

Correlation Between Listening to Music, Emotion Regulation, and Learning Focus Among English Education Study Program Students at Tadulako University

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ABSTRACT

Listening to music has become a common learning strategy among university students because it may support emotional well-being and concentration during academic activities. However, previous studies have mainly examined the relationship between music listening and emotion regulation or learning focus separately, leaving the correlation among these three variables insufficiently explored, particularly in English language learning contexts. This study aimed to examine the correlation between listening to music, emotion regulation, and learning focus among students of the English Education Study Program at Tadulako University. A quantitative correlational design involving 40 students selected through purposive sampling was employed. Data were collected using a 36-item researcher-developed questionnaire based on indicators of music-listening behavior, emotion regulation, and learning focus derived from relevant theoretical frameworks. The instrument was administered using a Likert scale and analyzed using descriptive statistics, the Shapiro-Wilk normality test, and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation. The findings revealed a very strong positive correlation between listening to music and emotion regulation ($r = 0.919$, $p < .001$), a moderate positive correlation between listening to music and learning focus ($r = 0.524$, $p = .001$), and a weak positive but statistically insignificant correlation between emotion regulation and learning focus ($r = 0.261$, $p = .104$). The findings suggest that listening to music is positively associated with students' emotional regulation and learning focus during English learning activities.

Keywords: *Listening to Music, Emotion Regulation, Learning Focus, English Education, Correlational Study*

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INTRODUCTION

Listening to music has become a common practice among university students, particularly during independent learning activities. Many students listen to music while reading, writing assignments, or preparing for examinations because they believe that music creates a more comfortable learning environment and helps them maintain concentration. Beyond its function as entertainment, music has increasingly been recognized as a learning strategy that supports both emotional well-being and cognitive performance. As higher education emphasizes the development of self-regulated learners, understanding how listening to music contributes to students' emotional and cognitive experiences has become an important concern in educational research. Music is therefore considered not only a recreational activity but also a potential factor influencing students' learning processes and academic engagement.

Theoretically, the relationship among music listening, emotion regulation, and learning focus can be explained through emotion regulation theory and theories of attention in learning. Listening to music can function as an emotion regulation strategy because musical characteristics, such as tempo, rhythm, and mood, may help individuals change, maintain, or regulate their emotional states according to situational needs (Gross, 1998; Saarikallio & Erkkilä, 2007). A more stable emotional state may subsequently support attention and concentration during academic activities. From the perspective of cognitive load theory,

positive or well-regulated emotional states may reduce irrelevant mental distractions, allowing greater cognitive resources to be allocated to learning tasks (Sweller et al., 2019). In addition, arousal and attention theories suggest that music with certain characteristics can influence an individual's level of arousal and, under appropriate conditions, help maintain attention toward a task (Husain et al., 2002). Thus, music listening may theoretically be associated with both emotion regulation and learning focus, although these relationships may vary according to musical characteristics, individual preferences, task demands, and learning conditions.

Listening to music has been associated with various psychological benefits that may support students during learning activities. Previous studies have suggested that music can improve mood, reduce stress, and create a positive learning atmosphere. Saarikallio & Erkkilä (2007) explained that individuals intentionally use music as a strategy to regulate their emotional states through mood enhancement, emotional expression, and relaxation. Similarly, Thoma et al. (2013) reported that listening to music significantly reduced physiological stress responses, indicating that music functions as an effective emotional regulation strategy. More recently, Julia et al. (2025) found that music consumption patterns were positively associated with emotion regulation and students' coping strategies in academic settings. These findings suggest that listening to music may help students manage emotional challenges encountered during learning activities while promoting psychological well-being.

Emotion regulation has long been recognized as one of the key psychological factors influencing students' learning experiences. It refers to learners' ability to manage, control, and modify their emotional responses in ways that facilitate academic engagement and goal achievement. According to Pekrun (2006), students who effectively regulate their emotions are more likely to maintain motivation, remain actively engaged during learning activities, and respond adaptively to academic challenges. Likewise, Zimmerman (2002) emphasized that successful learners regulate not only cognitive processes but also emotional conditions in order to optimize learning outcomes. Nadeem et al. (2023) further reported that students with better emotion regulation generally demonstrate stronger academic performance because they are able to manage stress, control anxiety, and sustain motivation throughout the learning process. Therefore, emotion regulation is considered an essential component of effective learning, particularly in higher education where students frequently encounter demanding academic tasks.

Besides emotional factors, learning focus is another important element contributing to successful learning. Learning focus refers to students' ability to sustain attention, process information effectively, and remain cognitively engaged during academic activities. Maintaining concentration is particularly important in English language learning because students are required to process linguistic information continuously while completing various learning tasks. Previous studies have indicated that music may contribute positively to learning focus by creating a comfortable learning environment and minimizing distractions. Lesiuk (2005) found that listening to music improved task performance through positive emotional conditions, while Vigl et al. (2023) reported that self-selected instrumental music enhanced students' motivation, concentration, and sustained attention. Similarly, Muslimah (2020) observed that many university students perceived music as beneficial for maintaining concentration during independent study. These findings indicate that music may support cognitive performance when used appropriately during learning activities.

The relationships among listening to music, emotion regulation, and learning focus can be explained through several educational and psychological theories. From the perspective of Self-Regulated Learning Theory, Zimmerman (2002) argued that effective learners actively regulate cognitive, motivational, and emotional processes to achieve academic goals. In addition, the Arousal-Mood Hypothesis proposes that music influences cognitive performance indirectly through changes in emotional arousal and mood, whereas Cognitive Load Theory suggests that reducing unnecessary distractions enables learners to allocate cognitive resources more efficiently during learning tasks. Collectively, these theoretical

perspectives suggest that listening to music may contribute to better emotion regulation, which subsequently supports students' ability to maintain learning focus during academic activities.

Previous studies have consistently reported positive relationships between listening to music and emotion regulation as well as between listening to music and learning performance. However, most of these studies have examined the variables separately or focused only on two-variable relationships. Consequently, empirical evidence investigating listening to music, emotion regulation, and learning focus simultaneously within a single correlational framework remains limited. Furthermore, only a few studies have specifically examined these relationships among university students in English language learning contexts, particularly in Indonesian higher education. This limitation indicates that the interrelationships among these three variables have not been comprehensively explored and therefore warrant further investigation.

The English Education Study Program at Tadulako University provides an appropriate context for examining these relationships because many students regularly listen to music while completing English learning activities, including reading, writing, and preparing academic assignments. As English learning requires sustained attention, emotional stability, and continuous engagement, investigating how listening to music relates to emotion regulation and learning focus may provide valuable insights into students' learning experiences. Moreover, understanding these relationships may contribute to developing learning strategies that support students' emotional well-being and academic engagement in higher education.

Based on these considerations, this study aimed to examine the correlation between listening to music, emotion regulation, and learning focus among students of the English Education Study Program at Tadulako University. Using a quantitative correlational design and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis, this study investigated whether significant relationships exist among the three variables. The findings are expected to enrich the existing literature on affective and cognitive factors in English language learning while providing practical implications for students, lecturers, and future researchers regarding the role of music in supporting effective learning experiences.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative correlational research design to examine the relationships among listening to music, emotion regulation, and learning focus among students of the English Education Study Program at Tadulako University. A correlational research design is appropriate when researchers aim to examine the strength and direction of relationships among variables without manipulating the variables under investigation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The study adopted a cross-sectional approach, in which data on all variables were collected at a single point in time, allowing the relationships among the variables to be examined within a specific population and period. The collected data were then analysed quantitatively using appropriate statistical procedures to determine the relationships among listening to music, emotion regulation, and learning focus.

Respondents

The respondents were 40 students of the English Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Tadulako University. The participants were selected using purposive sampling based on predetermined inclusion criteria. Students were eligible to participate if they were actively enrolled in the English Education Study Program and regularly listened to music while studying English independently. These criteria were established because the study specifically investigated the relationships among listening to music, emotion regulation, and learning focus within English learning activities.

Instruments

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of 36 items designed to measure three research variables: Listening to Music, Emotion Regulation, and Learning Focus. Each variable was represented by 12 statements developed from relevant theoretical indicators identified in previous studies. The questionnaire employed a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree), with higher scores indicating higher levels of the measured construct.

Prior to the main analysis, the reliability of each instrument was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to determine internal consistency. The reliability analysis indicated that all instruments were reliable for research purposes, with Cronbach's Alpha values of 0.784 for Listening to Music, 0.877 for Emotion Regulation, and 0.830 for Learning Focus. Since all coefficients exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Taber, 2018), the questionnaire was considered suitable for subsequent statistical analyses. In addition to the questionnaire, students' academic achievement scores were collected from one relevant English course as supporting information. However, these scores were analysed descriptively and were not included as research variables in the correlation analysis.

The questionnaire consisted of 36 items designed to measure three dimensions: music listening, emotion regulation, and learning focus. The music-listening dimension measured students' frequency, purpose, and patterns of listening to music during academic activities; the emotion-regulation dimension assessed students' use of music to manage, maintain, or change their emotional states; and the learning-focus dimension measured students' concentration, attention, and ability to remain focused during learning activities. All items were rated using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Sample items included "I listen to music while studying English," "Listening to music helps me manage my emotions when studying," and "I can maintain my concentration while studying with music." The questionnaire was researcher-developed based on relevant theoretical indicators and was reviewed for content validity by [number] experts. The instrument was then tested for reliability using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding a coefficient of [$\alpha = \dots$], indicating [acceptable/good/high] internal consistency. These procedures ensured that the questionnaire adequately represented the three dimensions and provided consistent measurements for the main study.

Procedures

Prior to data collection, permission was obtained from the English Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Tadulako University. The researcher informed participants about the objectives of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and the confidentiality of their responses. The questionnaire was then distributed online through Google Forms to facilitate efficient data collection. After all questionnaires had been completed, the responses were downloaded and screened to ensure completeness and accuracy. Only complete responses were included in the final dataset. Subsequently, students' academic achievement scores were obtained from the official academic records of one relevant English course and matched with the questionnaire responses using participant codes before being entered into IBM SPSS Statistics version 24 for analysis.

Data Analysis

The data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 24. Descriptive statistics were first calculated to summarize the characteristics of each variable, including the minimum score, maximum score, mean, and standard deviation. Instrument reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, while data normality was assessed using the Shapiro-Wilk test because the sample consisted of fewer than 50 respondents. Since all variables met the assumption of normality, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis was conducted to

examine the relationships among listening to music, emotion regulation, and learning focus. Correlation coefficients were interpreted according to Evans (1996) guidelines, and statistical significance was determined at the 0.05 level. Academic achievement data were analysed descriptively and presented only as supporting information because they were not included in the correlation analysis.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the statistical analyses conducted to examine the relationships among listening to music, emotion regulation, and learning focus among students of the English Education Study Program at Tadulako University. The findings are presented sequentially, beginning with the reliability analysis of the research instruments, followed by descriptive statistics, normality testing, and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis.

Table 1. Reliability Test of the Research Instruments

Variabel	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items	Interpretation
Listening to Music	0.784	12	Reliable
Emotion Regulation	0.877	12	Reliable
Learning Focus	0.830	12	Reliable

Prior to the main analysis, the internal consistency of the research instruments was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. As presented in Table 1, all three instruments demonstrated acceptable reliability. The Listening to Music instrument obtained a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.784, while the Emotion Regulation and Learning Focus instruments achieved coefficients of 0.877 and 0.830, respectively. Since all coefficients exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Taber, 2018), the questionnaire was considered reliable and appropriate for subsequent statistical analyses. Among the three variables, the Emotion Regulation instrument demonstrated the highest level of internal consistency.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

Variabel	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Listening to Music	40	22	46	33.70	4.74
Emotion Regulation	40	17	46	33.40	5.50
Learning Focus	40	23	46	34.53	5.12

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of the three research variables obtained from 40 respondents. Listening to Music recorded a mean score of 33.70 (SD = 4.74), while Emotion Regulation obtained a mean score of 33.40 (SD = 5.50). Meanwhile, Learning Focus demonstrated the highest average score among the three variables, with a mean of 34.53 (SD = 5.12). Overall, the descriptive statistics indicate that respondents reported relatively positive perceptions regarding their music-listening habits, emotion regulation, and learning focus. Furthermore, the relatively similar standard deviation values suggest a moderate level of variability among participants' responses, providing an appropriate basis for further statistical analyses.

Table 3. Shapiro-Wilk Normality Test

Variable	Statistics	Sig.	Interpretation
Listening to Music	0.973	0.432	Normal
Emotion Regulation	0.963	0.206	Normal
Learning Focus	0.954	0.107	Normal

As shown in Table 3, the Shapiro-Wilk normality test indicated that all research variables were normally distributed. The significance values for Listening to Music ($p = 0.432$), Emotion Regulation ($p = 0.206$), and Learning Focus ($p = 0.107$) were all greater than the significance level of 0.05. Therefore, the assumption of normality was satisfied, indicating that the data were appropriate for Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis.

Table 4. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Analysis

Variable	r	p	Interpretation
Listening to Music – Emotion Regulation	0.919	< .001	Very strong positive, significant
Listening to Music – Learning Focus	0.524	.001	Moderate positive, significant
Emotion Regulation – Learning Focus	0.261	.104	Weak positive, not Significant

Table 4 presents the results of the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis. The strongest relationship was found between Listening to Music and Emotion Regulation ($r = 0.919$, $p < .001$), indicating a statistically significant very strong positive correlation. A statistically significant moderate positive correlation was also observed between Listening to Music and Learning Focus ($r = 0.524$, $p = .001$). In contrast, the relationship between Emotion Regulation and Learning Focus was weak and not statistically significant ($r = 0.261$, $p = .104$). These findings indicate that although Listening to Music was significantly associated with both Emotion Regulation and Learning Focus, Emotion Regulation was not significantly associated with Learning Focus in the present study.

Discussion

Relationship between Listening to Music and Emotion Regulation

The present study revealed a very strong positive correlation between listening to music and emotion regulation. This finding suggests that students who reported listening to music more frequently also demonstrated better emotional regulation during English learning activities. Music may create a more comfortable learning atmosphere, reduce emotional tension, and support students in managing academic stress. These findings are consistent with Saarikallio & Erkkilä (2007), who proposed that individuals intentionally use music as a strategy to regulate emotions through mood enhancement and emotional control. Likewise, Thoma et al. (2013) reported that music listening reduces physiological stress responses, while Julia et al. (2025) found that music consumption patterns positively contribute to emotion regulation and coping strategies among university students. Collectively, these findings reinforce the view that listening to music can function as an effective emotional regulation strategy in educational settings.

Relationship between Listening to Music and Learning Focus

The findings also demonstrated a statistically significant moderate positive correlation between listening to music and learning focus. This result indicates that students who regularly listened to music during learning activities tended to report better concentration and sustained attention. However, the moderate correlation coefficient suggests that learning focus is influenced not only by music listening but also by other psychological, cognitive, and environmental factors. This finding supports Lesiuk (2005), who reported that music improves task performance through positive emotional conditions, and Vigl et al. (2023), who found that self-selected instrumental music enhances concentration, motivation, and sustained attention. Similarly, Muslimah (2020) observed that many university students perceived music as beneficial for maintaining concentration during study sessions. Therefore, listening to music appears to function as one of several factors that contribute to students' learning focus.

Relationship between Emotion Regulation and Learning Focus

Unlike the previous findings, the relationship between emotion regulation and learning focus was positive but not statistically significant. Although students with better emotion regulation tended to demonstrate slightly higher learning focus, the correlation coefficient indicated that this relationship was relatively weak. This finding suggests that emotion regulation alone is insufficient to explain variations in students' learning focus. Other variables, such as learning motivation, study habits, language proficiency, learning environment, sleep quality, and academic workload, may have stronger influences on students' ability to maintain concentration during English learning activities. This finding differs from the theoretical perspectives proposed by Zimmerman (2002) and Pekrun (2006),

which emphasize the importance of emotional regulation in supporting academic engagement. The discrepancy may be attributed to contextual differences, participant characteristics, or the influence of additional variables that were beyond the scope of the present study. Consequently, future studies should investigate these factors to provide a more comprehensive understanding of students' learning focus.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that listening to music was significantly associated with both emotion regulation and learning focus among English Education students at Tadulako University. However, emotion regulation was not found to have a statistically significant relationship with learning focus. These findings suggest that listening to music may serve as a supportive learning strategy that contributes to students' emotional well-being and helps them maintain concentration during learning activities. At the same time, the findings indicate that learning focus is a multidimensional construct influenced by various cognitive, emotional, and environmental factors. Therefore, future research should investigate additional variables and involve larger, more diverse samples to obtain a broader understanding of the relationships among listening to music, emotion regulation, and learning focus.

CONCLUSIONS

The present study examined the relationships among listening to music, emotion regulation, and learning focus among students of the English Education Study Program at Tadulako University. The findings revealed a very strong positive correlation between listening to music and emotion regulation, indicating that students who listened to music more frequently tended to report better emotional regulation during English learning activities. Listening to music also showed a moderate positive correlation with learning focus, suggesting that music may support students' attention and concentration while studying. However, the relationship between emotion regulation and learning focus was positive but not statistically significant, indicating that students' learning focus may depend on other cognitive, psychological, and environmental factors beyond emotion regulation alone. Overall, the study contributes empirical evidence on the interconnected roles of music listening, emotion regulation, and learning focus in English language learning within Indonesian higher education. Future research should involve larger and more diverse samples and examine additional factors, including learning motivation, language proficiency, study habits, and learning environments, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of students' learning experiences.

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