


Reencanto: An integrative review of music therapy and young children

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ABSTRACT

Context: the work carried out in Music Therapy has been conquering new spaces in recent years and, from there, it started to be carried out in the school environment. Therefore, this study seeks to address the music therapy process with preschool children in the context of early childhood education. **Methodology:** an integrative review was carried out using the combination of the terms "music therapy in a school context", "social and community music therapy" and "preschool children", searched for research published in the PubMed, LILACS, in addition to Google Scholar databases and in the magazines *Incantare* and *Revista Brasileira de Musicoterapia*, characterized as gray literature, between the years 2013 and 2023. **Results:** 1,811 studies were found and, based on the inclusion criteria, three studies were selected, one published in Latin America and two in Europe. **Conclusion:** theoretical possibilities, possibilities of action, evaluation and eligible audiences that the research included in the study allowed to identify were listed. The need for future studies in the field of Music Therapy in an Educational Context is also highlighted.

Keywords: Music Therapy, Preschool Children, Early Childhood Education, Social and Community Music Therapy, Music Therapy in the Educational Context.

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INTRODUCTION

Music Therapy has become a vast field of knowledge, with several possibilities of action, advancing and directing itself to different environments in relation to the usual *setting* (Arndt; Wedge; Volpi, 2016). Of these new investments, the practice of music therapy in the school environment presents itself as a promising area of professional activity.

The perspective of Social and Community Music Therapy is the theoretical path, in dialogue with Music Therapy in an Educational Context, by which the author of this work is oriented, thinking of the daycare environment as a welcoming field, which goes beyond the process of introduction to school life. Gomes (2011), through complex thinking, understands the role of the school as that of "seeking to transform the instrumental approach of knowledge into a humanistic approach, serving as a subsidy for the strengthening of self-esteem" (p. 26).

By making use of music to welcome groups of individuals, the music therapist is faced with what Zampronha (2007) describes as an affective scheme, which is awakened by music and stimulates bodily activities, allowing the listener to reveal himself. Gomes (2011) also adds that musical language, with regard to meaning and signifier, is purely structural, however, through listening, emotions and drives that escape the logical regime are accessed.

From the social and community perspective of Music Therapy, Cunha (2016) thinks of this practice as "an action based on the encounter between people who are willing to exercise solidarity, survival, resistance, confrontation, permission and welcoming" (p. 112). This is in line with the reflections of Moraes (2003 *apud* Gomes, 2011) about education needing a "re-enchantment" in the search to make the school environment "a place of enchantment and beauty, a place where creativity prevails and joy and new values are cultivated" (p.43). The author highlights that "it is in this perspective that we believe in the contribution that the music therapist can bring to the educational area through his or her sensitive look and performance" (Gomes, 2011, p. 43).

By basing this work on bringing to dialogue authors from the Social and Community perspective of Music Therapy, it seeks to understand the individual as a member of a group, who has the possibility of experiencing encounters that increase, decrease or do not interfere with their potentiality. Reflection in this perspective is deposited in people and in the plot of their daily lives, their feeling, acting, thinking and relating. The work of the music therapist, then, is to - through musical making - to become a mediator of good encounters, promoting the "possible space for sharing, exchange of knowledge, and increase of the power of action through creative actions" (Arndt, Cunha and Volpi, 2016, p. 391).

Here, 'potency' or 'potentiality' is understood from the perspective of Spinoza (1663/2013) and the interpretation of the author's writings given by Arndt, Cunha and Volpi (2016). In this system of thought, the author understands "potency" as an expression of the nature of each being, which is



revealed in its existence and in the way it relates to the environment. Thus, potency is inherent in each being, reflecting its essence and its interconnectedness with the world around it.

Starting from this meeting of people willing to welcome and solidarity, it is believed that, in the preschool environment, the music therapist can bring re-enchantment, permission to be creative, and increase their potential through musical making.

Gomes (2011) also mentions changes in the way of thinking within schools, describing a perspective that seeks to value the person as a creative and emotional being. At the same time, the thought of Paulo Freire (2021) is articulated, who understands that the human being has become more than a being in the world, he has become a presence in the world, with the world and with others. Thus, recognizing the other as "not me" and recognizing oneself as "oneself" – a transforming agent, who intervenes, who speaks of what he does and what he dreams, who breaks.

Considering the Brazilian educational environment in current times, it is worth mentioning the presence and growth of Inclusive Education, which is guaranteed by Law No. 12,796/2013, which establishes "free specialized educational service to students with disabilities [...] at all levels, stages and modalities, preferably in the regular education network" (Brasil, 2013).

Gomes (2011), in line with what Ferreira (2007) postulates, writes that "it is necessary to stop thinking about education from a simplistic and reductionist perspective", defending "a more humanitarian and fairer education" incorporating concepts such as "interdisciplinarity, individualization, collaboration, awareness and sensitization" (p. 10). Accordingly, the Salamanca Declaration states that:

those with special educational needs should have access to regular schooling, which should accommodate them within a child-centered pedagogy, capable of satisfying such needs (UNESCO, 1994, p.1).

Paulo Freire (2021) states that - in true learning - students become subjects of construction and reconstruction of knowledge, each one being - including the educator - subjects of the process. In this process, the work of inclusion must be brought into schools, which "must recognize and respond to the diverse needs of their students, [...] ensuring quality education for all through an appropriate curriculum [...]" (UNESCO, 1994, p. 5).

Freire (2021) brings in his reflection the understanding that "we are conditioned beings, but not determined" (p.20). With this, we can "recognize that history is a time of possibility and not of determinism, that the future [...] it is problematic and not inexorable" (Freire, 2021, p.20). This excerpt allows the author to get closer to what Arndt, Cunha and Volpi (2016) understand in Social and Community music therapy practice, since space is opened for the group to recognize its history at the same time as the experience and construct it.

In her writings, the author Araceli Onório (2012) warns of a manifestation of new



subjectivities whose dimensions have brought to light people who act in a refractory way to the word. She understands that this manifestation comes in the impossibility of asking for help, since there is no message directed to the other. This "other" is understood as the "source of all evil", "someone to tolerate it because the discourse of diversity is fashionable" (Onório, 2012, p. 23). Thus, and in line with the thought of Zamprona (2007), it is sought through musical making to access affections that go beyond the word and allow the listener to reveal himself.

Aiming at Freire's (2021) writings on the Pedagogy of Autonomy, reflections on music therapy practices in the school environment, as well as the Social and Community perspective of Music Therapy, the following guiding question arises: **What possibilities⁴ are presented in the music therapy process with preschool children in the context of early childhood education?**

The proposal is justified through the need to find readings on the subject and audience during the internship practice. And through this, the observation - also reached by Gomes (2011), that, in Brazil, "there are few researches in the area of Music Therapy in Education" (p. 13). According to the author and Nascimento and Domingues (2009), Music Therapy in the school context is a field to be explored, triggering new investigations in the area, opening new possibilities of work and a new paradigm. Gomes (2011) also points out that this area of activity is seen as "a possibility for the advancement of music therapy practices, favoring the construction of knowledge in various actions in this field [...]" (p. 48).

Finally, in this work, we seek to understand the performance of the music therapist professional in the school context as a member of the system that corroborates the acceptance of creativity and the being that is inserted in the group, seeking to promote encounters that increase the power of these human beings. Thinking with Gomes (2011), the student inserted in the school context will be seen as an integral part of the whole, which suffers diverse influences, being the source of the sound that is heard and welcomed, understood as being active in the group and belonging to it, worthy of the choice about oneself and the human gaze.

METHODOLOGY

It is an Integrative Literature Review, based on what Souza and Carvalho (2010) propose, with data collection carried out from secondary sources, which allows the survey and analysis of research published in journals indexed in virtual databases.

The following steps were carried out for the development of the Integrative Review: definition of the research question, establishment of inclusion and exclusion criteria with the literature search, definition of the information to be extracted from the included articles, critical

⁴ Here, the meaning of the word is understood by something that is possible (Possibility, 2024) that can happen (Possibility, 2024)



analysis of the results presented in the included articles, and synthesis of the data.

1ST STEP: GUIDING QUESTION

The guiding question of this Integrative Review was defined : **What possibilities are presented in the music therapy process with preschool children in the context of early childhood education?**

2ND STAGE: LITERATURE SEARCH

Terms and combinations of the descriptors music therapy; children and early childhood education; were prepared for search in the PubMed/MEDLINE, Latin American and Caribbean Health Sciences Literature (LILACS) search databases. In addition, searches were carried out in the gray literature through *Google Scholar* and in specific journals in the area, such as the Brazilian Journal of Music Therapy and Revista Incantare.

The following inclusion criteria were established:

- Original articles, available for free in full format, published in Portuguese or English, between 2013 and 2023
- Articles published by music therapists or where one of the authors is a music therapist.
- Articles in which the researched audience has been preschool children.

The following exclusion criteria were established:

- Reviews, conference proceedings, opinion articles, reflection articles and editorials.

STEP 3: DATA COLLECTION

After searching the search databases, the articles were managed using the *EndNote Web software* (Thomson Reuters, Toronto – Canada).

Initially, the studies were selected based on the reading of the titles and abstracts. In a second moment, the full reading was done and they were selected according to compliance with the inclusion and exclusion criteria established in this review.

The search protocol for the searches in the databases is as follows:

Chart 1 - Search protocol in the databases

	SEARCH BASES
PubMED	1. (“music therapy” [MeSh] OR “music therapy” OR “music” [MeSh] OR “music” OR “social and community music therapy”) AND 2. (“preschool children” [MeSh] OR “preschool children” OR “preschool child” [MeSh] OR “preschool child” OR “preschool” [MeSh] OR “preschool” OR “child” [MeSh] OR “child” OR “children” [MeSh] OR “children” OR “toddler”)
LILACS	("music therapy" OR "musicoterapia" OR "terapia musical" OR "social and community music therapy" OR "musicoterapia social e comunitária" OR "musicoterapia social y comunitaria") AND ("preeschool children" OR "preschool girls" OR "preschool girls" OR "preschool children" OR "preschool child" OR "preschool girl" OR "preschool girl" OR "preschool children" OR "children" OR "crianças" OR "girls" OR "boy" OR "child" OR "criança" OR "girl" OR "boy" OR "toddler" OR "toddler" OR "little girl" OR "little girl" OR "little boy")
CONSCIENTIOUS LITERATURE Brazilian Journal of Music Therapy and InCantare magazine	("music therapy" OR "musicoterapia" OR "terapia musical" OR "social and community music therapy" OR "musicoterapia social e comunitária" OR "musicoterapia social y comunitaria") AND ("preeschool children" OR "preschool girls" OR "preschool girls" OR "preschool children" OR "preschool child" OR "preschool girl" OR "preschool girl" OR "preschool children" OR "children" OR "crianças" OR "girls" OR "boy" OR "child" OR "criança" OR "girl" OR "boy" OR "toddler" OR "toddler" OR "little girl" OR "little girl" OR "little boy")
GOOGLE SCHOLAR	“social and community music therapy in preschool”

Source: The authors (2023).

4TH STEP: EXTRACTION OF DATA FROM THE INCLUDED STUDIES

The data extraction protocol has a title, author, date, country of origin, research objective, sample, music therapy procedure applied, data collection instruments used, variables analyzed, results and conclusions.

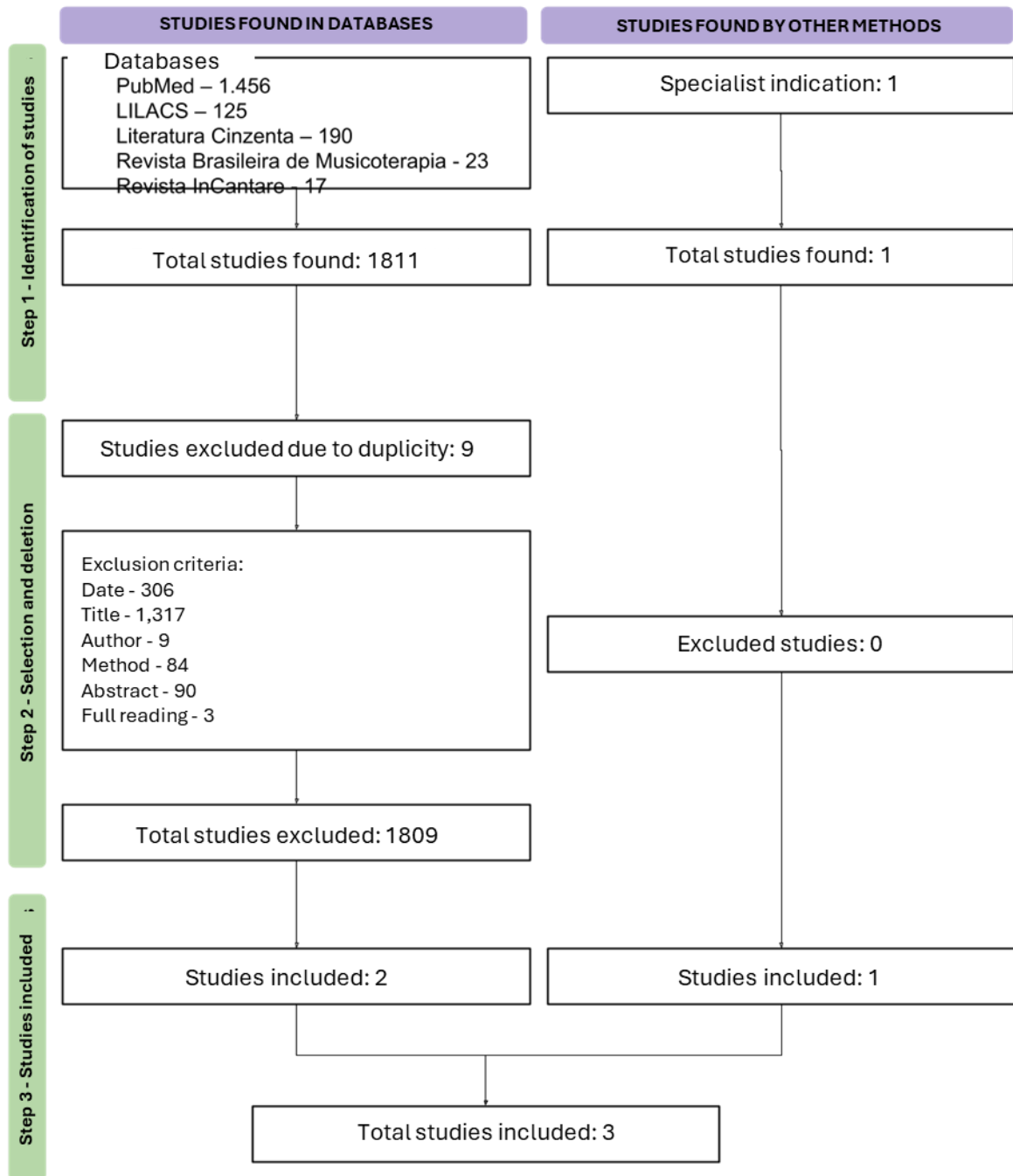
5th Stage: critical analysis of the data and discussion of the results.

RESULTS

Based on the research protocol presented, 1,456 studies were found in the PubMed/Medline database, 125 studies in the Latin American and Caribbean Health Sciences Literature (LILACS), the search in the gray literature resulted in 190 studies in *Google Scholar*, 23 in the Brazilian Journal of Music Therapy and 17 in the InCantare Journal, generating a total of $n = 1,811$. In addition to the studies provided by the research in the bibliography, a study suggested by a specialist was also considered.

During the selection stage, 1,809 studies were excluded, 306 of which were based on the date of publication; 1,317 for reading the title; nine that were not published by at least one music therapist; 84 non-original studies; 90 excluded by reading the abstract and three by reading it in full. Two studies found through the research protocol and one study indicated by the specialist were chosen for this review, totaling $n = 3$.

Figure 1 - Flowchart of the selection of studies



Source: The authors (2023).

Table 2: Result of the extraction of materials

No	AUTHOR	DATE	COUNTRY	STUDY DESIGN	OBJECTIVE	PARTICIPANTS	METHODOLOGY	RESULTS
1	BLANKY-VORONOV; GILBOA, 2022	2022	Switzerland	Quantitative analysis based on observations of recordings and semi-structured interviews	Initially examine the "Ensemble" treatment and determine if it has the potential to improve children's social skills	24 children between 5 and 6 years old, 24 mothers and 23 teachers	Qualitative quantitative mixed study, using video analysis and counting of key behaviors (quantitative) and semi-structured interviews (qualitative)	The "Ensemble" treatment improved the children's social skills both within the group and in other social contexts. The results were positive regardless of the diverse composition of the group, which indicates the potential of the "Ensemble" treatment with various clinical populations.
2	CUNHA; MAYNARDES, 2020	2020	Brazil	Description of the use of sound properties in music therapy sessions.	Describe ways in which the properties of sound have been used in Music Therapy meetings to facilitate communication with a group of infants and young children	Young children and infants, age not given	Description of the meetings through field notes after the end of the activities with weekly supervisions. And case reports of each service performed.	Changes were observed in the way participants relate to music, to each other and to the therapists
3	CARVALHO, 2022.	2022	Portugal	Report of the curricular internship of the Master's Degree in Music Therapy carried out in an inclusive school.	To present case studies based on the music therapy work carried out in an inclusive school.	Preschool children attending inclusive school.	Analysis of the music therapy process, presenting results of research tools.	There were improvements in most of the IMTAP domains evaluated, and the articulation and integration of the music therapist in the multidisciplinary team that intervenes directly with the children, whether during teaching or non-teaching activities, is crucial.

Source: The authors (2023).

From the table presented, it can be seen that the qualitative studies were mostly in relation to the quantitative ones, and the one that considers the quantitative analysis is of mixed character. Each



selected study was represented by a country of origin, namely Switzerland, Brazil, and Portugal, the first two being published in English and the last in Portuguese, all between the years 2020 and 2022.

The results presented by the studies showed improvements in social skills, in the relationship of participants with music, therapists and each other, and an improvement was also found in the assessment of the domains of the Individualized *Music Therapy Assessment Profile* – IMTAP (Baxter *et al.*, 2007). The authors of articles 1 and 2 highlighted the need for future studies, whether for the validation of music therapy treatment – as is the case of the study of the "*Ensemble*" treatment – or with the aim of exposing the limitation of the literature on the population and the theme researched.

The theme 'social relations' was present in all the studies analyzed, having been presented in different ways. In the study by Blanky-Voronov and Gilboa (2022), participants' social skills were directly surveyed and key behaviors were quantified for survey data collection. In the study by Cunha and Maynardes (2020), social relationships were addressed as one of the results of the music therapy intervention, considering that at the end of the meetings the authors noticed changes in the children's relationship with the people around them. The exploratory study in the social and community context conducted by Carvalho (2022) allows us to understand that the intervention of music therapy in a community context has the potential to have a positive impact "at the level of the emotional area, allowing the promotion of the expression of feelings and emotions, and the social area, facilitating and improving social interaction and awareness of the other" (p. 93-94).

DISCUSSION

The objective of the present study was, through an integrative literature review, to present the possibilities presented in the music therapy process with preschool children in the context of early childhood education.

The results of the search show that the volume of publications on the subject and, especially, on the surveyed public is scarce. During the literature search process, 1,811 publications were surveyed, of which only two studies met all the inclusion criteria. In addition to these publications, the article suggested by the specialist was included, which totaled the three studies analyzed in this research. With this number of publications, it is not possible to envision a generalized panorama of music therapy in the school context with the public that includes preschool children.

Therefore, as a first reflection, there is the need for scientific studies in the field of Music Therapy in the School Context and applied to the preschool public. Cunha and Maynardes (2021) bring the same mishap in their reflection, highlighting:

Music therapy studies that focus on infants without health problems are quite limited in the Brazilian literature. More research is needed to support music therapy practices with this population. Studies on the subject can consider the increase in empirical knowledge about



each of the sound properties and their impacts on music therapy interactions with infants and young children (p. 230).

It is also worth noting that the music therapist's own performance in the school context is recent and when it comes to working with "normative individuals" - that is, individuals without mental, sensory or physical disabilities and psychiatric conditions - the limitations are even more prominent (Nascimento; Gomes; Brazil, 2009; Gomes, 2011). Professor Sandra Rocha Nascimento *et al.*, who conducted a study group on Music Therapy in Education (NEPAM/EMAC/UFG) in 2006, write in their article "Applicability of Music Therapy in Education: challenges and possibilities":

We realize that some difficulties manifested by professionals and parents of students, regarding the understanding of the real applicability of Music Therapy and its effectiveness within the educational context, as well as its differentiation from the musical practice promoted by other areas of knowledge, may be associated with the existence of few studies related to the theme [...] (Nascimento; Gomes; Brasil, 2009, p. 389).

With this, it can be understood that the need for research in the educational area within the field of Music Therapy comes together with the pioneering of professional performance within schools and educational institutions.

Within the public policies for education, Nascimento, Gomes and Brasil (2009) think of the practice of the music therapist in school as a factor that provides the generation of an environment without judgment, observing the individual from other angles, in addition to his difficulty. This thought is in line with what is thought in social and community music therapy practice, a theoretical line that guided one of the articles analyzed in this research. In it, the authors Cunha and Maynardes (2021) understand that this perspective of work goes beyond the *setting* to reach its audience, the work happens where the community lives and relates to each other (Stige; Aaro, 2012 *apud* Cunha and Maynardes, 2021).

It is possible to make a comparison between the studies located in this research, in order to identify their differences. The first study (article 1) is based on quantitative-qualitative analysis, using behavior counting to generate quantitative information and interviews for qualitative information, while the other two (articles 2 and 3) are based on qualitative analysis, using reports and case studies. In addition, during the analysis of the publications, different lines of thought can be perceived.

Article 1 of Table 2 is based on behavioral foundations, while article 2 is based on authors of Social and Community Music Therapy such as Even Ruud. In the aforementioned research, the concern with mutual care and the humanization of institutions and communities is evident. Thus, the authors affirm that the concept of disease adopted by the biomedical model is challenged, and the understanding that "poor health and deficiencies have to be seen as a whole" (Ruud, 2004, p.11) is put on the agenda. Article 3 of the table, on the other hand, is based on multiple theories, understanding that work in the area differs from clinical work due to the non-pathological approach and the opening



of greater possibilities for learning and cognitive and social development with the objective of expanding musical experiences beyond formal learning. The author points out that "musical experience, from this perspective, can stimulate the student to deal with their realities of autonomy and dependence, facilitating the construction of a more complete being with a better quality of life" (Cunha and Volpi, 2008 *apud* Carvalho, 2022, p. 22). The cultural distance of the published studies is also evident, considering that the countries that each one represents belong to Latin America (Brazil) and Europe (Portugal and Switzerland), this indicates that choices such as methodology, theoretical foundation, among others may have been influenced by the cultural environment from which the authors originate.

From the theoretical framework of the articles found, it is possible to understand an approximation of thought by the authors Cunha and Maynardes (2021) and Carvalho (2022), who start from authors with social and community perspectives. On the other hand, the work of Blanky-Voronov and Gilboa (2022), is based on studies that consider participants' behaviors and social skills. The authors bring research that found that music therapy increased receptivity to positive social behaviors and encouraged interactions with aggressive peer groups. From this point of view, the authors developed the "*Ensemble*" tool, which aims to "develop and improve children's social skills, unfolding into 6 sub-goals and 12 measurable behaviors" (Blanky-Voronov; Gilboa, 2022 p.3).

Regarding the target audience, article 3 of the table presented describes the research participants as children enrolled in inclusive schools who were diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder - ASD, Emotional and Behavioral Disorders and Intellectual and Motor Development Disorders. The author sheds light on the understanding that the literature points out that most interventions in the school context are related to disorders - whether of behavioral, social origin and emotional regulation - and to special educational needs, with emphasis on the ASD public (Carr; Wigram, 2009; Gattino; Reis, 2019 *apud* Carvalho, 2022). In article 2, the target audience of the study was children who did not have health problems, which allowed the authors to analyze the effects of sound properties during the music therapy process in children in typical development for their age. Article 1 included children who had not undergone a medical diagnosis process, but presented difficulties in the classroom and in daily life related to the social skills that were expected to be developed at the age in which they were.

Finally, some of the possibilities in the music therapy process found by the authors of the analyzed studies can be outlined. Starting from theoretical possibilities, where each author found in literature a starting point that proved to be different from the others; moving on to possibilities of professional action, which mostly covered work with groups and individual work. Music therapy assessment scales were also presented, such as the *Individualized Music Therapy Assessment Profile* – IMTAP (Baxteer *et al.*, 2007), also scales *Music in Everyday Life* – MEL (Gottfried; Thompson;



Elefant; Gold, 2018), in addition to Rolando Benenzon's Music Therapy File (1985). In addition, the researchers studied chose to reach different audiences, even though they all had the age group in common, which denotes possibilities for varied audiences with different needs.

CONCLUSION

Music Therapy in an Educational Context is constantly expanding, especially in the context of inclusive education. In addition, music therapy interventions were also possible in this context from the Social and Community perspective, under which it is understood that professional performance can cross the walls of the *setting* and go where the participant is.

By outlining the objectives of this research, we sought to identify possibilities in the music therapy process of the studies analyzed. Thus, theoretical possibilities, action, evaluation and eligible audiences that the research included in the study allowed to identify were listed. This shows that the music therapy process in the school context with preschool children is a field with clear possibilities, which can be explored and deserves to be explored.

In view of the points presented in this research, it is possible to perceive the relevance of producing studies that encompass Music Therapy in the Educational Context, especially with preschool children, whether they are public of inclusive education or not. With this, it is expected that in the future the literature will allow a diversity of scientific productions that give rise to a consolidated development of professional performance in the area.



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