy initiatives, and music education advocacy at regional and national levels.

6.4 Future Research Directions

Longitudinal Studies: Track institutional changes over time to understand long-term impacts of interventions.

Comparative Studies: Extend the model to other provinces or countries to test its generalizability.

Digital Integration: Explore the impact of AI tools, online platforms, and blended learning in music education management.

Socio-Cultural Variables: Include external factors such as socioeconomic status and cultural values in future models for a more comprehensive understanding.

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