

The Effects Of Participation In The Alexander Technique On Female Violinists And Violists: A Mixed Methods Study

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ABSTRACT

The primary purposes of this mixed-methods study were to (a) determine what effects, if any, participation in 20 AT lessons has on the sample of female violinists' and violists' Pain, Executive Skill Function, Well-being and Awareness, and (b) to describe the experiences of the participants in the study intervention. The secondary purpose of this study was to explore how participation in AT affected the female violinists' self-reported experience of playing.

Due to the prevalence of performance-related injuries in female string players, it was theorized that AT could provide a means for improvement. This study employed a mixed methods design using pretest and posttest questionnaires, observations, and semi-structured interviews. The surveys and interviews were used to explore how participation in AT affects playing experiences.

The 12-week study was performed in a major metropolitan city and participants were female violinists and violists between the ages of 18 and 34 with no previous AT training. Criterion sampling was employed and 51 participants were randomly assigned to either the control group (n = 26) or the treatment group (n = 25). The intervention included AT lessons two times a week over a 10-week period. Six case study participants were selected from the treatment group to participate in the qualitative interview portion of the study.

The quantitative findings demonstrated statistically significant changes in Awareness and Executive Skill Function, while only approaching statistical significance for Pain and Well-being. In the qualitative analysis, themes that were explored included the dependent variables, as well as teaching and learning, AT principles, tools, and applications. The qualitative data provided evidence of improvement in all four *a priori* variables.

Convergence of the quantitative and qualitative data helped corroborate the statistically significant findings for Awareness and Executive Skill Function and provide convincing data that there was improvement in Pain, while data for Well-being improvement was inconclusive. Recommendations for application of these findings and suggestions for further research are included.