

Motivational Factors in Thai Music Learning for New Generation University Students

Yutakorn Sarikkaganon

Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University

E-mail: Yutakorn.sa@ssru.ac.th

Abstract

The conservation and transmission of Thai classical music within higher education encounters substantial challenges, particularly regarding the motivation of Generation Z students influenced by globalization and digital culture. This research investigates motivational factors impacting contemporary students' participation in Thai music education through qualitative methodology. In-depth interviews were conducted with 15 purposively selected students from a cohort of 350 enrolled in the Music Program, Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, complemented by interviews with 5 Thai music instructors. The study employs Self-Determination Theory and Expectancy-Value

Theory as analytical frameworks for examining motivational patterns. Initial findings indicate that despite traditional pedagogical emphases on cultural preservation and technical proficiency, contemporary students demonstrate motivation derived from multifaceted factors: creative expression, social connection, career opportunities, cultural identity construction, and technological integration in learning. The research illuminates' disparities between conventional instructional methods and current student expectations, underscoring the imperative for innovative pedagogy that reconciles cultural authenticity with contemporary engagement approaches. Research outcomes will guide curriculum enhancement, instructional strategy development, and policy recommendations for Thai music education at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, advancing sustainable cultural heritage preservation through strengthened student motivation and participation

Keywords: Cultural preservation, Student motivation, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Thai music

1. Introduction

Thai music constitutes a vital component of the nation's cultural heritage, embodying the identity, indigenous knowledge, and quintessential Thai characteristics that have been perpetuated across centuries. From the Sukhothai through the Rattanakosin periods, Thai music has undergone continuous development and transmission via the master-apprentice pedagogical system, culminating in a distinctive performing art form distinguished by its unique melodic structures, rhythmic patterns, and performance techniques. Thai music has fulfilled an integral function in ceremonial practices, traditional festivities, and the quotidian existence of Thai people throughout history. Consequently, the conservation and perpetuation of Thai music represent a critical endeavor in preserving the nation's cultural identity for posterity, aligning with UNESCO's emphasis on safeguarding intangible cultural heritage (UNESCO, 2003)

In the contemporary era, Thai music preservation and transmission confront multiple formidable challenges, particularly within the globalization paradigm wherein Western culture and international music have established considerable prominence within Thai society. This phenomenon has precipitated a shift in attention among youth and the general populace toward contemporary popular music genres, correspondingly diminishing interest in Thai music. Additionally, the progressive urbanization of Thai society has resulted in the erosion of spaces for Thai music performance and appreciation in everyday life. Concurrently, master practitioners possessing profound expertise in Thai music are advancing in age and declining numerically. The transmission of this specialized knowledge to emerging generations has thus emerged as an imperative requiring urgent intervention

Higher education institutions occupy a pivotal position in the transmission and advancement of Thai music within contemporary societal frameworks (Schippers, 2010). Universities offering music programs encompassing both Western and Thai musical traditions are especially instrumental in this mission. Rajabhat Universities, as academic institutions mandated with local development and cultural heritage conservation, have implemented music curricula emphasizing the synthesis of international and Thai musical practices to cultivate graduates demonstrating competence across both domains. Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, situated in Bangkok's metropolitan center, administers a Bachelor of Fine and Applied Arts degree program specializing in Music within the Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts. The program maintains an enrollment of approximately 350 students distributed between international and Thai music concentrations. The curriculum is designed to produce graduates possessing comprehensive musical expertise encompassing theoretical foundations and practical applications, thereby enabling career trajectories as music educators, performing artists, and music industry professionals

Nevertheless, notwithstanding the critical significance of higher education music programs in perpetuating Thai musical traditions, a conspicuous disparity exists wherein substantially fewer students elect to pursue Thai music studies relative to international music. Additionally, challenges pertaining to student commitment and retention within Thai music programs have been documented. Certain students subsequently transition to international music concentrations or exhibit diminished engagement in practice and skill cultivation (Hallam, 2002). A principal contributing factor underlying these phenomena relates to motivational deficiencies concerning Thai music education among the student population

Motivation represents the most critical foundational factor in learning and skill acquisition, particularly within domains necessitating sustained and rigorous practice such as musical training (McPherson & O'Neill, 2010). Self-Determination Theory, articulated by Deci and Ryan (1985; 2000), delineates motivation into two primary classifications: Intrinsic Motivation, originating from inherent interest, affective engagement, and autonomous enjoyment of the activity per se, and Extrinsic Motivation, derived from external contingencies and reinforcements including academic evaluation, social recognition, or vocational prospects. The theory proposes that intrinsic motivation manifests when three fundamental psychological needs receive satisfaction: Autonomy (perceived self-governance and volitional functioning),

Competence (perceived efficacy and mastery), and Relatedness (perceived social connectedness and belonging) (Ryan & Deci, 2017)

Empirical investigations within music education psychology have established that students demonstrating elevated intrinsic motivation typically manifest enhanced dedication, engage in systematic practice regimens, and achieve superior skill development relative to students motivated predominantly by extrinsic contingencies (Evans, McPherson & Davidson, 2013). Furthermore, Expectancy-Value Theory formulated by Eccles and Wigfield (2002) explicates that academic motivation is contingent upon learners' expectancy beliefs regarding success probability and the subjective task value they ascribe to the activity, encompassing attainment value, intrinsic value, utility value, and perceived cost

Generation Z cohort members, encompassing individuals born between 1997-2012 (B.E. 2540-2555), manifest distinctive characteristics diverging substantially from preceding generational cohorts (Seemiller & Grace, 2016). As digital natives who matured contemporaneously with ubiquitous digital technology, internet connectivity, and mobile computing devices, they exhibit sophisticated technological competencies and naturalized familiarity with technology-mediated learning environments (Prensky, 2001). This demographic demonstrates preferences for expeditious information processing, pedagogical pluralism, and participatory engagement within educational contexts, coupled with aspirations for autonomous creative expression and individualization. Concurrently, they ascribe considerable significance to social network cultivation and peer validation. These distinguishing attributes exert substantial influence upon their motivational orientations and educational expectations regarding Thai music instruction, potentially diverging significantly from antecedent generations who demonstrated greater receptivity toward conventional pedagogical approaches emphasizing rote memorization and iterative practice methodologies

Traditional Thai music instruction predominantly employs master-apprentice transmission modalities through individualized mentorship, utilizing memorization-based and mimetic pedagogical techniques. In this paradigm, master practitioners perform exemplars while apprentices observe, internalize, and replicate through sustained practice, typically with minimal reliance upon Western musical notation systems or alternatively employing indigenous Thai notation systems structurally distinct from Western conventions. While this pedagogical approach demonstrates efficacy in transmitting the intricate subtleties and implicit dimensions of Thai musical expression that resist codification through written representation (Miller & Williams, 2008), it potentially manifests incongruence with contemporary students' epistemological preferences, which favor rationalistic comprehension, collaborative engagement, and methodological diversity in learning modalities. Additionally, certain components of Thai musical repertoire may appear temporally obsolete or phenomenologically disconnected from students' contemporary experiential contexts, consequently impeding their recognition of Thai music education's contemporary relevance or inherent value proposition

Conversely, contemporary student cohorts demonstrate expectations for engaging with Thai music through increasingly modernized pedagogical modalities, including technology-mediated learning interventions such as practice applications, multimedia instructional resources, or digital audio production software (Dammers, 2012), the curricular integration of

Thai musical traditions with contemporary popular idioms or intercultural fusion with Western musical practices (Schippers, 2010), the development of content exhibiting relevance to quotidian experiences or contemporary sociocultural phenomena, and provision of opportunities for creative agency in compositional or arrangement activities within Thai musical frameworks (Burnard, 2012). These students seek tangible vocational pathways and practical applications of Thai musical competencies across diverse professional contexts, encompassing entertainment sectors, tourism industries, digital media platforms, and creative economy enterprises

Beyond instructional methodology, multiple additional variables potentially exert influence upon contemporary students' motivational orientations toward Thai music education. Cultural Identity considerations may manifest wherein certain students conceptualize Thai music study as a mechanism for establishing connection with ancestral heritage and Thai cultural identity or as fulfilling custodial responsibility for intergenerational cultural transmission. Social Factors incorporate familial, peer, and community support structures, the availability of accomplished Thai music practitioners serving as aspirational exemplars, and access to performance opportunities yielding social recognition (Creech & Hallam, 2011). Learning Environment variables encompass physical infrastructure including instructional spaces, instrumental resources, pedagogical materials, and psychosocial classroom climate. Teacher Factors comprise pedagogical expertise, dispositional characteristics, professional enthusiasm, and capacity for catalyzing student inspiration (Woody, 2004). Personal Factors encompass antecedent musical preparation, gender demographics, geographical provenance, socioeconomic positioning, and prior experiential exposure to Thai musical traditions

These aforementioned challenges and complexities constitute the rationale underlying this systematic and in-depth investigation of motivational determinants in Thai music education among contemporary student cohorts, specifically within the institutional context of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, which maintains substantial enrollment of students representing diverse sociodemographic backgrounds who possess curricular options between international and Thai musical concentrations. Elucidating the factors that either facilitate or constrain student motivation will enable instructional practitioners, curriculum administrators, and policy architects to formulate appropriate strategic interventions for advancing Thai music pedagogy, enhancing curricular frameworks, refining instructional methodologies, and optimizing learning environments to achieve congruence with contemporary students' requirements and aspirations, while concurrently safeguarding the cultural integrity and authenticity of Thai musical traditions

This investigation addresses a significant lacuna in academic scholarship concerning Thai music education within tertiary contexts, particularly regarding educational psychology and learner motivation perspectives, which remain insufficiently examined within Thai musical pedagogical discourse. The research outcomes will furnish essential empirical evidence informing policy development and pedagogical practices in Thai music education, extending beyond Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University to establish methodological frameworks applicable to analogous higher education institutions offering Thai music curricula. Moreover, this research substantively contributes to sustainable cultural heritage conservation and

intergenerational transmission by cultivating an emergent generation of Thai music practitioners and advocates possessing requisite knowledge, competencies, and intrinsic motivation to preserve and progressively develop Thai musical traditions

Consequently, this research entitled "Motivational Factors in Thai Music Learning for New Generation University Students: A Case Study of Students in the Bachelor of Fine and Applied Arts Program, Music Major, Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University" assumes critical significance and imperative necessity within contemporary sociocultural contexts. The investigative findings will yield comprehensive understanding of multifaceted factors exerting influence upon student motivation and establish foundational knowledge essential for developing efficacious pedagogical approaches and sophisticated curriculum management strategies, thereby ensuring that contemporary student cohorts sustain motivation for learning, transmitting, and sustainably advancing Thai musical traditions across successive generations

1.1 Research Objective

To investigate the motivational factors in Thai music learning among students in the Bachelor of Fine and Applied Arts Program, Music Major, Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University

2. Literature review

In conducting the research titled "Motivational Factors in Thai Music Learning for New Generation University Students," the researcher has conducted a comprehensive review of relevant documents, literature, and scholarly research, categorized as follows

2.1 Concepts and Theories of Motivation

The concept of motivation is fundamental to the study of behavioral science and human operational processes. It is defined as a state driven by stimuli that compel individuals to act toward a specific objective. In academic discourse, motivation theories are generally categorized into two primary groups: Content Theories, which identify what specific factors motivate human beings, and Process Theories, which elucidate how the stages of motivation occur and function.

A foundational and extensively cited framework is Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Maslow (1943) proposed that human beings possess five levels of fundamental needs, ranging from basic Physiological Needs at the lowest tier to Self-Actualization at the apex. This theory suggests that motivation is sequential; it arises only when lower-level needs are sufficiently satisfied, thereby prompting the individual to pursue higher-level fulfillment

2.2 Concepts of Thai Music and Pedagogy

Regarding the pedagogy of Thai classical music, Panya Rungrueang (2003) highlights that traditional instructional systems were historically governed by strict customary traditions. Central to this is the "Wai Khru" ceremony, which serves as a spiritual anchor and an expression of gratitude toward teachers. The traditional instructional process emphasizes Individual Instruction, known as *Kan Tor Mue* (literally "hand-to-hand transmission"). In this method, the master transmits technical skills, stylistic nuances, and musical expressions directly to the student through demonstration and imitation

However, in the contemporary era, Thai music pedagogy has adapted to global dynamics. Narut Suttachit (2012) observes the increasing integration of music notation systems and multimedia as instructional tools to accommodate the growing number of students within formal educational institutions. This transition has shifted Thai music from being a "familial secret" or restricted lineage knowledge toward becoming a standardized, internationalized academic discipline

Despite these advancements, a significant challenge remains: preserving the subtle nuances and the traditional *Thang* (individual musical pathways) to ensure they are not diminished through the processes of transcription or rearrangement. Understanding these contexts allows the researcher to recognize the importance of transcribing and arranging the song "Mameah"—which is rooted in Lanna culture and traditional Thai stylistic elements—to suit the technical capabilities of a brass quintet without compromising the aesthetic integrity and inherent character of the original Thai musical source

3. Body of paper

3.1 Research Scope

3.1.1 Population and Sample

Population

The population for this study consists of students enrolled in the Bachelor of Fine and Applied Arts Program, majoring in Music, Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, including students from both international and Thai music concentrations, with a total enrollment of approximately 350 students.

Sample

The research sample comprises two groups:

1. Fifteen (15) students engaged in Thai music studies, selected through purposive sampling methodology
2. Five (5) Thai music instructors

3.1.2 Content Scope

This investigation examines motivational factors in Thai music education encompassing the following dimensions:

1. Intrinsic Motivation
2. Extrinsic Motivation
3. Instructional Methodologies and Learning Environment
4. Cultural Identity and Social Factors
5. Technology Integration in Thai Music Pedagogy

4. Methodology

This qualitative inquiry investigates motivational factors in Thai music learning among contemporary university students. The research purpose is to systematically examine

motivational constructs influencing Thai music education within the Bachelor of Fine and Applied Arts curriculum, Music concentration, Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University. Employing case study methodology (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), this investigation conducts comprehensive analysis of motivational factors shaping students' Thai music learning experiences

4.1 Population and Sample

4.1.1 Population

The research population consists of students enrolled in the Bachelor of Fine and Applied Arts Program, Music Major, Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, during the academic year 2025 (B.E. 2568), totaling approximately 350 students.

4.1.2 Sample

The researcher selected participants through purposive sampling methodology, comprising two groups:

Group 1: Thai Music Students

Fifteen students studying Thai music, distributed across academic years 1-4 (3-4 students per year). Participants were selected from students who had registered for at least one Thai music course and voluntarily agreed to participate in the study.

Group 2: Thai Music Instructors

Five Thai music instructors who are full-time faculty members with a minimum of three years of experience teaching Thai music at the higher education level

4.2 Instruments and Data Collection

This investigation utilized semi-structured interview guides as the primary data collection instruments. The interview protocols were systematically developed through extensive literature review and informed by the study's theoretical framework

Student Participant Interview Guide

The student interview protocol was constructed with six thematic domains designed to elicit comprehensive data regarding motivational factors:

1. Background Information: Academic year, major specialization, prior musical experience
2. Intrinsic Motivation: Reasons for selecting Thai music, personal enjoyment, sense of pride, perceived challenges
3. Extrinsic Motivation: Family and peer support, career opportunities, academic evaluation, external expectations
4. Teaching Methods and Learning Environment: Instructor approaches, technology integration, facility adequacy, classroom atmosphere
5. Cultural Identity and Social Factors: Connection to Thai cultural heritage, role models, participation in cultural activities

6. Recommendations: Identified obstacles, suggestions for improvement, future expectations

Faculty Participant Interview Guide

The instructor interview protocol encompassed five principal dimensions:

1. Professional Background: Teaching experience, courses taught, student enrollment
2. Student Motivation Perspectives: Observed motivational behaviors, distinctions between high and low motivation, influential factors
3. Instructional Strategies: Teaching methodologies employed, technology integration, pedagogical adaptations for Generation Z learners
4. Instructional Challenges: Identified obstacles, institutional support needs, proposed solutions
5. Recommendations: Strategies for enhancing student motivation, curriculum and instructional development

4.3 Data Collection

The researcher obtained permissions and contacted sample participants to explain the research objectives and request informed consent for participation in the study. Each interview session lasted approximately 30-45 minutes per participant and was conducted in quiet, private interview rooms or meeting rooms within the Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, with the researcher maintaining observational notes throughout. Following the established data collection timeline, after each interview session, the researcher conducted data analysis, synthesis, and verification of accuracy

4.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis employed content analysis methodology following the approach of Braun and Clarke (2006), integrating both inductive and deductive analytical approaches. Self-Determination Theory and Expectancy-Value Theory served as guiding theoretical frameworks for the analysis. Initial coding identified themes such as love for Thai music, learning challenges, family support, career opportunities, instructor teaching methods, technology integration, and cultural identity. Subsequently, codes with similar meanings were clustered into sub-themes, and related sub-themes were consolidated into main themes. Anticipated main themes included: intrinsic motivation in Thai music learning, extrinsic motivation affecting Thai music learning, the role of teaching methods and instructors, influence of learning environment and modern technology including AI, cultural identity and socioeconomic factors, expectations, and problems and obstacles in Thai music learning. Additionally, comparative analysis was conducted across different academic year levels and between student and instructor perspectives to identify similarities and differences in motivational factors

5. Results

This research aimed to investigate the motivational factors in Thai music learning among students in the Bachelor of Fine and Applied Arts Program, Music Major, Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University. Through in-depth interviews with 15

students and 5 instructors, the study found that motivational factors in Thai music learning among new generation students can be categorized into six main themes as follows:

1. Intrinsic Motivation

Students demonstrated intrinsic motivation stemming from their love and passion for Thai music, which constituted the most significant factor contributing to their commitment and persistence in learning. Additionally, the challenge and enjoyment of learning, as well as emotional expression and creative outlet through Thai music, emerged as important intrinsic motivational factors

2. Extrinsic Motivation

External factors influencing motivation comprised: support from family and friends, which served as crucial reinforcement; career opportunities and practical applications of Thai music in various fields such as teaching, performance, and creative industries; academic evaluation and grades that provided reinforcement for some students; and performance opportunities with public recognition, which enhanced students' confidence and sense of pride

3. Role of Teaching Methods and Instructors

Diverse and flexible teaching methodologies that extend beyond mere memorization and imitation, emphasizing deep understanding and variety, significantly affected student motivation. The personality and enthusiasm of instructors who demonstrated genuine passion for Thai music were capable of inspiring students. Positive relationships between instructors and students characterized by approachability and individualized attention enhanced students' confidence and learning motivation. Furthermore, achieving balance between traditional and contemporary teaching methods emerged as a priority recognized by both students and instructors

4. Influence of Learning Environment and Technology

Physical learning environments including classrooms, practice rooms, and musical instruments affected learning convenience. While students expressed general satisfaction, certain limitations requiring improvement were identified. Contemporary students desired greater technology integration in Thai music learning, such as practice applications, instructional videos, and various computer programs. Additionally, learning materials and resources including musical scores, videos, and online databases should be developed to become more accessible and diverse

5 Cultural Identity and Social Factors

Pride in Thai culture and the perception of Thai music learning as connecting with cultural roots and participating in cultural heritage preservation constituted important motivational factors for some students. Role models and inspirational figures, such as successful Thai music artists or exemplary instructors, significantly influenced motivation. Additionally, participation in cultural activities helped foster a sense of community belonging and enhanced motivation

6 Obstacles and Recommendations

The difficulty and complexity of Thai music presented significant obstacles that discouraged some students. Resource and equipment limitations, such as insufficient instruments and

limited practice rooms, affected practice opportunities. The perception and popularity of Thai music in society, which remained lower than desirable, impacted some students' confidence

5.1 Summary

Research findings reveal that motivational factors in Thai music learning among new generation students result from diverse internal and external factors. While intrinsic motivation derived from love of Thai music emerged as the most significant factor, it requires support from various external factors including family support, instructor roles and teaching methods, career opportunities, and appropriate learning environments. Contemporary students expect to learn Thai music through modern approaches incorporating technology and aligning with their lifestyles, while simultaneously preserving Thai music's cultural value and authenticity. Future development of Thai music education should therefore balance preservation of traditional authenticity with adaptation to contemporary contexts to ensure sustainable transmission of Thai musical traditions

6. Conclusion

This research aimed to investigate the motivational factors in Thai music learning among students in the Bachelor of Fine and Applied Arts Program, Music Major, Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University. Through qualitative study via in-depth interviews with 15 students and 5 instructors, the findings revealed that motivational factors in Thai music learning among new generation students result from diverse interconnected internal and external factors. Love and passion for Thai music emerged as the most significant intrinsic motivational factor, aligning with Self-Determination Theory, which proposes that intrinsic motivation constitutes the essential foundation for sustainable learning. However, this intrinsic motivation requires support from several important external factors, including support from family and friends, instructor roles and teaching methods, career opportunities, social recognition, as well as balanced learning environments and supportive resources including musical performance opportunities, which contribute to long-term success (Panapinun, 2025) This corresponds with Expectancy-Value Theory, which explains that students demonstrate high motivation when they believe they will succeed and perceive value in Thai music learning

The research also revealed that Generation Z students possess characteristics and expectations differing from previous generations. They desire diverse, participatory learning approaches with technology integration, while simultaneously valuing cultural identity and pride in Thai heritage. Creating balance between preserving Thai music's traditional authenticity and adapting to contemporary contexts represents a significant challenge requiring careful implementation

Acknowledgment

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