Impact of Dhamma Music on Children's Meditation Engagement: A Review of Multisensory Approaches

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Abstract

This review examines how Dhamma music may strengthen children's engagement in meditation by functioning as an auditory anchor within multisensory mindfulness-based interventions. Focusing on children in the primary-school developmental range, the article synthesizes literature on multisensory learning, music-assisted mindfulness, and Buddhist-informed contemplative education to address three aims: (1) to clarify how multisensory inputs, especially auditory stimulation, support attention, emotional regulation, and participation during meditation; (2) to analyze the potential functions of Dhamma music (e.g., slow tempo, repetitive melodic patterns, and spiritually meaningful lyrics) in scaffolding calmness, sustained focus, and reflective awareness; and (3) to identify research gaps and propose directions for culturally responsive, developmentally appropriate program design. Across the reviewed studies, multisensory approaches integrating sound, movement, imagery, and guided instruction are consistently associated with improved attentional control and affect regulation during mindfulness practice. The review further suggests that Dhamma music may contribute additional benefits through rhythmic entrainment, predictable structure, and value-laden content that supports prosocial dispositions (e.g., kindness and compassion) when implemented ethically and voluntarily. However, the evidence base remains limited by short intervention durations, heterogeneity in outcome measures, and a scarcity of controlled comparisons between culturally specific sacred music and secular soundscapes. The article concludes by outlining implementation principles and a research agenda for validating Dhamma-music–integrated curricula across diverse educational and community contexts.

Keywords: Dhamma music; Mindfulness education; Children's meditation; Multisensory learning; Music-assisted mindfulness; Contemplative pedagogy

Introduction

Recently, mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) have been included in child development programs to enhance emotional regulation, concentration, and relationships with others (Filipe et al., 2021; Nur's Aini et al., 2021). However, children, particularly those aged 6 to 12, may experience developmental issues during extended meditation sessions, because children often find it difficult to maintain their focus and manage emotions of confusion. Incorporating music, dance, and visual stimuli into practices of mindfulness (Koshland & Wittrock, 2013; Fortune & Barksdale, 2023) is approach academics are exploring to enhance the accessibility and engagement of meditation for adolescents and kids.

Dhamma music, a spiritually grounded, recited melody used in Buddhist traditions, has emerged as a promising multidimensional strategy for increasing children's engagement in meditation. Dhamma music has been proven to facilitate emotional peace, enhance attention, and boost mindfulness practice when utilized as a backdrop during guided meditations (Singh & Dhir, 2022). Research on projects such as Plum Village in France and Dharma Drum Mountain in Taiwan indicates that children who engage in meditation accompanied by Dhamma music show improvements in empathy, prosocial behavior, and overall emotional well-being (Koshland & Wittrock, 2013). The rhythmic and repeated nature of the music fosters inner rhythm and respiratory synchronization, thereby enhancing mindfulness and attentional attention (Delport & Auerbach, 2021).

Notwithstanding these results, there is still an in-depth investigation or focused study lacking on the relevance of Dhamma music as an essential element in child-centered mindfulness programs. Often disregarding the cultural, spiritual, and growth-oriented value of music such as Dhamma, the present study generalizes the impact of music-assisted meditation. Threefold is the objective of this paper: (1) to examine the role of multisensory learning, specifically auditory stimuli, in children's meditation; (2) to assess the different functions and advantages of Dhamma music in mindfulness practice for children; and (3) reveal problems in being research and indicate new possibilities for including music into culturally sensitive and developmentally acceptable meditation interventions.

Multisensory Learning and Child Meditation

The potential benefits of meditation and multidimensional education for enhancing children's emotional and cognitive growth are receiving increasing attention. Referred to as multisensory in nature, learning that continuously involves several senses has been demonstrated to improve memory retention and idea comprehension (Shams & Seitz, 2008). Also, personalized meditation programs for kids have become more common. These programs have shown promise in helping kids focus and control their emotions (Semple et al., 2017). Theoretically and through experimentation verified information supporting both kids' meditation and multifaceted learning is reviewed in this work, together with its ramifications for educational practice.

The knowledge that the human brain naturally integrates data from multiple sensory modalities, visual, aural, kinesthetic, and tactile, grounds multisensory learning (Shams & Seitz, 2008). Multisensory learning, in contrast to the outmoded idea of learning styles, is supported by strong neuroscientific evidence that using more than one sense improves brain connectivity and information processing (Moreno & Mayer, 2007). Children who learn to read by seeing letters, identifying their sounds, and monitoring their forms, for example, activate multiple brain regions and thereby reinforce neural pathways related to literacy (Birsh, 2018). graphical aids, audio lectures, practical manipulatives, and movement-based activities—all of which support deeper learning and greater engagement—are a component of everyday multimodal education (Birsh, 2018; Moreno & Mayer, 2007).

Particularly for children with learning difficulties, the preschool years clearly demonstrate the benefits of multimodal education. Studies show that pupils taught using multisensory methodologies exhibit greater drive, better academic achievement, and greater information retention than those taught using single-modality approaches (Shams & Seitz, 2008; Birsh, 2018). Students educated with a mix of visual and aural cues showed enhanced performance in a study by Moreno and Mayer (2007) compared with those treated with a single modality. According to Birsh (2018), children with dyslexia, along with other learning disorders, benefit especially from multifaceted approaches, as they provide multiple methods for children to grasp and recall recently acquired knowledge.

With the rise of multisensory education, meditation approaches tailored for children have gained popularity as strategies to enhance psychological well-being and cognitive flexibility. Child meditation typically includes mindfulness techniques, breathing exercises, and guided imagery, all adapted to their developmental stages (Semple et al., 2017). The main goal is to aid children in cultivating present-moment awareness and self-regulation skills, so enhancing their ability to effectively regulate emotions and stress (Zenner et al., 2014). Mindfulness, while proven to improve emotional regulation and focus, can be challenging for young children to practice consistently because it requires sustained mental concentration and calmness. As a result, researchers and educators have examined how multimodal inputs, particularly music and movement, can provide developmental pathways to augment the efficacy of awareness (Nur'Aini et al., 2021). Koshland and Wittrock (2013) emphasized that sensory aspects, such as music and rhythm, in mindfulness practice not only attract children's attention but also enhance emotional expression and promote classroom collaboration. The integration of mindfulness with stimulating sensory inputs transforms it from a passive endeavor into a fun one that adolescents will enjoy while learning through their innate learning characteristics.

Multisensory learning engages multiple senses, visual, aural, tactile, and kinesthetic, serving as an effective instructional method that fosters holistic child development and enhances cognitive processing. This technique aligns with the principles of whole-child education, which emphasizes academic achievement with motor, emotional, and sensory development. Cosentino and Giannakos (2023), cited in IJORER (2024), found that multimodal settings activate multiple brain areas, leading to improved cognitive functions such as memory, reasoning, and language acquisition, as well as the creation of new learning pathways. These advantages are particularly relevant for children between the ages of six and twelve, a time when their executive functions and emotional regulation are still maturing.

Multisensory learning has been shown, within the framework of consciousness and meditation, to help young people become more engaged and psychologically stable. Programs that include sensory-rich components such as imagery, songs, and dance often produce better outcomes in attention and emotional control than those based solely on verbal or static training. Studies by Nur'Aini et al. (2021) and Filipe et al. (2021) demonstrate that children learn more from mindfulness exercises when the materials engage the senses and

emotions. These sensory-enhanced exercises enable kids to connect their inner experiences via their bodies, feelings and motions, so enabling their deeper level meditation and more faithful practice.

When it comes to sensory modalities, auditory cues, particularly music, are particularly potent. Attractive listening (Fortune & Barksdale, 2023) has been shown to help children develop empathy, focus, and emotional and social understanding. Calm, seamless, and repeating music helps with breathing control and smooth transitions into meditative states, unlike silence or spoken instruction alone. This approach particularly helps in set-up situations, such as group meditation and educational institutions, where auditory cues help children focus and achieve a state of conscious absorption.

Extending this evidence, more research shows that auditory stimuli enhance not just mental and emotional command but also memory and understanding when combined with other modalities. Wolfe and Noguchi (as reported in Şendülger et al., 2020) claim that music more effectively increases children's engagement and sustained attention than spoken instruction. In addition, linked to improved cognitive retention and recovery have been multimodal combinations, such as auditory with visual or kinesthetic input (Eördegh G et al., 2022; Shams & Seitz, 2008). In meditation settings, spiritual audio such as the Dhamma Gīta or Buddhist chanting serves not only as a calming tool but also to increase meditative absorption and promote emotional balance (Siriwattgo et al., 2024; Duangloy et al., 2016). The results above emphasize the importance of providing efficient audio recordings to improve introspection and learning opportunities for children.

Ultimately, the studies under discussion overwhelmingly endorse the importance of multifaceted learning, especially auditory stimuli, in increasing children's engagement in meditation. Children possess developmentally sufficient routes for sustained attention and internal knowledge; multimodal techniques activate many brain areas, improve emotional control, and help to regulate emotions. Among all the sensory modalities, music has been shown to be a very effective tool for improving focus, facilitating emotional processing, and enabling seamless transitions into meditative states. Music enhances cognitive engagement and broadens empathy when combined with meditation as an act, alongside other sensations such as images and movement. thereby, the use of music and distinctive multisensory approaches lays a solid foundation for tailoring mindfulness treatments to children's needs. These results immediately

address Objective 1 of this article by demonstrating that children's meditation engagement and emotional development are significantly improved by auditory-supported multisensory learning, thereby laying the foundation for more in-depth research on Dhamma music in the following section.

The Role of Dhamma Music in Children's Meditation

According to Moret et al. (2016, mindfulness and music help with wellness, emotional control, and focus. Studies show mindfulness-based teaching boosts academic achievement and mental wellness. It implies adding music to these buildings to enhance entertainment value and educational efficiency. It verifies that music-based mindfulness training lowers stress and enhances mood. More focused participants chose Melody and Harmony. These results imply that, because they produce a calmer, more orderly aural environment that promotes focus and relaxation, simpler, more melodic songs could induce mindfulness more effectively than complex ones. Over-breathing awareness, controlled over-breathing, and attentive listening to music or the natural surroundings raised session attendance. Aural stimulation could raise awareness and drive for mindfulness. Loo's (2018) study reveals how natural sounds or music enhance daily psychological functioning, including receptivity to events, adaptive coping mechanisms, mindfulness, and others. Although data were not reported, heart-rate variability was a sign of well-being. Natural noises or music have been found to enhance physiological states, therefore supporting mindfulness-based therapies. Attending more sessions than the control group, mindful listening participants reported that pleasant aural cues helped boost motivation, dedication, and persistence to a meditation program.

Recent studies (Fortune & Barksdale, 2023) show that children's emotional resilience, concentration, and social abilities improve with music and meditation. Studies indicate that music helps children meditate by providing a structured and engaging framework for concentration, thereby increasing calm and attention. By motivating active participation, empathy, and comprehension, conscious listening in elementary schools enhances communication, emotional intelligence, and education. Good listening improves children's understanding and communication skills, therefore establishing bonds. Good social situations and encounters call for empathy and emotional awareness, qualities that mindfulness helps one acquire. By involving students, attentive listening enhances academic performance and

school spirit. Teachers can encourage in a friendly classroom attentive, sympathetic, and socially conscious pupils.

Music in Buddhism has a special place in religious and spiritual life; it can help one feel closer to God and more at peace with oneself (Guétin et al.,2009). Buddhist music can help youngsters develop mindfulness, emotional stability, and self-awareness. Dhamma music, which frequently integrates Buddhist teachings with melodies, improves children's emotional and cognitive development. One of Buddhist music's biggest benefits is helping kids regulate their emotions. Children cope with stress, anxiety, and emotional shifts by listening to relaxing music. Dhamma music's slow beat and soothing mantras help 6- to 12-year-olds relax. Contemporary, rapidly changing environments with many distractions make it hard for children to focus. Mindfulness and music can improve children's attention span and concentration. This significantly improves children's dhamma-related activities, including meditation (Koshland, Wilson, & Wittrock, 2013).

Children can meditate much more effectively when they listen to Dhamma music with slow beats, repetitive melodies, and spiritually meaningful lyrics. According to Tanpoonkiat (2024), this type of music comes from Buddhist traditions. It uses sound messages and lessons to help people be more aware, calm, and focused. The literature review presents theoretical and empirical investigations of how Dhamma music enhances children's meditation and happiness. Children's meditation practices have greatly improved the Dhamma music, distinguished by spiritually relevant lyrics, repeated melodies, and slow tempos. Traditional Buddhist music blends contemplative teachings with sonic components to improve awareness, emotional regulation, and cognitive focus. This review compiles studies demonstrating the beneficial effects of Dhamma music on children's well-being and meditative commitment.

Dhamma music, commonly known as Dhamma Gīta, creates an auditory environment conducive to meditation by integrating Buddhist concepts with rhythmic structures. Their emotionally evocative lyrics and recurring themes are designed to improve concentration, enhance meditative immersion, and reduce mental unrest (Siriwattgo et al., 2024). The key respondents in a qualitative study emphasized that Dhamma songs help children “foster mindfulness and concentration” by substituting high-quality aural information for distracting inputs, thereby laying the foundation for inner quiet (Tanpoonkiat,

2024). Because of its simplicity and consistent beat, the music helps kids grow their minds and may be used to teach them meditation (Auerbach & Delport, 2021).

Research indicates that when adolescents engage in meditation while listening to Dhamma music, they exhibit enhanced capacity to concentrate and attend to the nuances of the meditative experience. Activities such as "vowel sounding" and attentive listening have been shown to aid adolescents in maintaining equilibrium and filtering out distractions, as evidenced by a study conducted by Auerbach and Delport (2025). According to the findings of Jiwattanasuk et al. (2025), systematically designed Dhamma music programs, exemplified by the Mindfulness, Wisdom & Loving-Kindness (MWL) educational initiative, increased engagement and heightened attentiveness among teenagers. The youth's propensity to find a continuous anchor in the music contributed to this phenomenon. The implications of these findings suggest that the auditory regularity inherent in Dhamma music plays a significant role in modulating cognitive processes, thereby facilitating adolescents' attainment of meditative states in a manner that is highly beneficial.

Dhamma music supports children's social and emotional growth in cross-cultural, mindfulness-based educational programs. Plum Village, France, hosts educational music and meditation courses for young children (Gonzalez, 2021). The society advocates metta, mindfulness, and compassion. Dhamma meditation music is commonly used in awareness courses to help one relax and raise spiritual and emotional consciousness. Relaxing music helps with childhood concentration, relaxation, and emotional involvement. It increases resilience, emotional control, and comprehension. Two methods that the Green School in Bali, Indonesia (Burke, 2010), uses to maintain a peaceful atmosphere that promotes learning are meditation sessions and instrumental music to unwind. Including music in mindfulness meditations provides a number of benefits, including increased calm, confidence, and a sense of belonging. For children, music helps them concentrate better, supports meditation, and makes the process less difficult and more enjoyable. Using Buddhist music, Dharma Drum Mountain (DDM) in Taiwan imparts morality and awareness (Wang, 2020). Using singing, these activities teach kids. kindness, emotional expression, and Buddhist ideas. Instruction in meditation set to established songs not only helps students relax through a calming rhythm but also motivates them to listen closely, which in turn cultivates their self-awareness and knowledge of ethics. Examples

like this from all across the globe show how important Dhamma music is for raising consciousness. The sounds and melodies of Buddhism support meditation, emotional equilibrium, and concentration. Children who practice mindfulness and listen to music become more sympathetic, calm, and happy.

According to relevant studies, Dhamma music offers many significant benefits for enhancing children's mindfulness practices, particularly in calm areas for introspection and in regulated learning environments. With its slow tempo, repeating melodies, and spiritual lyrics, it helps children relax and concentrate. Studies show that Dhamma music blends Buddhist ideas such as loving-kindness and awareness into a peaceful environment, which helps to control emotions, encourage moral contemplation, and lower stress. Dhamma music improves attentional control, stress tolerance, and empathy both in Plum Village in France and Dharma Drum Mountain in Taiwan. Studies on the MWL program, qualitative and empirical data, and more clearly reveal that children's interest and performance improve when music is consistently included in mindfulness sessions. Regarding the emotional, social, and meditative development of children, Dhamma music seems to be a necessary tool rather than mere background noise.

Gaps in Literature and Future Directions

Despite recent studies demonstrating that Dhamma music can improve children's meditation practices, there are still several important gaps in the research. It is difficult to evaluate the long-term developmental influence of Dhamma music on children's emotional resilience, attentional control, and cognitive flexibility because the majority of currently accessible data is derived from case-based programs or treatments implemented for only a very short period of time. Despite programs like Plum Village and Dharma Drum Mountain showing positive results (Gonzalez, 2021; Wang, 2020), most of these findings are qualitative and lack confirmation through longitudinal methods. Without a longer follow-up period, it is not possible to determine whether the advantages of Dhamma music continue to accrue over time or decline in the absence of ongoing organized support.

Moreover, few studies link Dhamma music to other sound- or touch-based meditation techniques. Although few studies have methodically compared Dhamma music with alternatives such as mechanical recordings, natural sounds,

or secular mindfulness music, several studies have highlighted the benefits of rhythmic, spiritually based music (Tanpoonkiat, 2024; Siriwattgo et al., 2024). Fortune and Barksdale (2023) claim that the individual's cultural setting and sensory preferences may affect the efficacy of music-based mindfulness. Therefore, it is important to do controlled comparative research to determine whether the unique spiritual and lyrical elements of Dhamma music have advantages beyond their melodic framework.

There is a significant gap in the literature on neurophysiological assessment, which is another important limitation. Few studies have used tools such as heart rate variability, electroencephalography (EEG), or eye-tracking to objectively evaluate how Dhamma music influences brain activity or autonomic responses. This is despite outcomes such as increased focus, relaxation, and emotional control being commonly reported through self-reports and educator feedback (Auerbach & Delport, 2021; Jiwattanasuk et al., 2025). Physiological data, as Loo (2018) noted, can provide insight into how music alters adaptive functioning and states of consciousness. Including such instruments would help to improve the empirical foundation of Dhamma music study.

It is also important to pay greater attention to how Dhamma music might be integrated and preserved outside of classrooms. It is unclear how Dhamma music operates when used informally at home or in community settings, despite the MWL program's demonstrated success in school-based and directed settings (Siriwattgo et al., 2024). Only a small number of studies have examined how family-led practices influence children's long-term involvement and emotional well-being. However, studies such as Tanpoonkiat (2024) demonstrate that children can benefit from listening to Dhamma music before bed. Research on how parents, caregivers, and educators use music to encourage mindfulness in daily routines might help to shape more sustainable, community-based approaches.

All things considered, the data on age- and ability-specific adaptations of Dhamma music therapy are limited. Most research on the general 6–12 age range ignores differences in developmental maturity, cognitive styles, or neurodiversity. The research of Filipe et al. (2021) and Nur'Aini et al. (2021) shows the need to tailor mindfulness techniques to meet children's sensory and emotional needs. However, Dhamma music for children with learning or concentration issues or autism is hardly mentioned. Prospective studies should

focus on inclusion by examining how rhythm and lyrics can be changed to suit a wide variety of developmental stages.

Overall, there is some empirical evidence suggesting that engagement with Dhamma music may enhance concentration and promote overall well-being; however, there remains a substantial need for further investigation to address existing knowledge gaps. Key research objectives encompass longitudinal studies to assess effects over time, comparative analyses of diverse cultural and sensory methodologies, the application of neurophysiological techniques, exploration of familial and domestic contexts, and the formulation of developmentally appropriate therapeutic interventions. By systematically addressing these critical issues, Dhamma music can not only be substantiated as an effective meditative resource but can also be more adeptly integrated into culturally sensitive and inclusive child development frameworks.

Conclusion

This review synthesizes evidence at the intersection of multisensory learning, child-friendly mindfulness, and Dhamma music as an auditory support for children's meditation engagement. Across the literature, multisensory scaffolding, combining sound with movement, imagery, and guided instruction, appears to reduce the entry barriers of silent practice and to strengthen attention, emotional settling, and participation during sessions. Within this multisensory repertoire, Dhamma music is best understood not as background entertainment but as a culturally grounded “auditory anchor”: its slow tempo, repetitive melodic structure, and value-laden themes can stabilize focus, support breathing–rhythm entrainment, and provide developmentally accessible cues for kindness, patience, and self-awareness. Programs in Buddhist and intercultural settings further suggest potential spillover benefits for prosocial behavior when music is implemented voluntarily and accompanied by reflective activities that translate lyrics into lived conduct.

At the same time, the current evidence base remains methodologically uneven. Many studies rely on short interventions, heterogeneous outcome measures, and limited controls, making it difficult to isolate what is distinctive about Dhamma music relative to other soundscapes (e.g., nature sounds, instrumental mindfulness music, or silence). Future research should prioritize longitudinal and comparative designs, include objective indicators (e.g., attentional tasks, physiological measures), and examine how effects vary by age, neurodiversity, and cultural context. Practically, educators should apply clear

ethical safeguards, opt-in participation, alternative options, and non-sectarian framing where required, while using Dhamma music purposefully and progressively to build children's independent mindfulness skills. Used in this way, Dhamma music can serve as a bridge from multisensory practice toward quieter forms of sustained, self-directed meditation.

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