

Pedagogical strategies for drum learning: A qualitative study on fun and discipline for elementary students

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Submitted:
28-03-2025

Accepted:
28-04-2025

Published:
03-05-2025

Abstract: This study examines the balance between fun and discipline in drumming lessons for primary school students at Favore Music, a non-formal music education institution. The aim of the study is to explore effective pedagogical strategies that can increase students' motivation, engagement, and mastery of skills through a combination of fun activities and technical discipline. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The findings show that the integration of fun activities, such as rudiment rhythm games and drum cover challenges, can increase student engagement while maintaining a focus on technical aspects. The role of the teacher as both instructor and facilitator is crucial in providing interactive feedback and structured challenges to encourage skill development. The results show that students who engage in fun activities show increased motivation and perseverance, which leads to improved technical ability. This study concludes that a balanced approach between fun and discipline is essential for effective music education, which not only develops musical skills, but also motivates and builds long-term resilience in students.

Keywords: Discipline, drum learning, motivation, pedagogical strategies

Abstrak: Penelitian ini mengkaji keseimbangan antara kesenangan dan disiplin dalam pembelajaran drum untuk siswa sekolah dasar di Favore Music, sebuah lembaga pendidikan musik non-formal. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengeksplorasi strategi pedagogis yang efektif yang dapat meningkatkan motivasi, keterlibatan, dan penguasaan keterampilan siswa melalui perpaduan aktivitas yang menyenangkan dan disiplin teknis. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui observasi partisipatif, wawancara mendalam, dan dokumentasi. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa integrasi aktivitas yang menyenangkan, seperti permainan ritme rudiment dan tantangan drum cover, dapat meningkatkan keterlibatan siswa sembari mempertahankan fokus pada aspek teknis. Peran guru sebagai pengajar sekaligus fasilitator sangat penting dalam memberikan umpan balik yang interaktif dan tantangan yang terstruktur guna mendorong pengembangan keterampilan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa siswa yang terlibat dalam aktivitas menyenangkan menunjukkan peningkatan motivasi dan ketekunan, yang berujung pada peningkatan kemampuan teknis. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa pendekatan yang seimbang antara kesenangan dan disiplin sangat penting untuk pendidikan musik yang efektif, yang tidak hanya mengembangkan keterampilan musikal, tetapi juga memotivasi dan membangun ketahanan jangka panjang pada siswa.

Kata kunci: Disiplin, pembelajaran drum, motivasi, strategi pedagogik

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INTRODUCTION

Balancing fun and discipline in the learning process is one of the central issues in contemporary educational practice (Ng, 2023; Váradi, 2022). This approach emphasizes the importance of creating an engaging and enjoyable learning environment, while maintaining academic rigour and discipline. The interaction between these two aspects directly affects learners' motivation, engagement and learning outcomes. Numerous studies show that

integrating elements of fun into learning significantly increases student engagement and encourages a positive attitude towards the learning process.

Feiyue (2022) explains that the edutainment approach, which combines educational and entertainment elements, can create more relaxed cognitive conditions, thus increasing the effectiveness of learning. Furthermore, humor and the aspect of fun in education have been proven to stimulate curiosity and create a more flexible and conducive learning environment. In an effective learning process, and to support fun and disciplined learning, student motivation is a very important factor. According to Khodijah (2014) strategies to motivate students should start with creating a fun classroom atmosphere, which will stimulate students' interest and involvement in learning. During the learning process, teachers can implement a variety of interesting techniques, such as games, which can increase student engagement and enthusiasm. At the end of the lesson, the teacher has an important role in reassuring students that they have the potential and ability to achieve the set learning objectives.

Shafarwati et al. (2025) argues that a teacher must treat students with full respect as individuals with self-esteem, without degrading or insulting them, and provide objective assessment and appreciation of every piece of work they create. Teachers are also expected to be caring in order to help students overcome the challenges or problems they face. In the perspective of Rogers' learning theory, a positive relationship between teacher and student is essential (Brandisauskiene et al., 2023; Martin & Collie, 2019; Scales et al., 2020). When teachers show empathy, unconditional appreciation, and genuine acceptance, this creates a positive emotional bond, which provides a solid foundation for learning and overall student development (Nasir et al., 2024; Rohner, 2021; Testa, 2022). However, the aspect of discipline cannot be ignored. Academic discipline remains a fundamental element in learning, as it helps students develop perseverance, academic integrity, and self-regulation (Gunn & Harper, 2023; Syauqi et al., 2024). This perspective is reinforced by research by Rahmadani et al. (2024) which emphasizes that a pleasant learning environment can improve student performance when accompanied by clear expectations and guidelines. Thus, the balance between fun and discipline in the learning process not only creates a more engaging learning experience but also provides a structure that supports learning effectiveness.

In the context of music education, the application of elements of fun has been proven to provide significant benefits for the development of students' skills. Studies according to Anuar and Ismail (2021) reveal that the Dalcroze method, which is based on movement and rhythm activities, is able to improve the singing skills of elementary school students by creating an active and fun learning atmosphere. Furthermore, research by Aeni and Pamungkas (2024) highlights the importance of an interactive approach to teaching music to children, where a fun learning method contributes to increased engagement and learning effectiveness (Huang, 2023).

In any case, the enjoyment of learning music must be balanced with a strong disciplinary structure to ensure optimal achievement of technical skills. A systematic learning approach allows students to develop more in-depth and focused musical competence (Rianduli & Sianturi, 2023). A disciplined focus on core music practice contributes to honing talent and a more comprehensive conceptual understanding of music theory and practice (Hu, 2024). In addition, the balance between enjoyment and discipline

in music learning also has significant psychological implications (Ferreri et al., 2019; Jääskeläinen & Phillips, 2023; Peters et al., 2024). A study conducted by Arribas-galarraga et al. (2023) shows that the fulfilment of psychological needs in musical activities is closely correlated with the level of enjoyment felt during the rehearsal and performance process. The integration of elements of pleasure contributes to increased student motivation, while structured and disciplined practice ensures more effective mastery of skills. Thus, a systematically designed music curriculum can provide a framework that supports the exploration of student creativity within directed boundaries, facilitating self-expression as well as the development of technical skills (Patria & Zulkarnaen, 2023; Purhanudin et al., 2023).

This study focuses on drumming practices at Favore Music, a non-formal music education institution that applies an innovative approach to teaching. As an institution that serves students from various backgrounds, Favore Music faces the challenge of balancing the elements of fun and discipline in drumming. Initial observations show that although many students enjoy the process of learning music, their level of engagement and discipline varies. Some students lose motivation when learning feels too rigid, while others have difficulty achieving the expected skills due to the lack of a clear disciplinary structure. In line with these issues, this study aims to explore learning strategies that can balance fun and discipline in the context of drumming at Favore Music.

METHOD

This research uses descriptive qualitative methods to explore pedagogical strategies in drumming lessons at Favore Music, located at Mekar Puspita No.46, Cibaduyut, Kecamatan Bojongloa Kidul, Kota Bandung, Jawa Barat 40236, with a focus on balancing the aspects of fun and discipline in learning. One of the main characteristics of qualitative methods is flexibility in the data collection process, which generally involves direct interaction between researchers and participants (Bazen et al., 2021; Köhler & Smith, 2022; Rusandi & Muhammad Rusli, 2021). In this study, the researcher acted as an active participant, as both a drum instructor and a researcher, thus having the opportunity to directly observe and experience the learning process. The research subjects consisted of twelve students aged eight to thirteen years old with varying skill levels, selected using purposive sampling. Data collection was carried out through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Interviews were conducted with three students and three parents to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences in participating in drumming lessons and the challenges they faced. Semi-structured interviews with students and parents aimed to explore motivation, challenges, and perceptions of the lessons received.

Table 1. Interview questions to students

No	Question	Students
1	What do you think about the material that was studied in the previous session? Does the material feel interesting or difficult to comprehend?	S1
2	Do you feel happy or excited about playing the lessons that was studied in the previous session?	S2
3	In your opinion, what is the most difficult challenge in learning the drums that you have experienced so far?	S3

Table 2. Interview questions to parents

No	Question	Parents
1	How do you assess your child's learning outcomes? Has your child shown improvement in their exercise routine?	P1
2	How do you observe the development of your child's drumming skills since taking this course?	P2
3	What are your hopes for the further development of your child's drumming in the future?	P3

Documentation used in this study includes learning materials provided by the instructor, reflective notes from the instructor, and recordings of practice sessions. This documentation was used to enrich the research findings and provide additional confirmation of the results obtained from observations and interviews. The data obtained was analysed using thematic analysis techniques with reference to the framework of (Miles et al., 2014) which includes three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions and verification. Data from various sources are classified, arranged in the form of descriptive narratives and thematic matrices, and validated through triangulation techniques to ensure the accuracy and credibility of the findings.



Fig 1. Favore music location

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Designing fun activities and technical discipline

Drum lessons at Favore Music last one hour in each session, with a curriculum structure based on RockSchool Music standards. The curriculum is a guide for students from Grade 1 to Grade 5, covering basic drumming techniques, notation reading from beginner to advanced levels, and a variety of accompaniment patterns used in various musical styles. Although the curriculum provides a clear framework, teachers have the flexibility to design learning methods and materials, as long as they follow the pedagogical principles set by Favore Music. This approach allows learning that is more adaptive to the needs of each student, while maintaining the technical standards required in drumming.

As part of a pedagogical approach that integrates joyful learning and discipline-based learning, this study applies the “Rhythm Rudiment Games” method, which is a rudiment sticking exercise packaged in the form of an interactive game. This exercise not only functions as a hand warm-up and motor exercise, but also aims to improve rhythmic precision, hand coordination, tempo consistency, and dynamic control in drumming. With this method, students not only mechanically memorize rudiment patterns, but also internalize rhythmic concepts through a more enjoyable and interactive experience. In this learning pattern, direct interaction between teacher and student is the main aspect in maintaining a balance between the pleasure of learning and the discipline of playing techniques (Giawa & Telaumbanua, 2023; Suyamti et al., 2024). The teacher not only acts as an instructor, but also as a facilitator who provides gradual challenges so that students can progressively improve their technical skills (Azisah et al., 2023; Kholidah et al., 2023). Before the game starts, the teacher gives clear instructions regarding the rudimentary patterns to be played, the techniques to be applied, and the target tempo and dynamics to be achieved. The teacher then demonstrates the pattern which the students follow at a slow tempo before gradually increasing it according to their individual abilities.

During the training, the teacher actively provides direct feedback on every detail of the student's play, including stroke accuracy, stick pressure, and rhythmic stability. If a discrepancy is found in the playing pattern, the teacher immediately provides correction and directs the student to fix it with a more specific training method. In addition, to maintain discipline in practice, the teacher sets various tempo and dynamic-based challenges, such as maintaining a rudiment pattern at a gradually increasing tempo or adjusting the dynamics of the game based on certain cues. For discipline in learning, each student is evaluated on three main indicators: rhythmic accuracy, tempo stability, and stroke technique. If students have not yet reached the set standard, they will be given more specific remedial exercises before moving on to the next level. This model ensures that each student not only plays freely but also develops systematic technical control.

As a form of appreciation and motivation for students, those who successfully complete the challenge will receive a symbolic award noted on the blackboard or whiteboard as “Master of Rudiments”. This award not only gives students a sense of accomplishment but also creates a healthy competitive spirit among them. In addition to recording on the whiteboard, the teacher also provides direct forms of appreciation, such as high-fives and verbal praise, which serve as a positive encouragement to boost students' confidence. Despite the fact that the game and appreciation aspects are applied, the teacher still ensures that the award is given based on objective achievements in the established drum technique parameters. Thus, this award not only functions as a motivational boost, but also as a form of validation of the skills that students have mastered (An et al., 2024; Khoirudin, 2022; Wahyuni et al., 2024).

In this way, students not only feel valued for their efforts, but are also more motivated to continue improving their drumming skills. This approach provides a balance between a strict training structure and fun game elements, so that students remain motivated in learning without losing discipline in drumming techniques. With the Rhythm Rudiment Games method, students not only gain a stronger technical understanding, but also improve rhythmic control, hand coordination, and the skill of responding to motivational directions from the teacher.



Fig 2. Two students playing their favorites song

Fun as a gateway to discipline in drum learning

Fun concept, is not simply related to entertainment or pleasure but rather refers to pedagogical strategies that optimize intrinsic motivation, active involvement, and an interactive learning experience (Alsa et al., 2021; Qurrotu Aini & Saripah, 2019). This approach is in line with the principle of joyful learning, where students continue to participate in a structured learning process without losing enthusiasm and interest in the material being taught. Thus, fun in drumming not only plays a role in reducing boredom or psychological pressure but also functions as a pedagogical instrument that supports increased skill retention and long-term reinforcement of technical discipline.

In drumming lessons at Favore Music, students recognize that fun activities, such as the drum cover challenge, significantly reduce the psychological burden of repetitive technical exercises. By practicing with songs that are familiar and interesting to them, students are able to maintain concentration and increase endurance in hour-long practice sessions. This is reflected in the words of one of the students:

(S1) "Wow, Mr, it doesn't feel like I've been practicing for an hour, because this song has a good beat!"

This statement shows that when an element of fun is integrated into learning, students are more motivated to remain actively involved in practice and have better resilience in developing their technical skills. Even though the learning approach is packaged in a fun way, the instructional component remains the main aspect emphasized by the teacher in each practice session (Hamdi et al., 2022; Nuragnia et al., 2021). In practice, there are moments when students have difficulty playing fill-ins or more complex rhythmic patterns, which require high coordination and precision. When faced with this obstacle, the teacher immediately takes on the role of facilitator by providing a direct demonstration of the correct technique. After that, students are given the opportunity to try again, with gradual direction from the teacher who repeatedly instructs them to correct the parts that are not right.

While playing the drums, the (S2) student can be seen playing the drums enthusiastically, following the rhythm of his favourite song which is playing loudly. With lively and expressive movements, he seems to really enjoy every beat produced. After completing a certain part of the song:

(S2) "I'm really happy! The material is exciting and I'm even more excited to practice because I can play drums to cool songs."

During this process, motivation and instructional guidance run simultaneously. Teachers not only correct technical errors but also provide psychological encouragement that encourages students to persevere in the face of challenges (Liu et al., 2024). In this situation, feedback is given in the form of positive affirmation from teacher, such as:

(T)“Come on, try again! The beginning was good, now let's do it again, come on!”

Sentences like this play an important role in building students' resilience mentality, where they not only feel disciplined in practice, but are also encouraged to continue improving their skills in a supportive and non-pressuring atmosphere. After completing a certain part of the exercise, the student (S3) seemed excited, put down the drumstick for a moment, and then looked at the instructor attentively. He then opened up a conversation about the challenges faced in the process of learning to play the drums. The student said:

(S3)"The hardest part is maintaining the tempo, because it's pretty fast, so sometimes I have a hard time staying stable."

In addition, in order to foster long-term motivation, students who successfully complete the challenges in the drum cover challenge are given a symbolic award that is recorded on the blackboard or whiteboard as “Great Play”. This appreciation not only reinforces a sense of individual achievement but also creates a healthy competitive atmosphere in the classroom (Charity T. Embodo & Randy B. Alonzo, 2024; Heinz, 2023; Roberson et al., 2021). Through this approach, drumming at Favore Music proves that the element of fun in music education does not conflict with the principle of discipline but rather serves as a catalyst that helps students develop better perseverance, consistency, and technical skills.



Fig 3. Student success in reading notation



Fig 4. Playing song accompaniment by reading drum notation

Decisive factors for effectiveness in drum learning

The effectiveness of drumming for elementary school students is strongly influenced by various pedagogical factors that integrate cognitive, motor, and affective aspects (Awiya & Rahayu, 2022; Sembiring et al., 2025). One of the key elements in successful learning is active collaboration between teachers and students. In this approach, teachers not only act as instructors, but also as partners in the process of playing the drums (Sembiring et al., 2025). By playing with students, teachers create a fun learning atmosphere while allowing students to directly imitate the correct playing technique. This approach significantly reduces the error rate in technique execution because students have a model they can observe and imitate in real-time. Furthermore, the active involvement of the teacher in playing drums with the students increases emotional involvement, so that students feel more comfortable and motivated to practice without excessive pressure (Yao et al., 2024).

In addition, the availability of adequate facilities and infrastructure in the drum learning environment is a determining factor in the effectiveness of the learning process. The availability of two sets of drums, both electric and acoustic, allows for flexibility in the teaching method. With these two instruments, teachers and students can switch positions in the learning session, providing a more comprehensive experience of the different characteristics of the two types of drums. This flexibility also gives students the freedom to explore instruments according to their preferences, thus increasing a sense of ownership and attachment to the learning process (Sembiring et al., 2024). With this option, students can experience how the same technique can be applied to different types of drums, broadening their musical horizons from an early age.

In addition to technical factors, a pedagogical approach oriented towards constructive feedback and continuous motivation from the teacher also plays a fundamental role in the effectiveness of drumming learning. Each playing session that the students do is always accompanied by feedback from the teacher, which not only includes corrections to suboptimal techniques, but also appreciation for the progress that has been made. This feedback is given in a constructive manner, ensuring that students continue to feel supported and encouraged to keep improving. Teachers also apply a balance between exercise discipline and the fun aspect of learning, ensuring that the classroom atmosphere does not become too rigid. The positive expressions and motivational words provided by the teacher have a significant impact on the students' psychology, increasing their confidence in playing the drums and building endurance to the technical challenges of learning.

Interviews with parents also provided important insights into the effect of drumming on children's development. The parents interviewed revealed that they saw positive changes in their children's habits, both in terms of time discipline and in increasing their confidence. (P1) Parent said:

(P1) "I see my child getting more and more excited about practicing the drums at home, even reminding us often about upcoming practices."

That statement shows that learning the drums not only affects the children in the classroom but also strengthens the involvement of parents in supporting their children's learning process. Another parent, who is also involved in accompanying their children during home practice adds:

(P2) "I feel closer to my child because we often talk about their drum practice, and they are happy when I provide support. I think this makes them more confident in performing in front of their friends."

When they had finished watching their child practising from outside the window, the parents (P3) were seen sitting with a satisfied smile, looking at their child who was playing the drums enthusiastically and saying,

(P3) "I hope my son gets better at playing the drums, because he enjoys learning, especially with songs he likes."

Furthermore, managing practice time with the insertion of productive break time is also an important factor in maintaining learning effectiveness. The break provided is not just a break from physical exercise but is also filled with activities that are indirectly related to music and drums. Teachers often give students creative challenges during breaks, such as drawing drums or describing the elements of the drum set they are using. These activities not only provide an opportunity for students to rest but also keep them engaged in learning in a more relaxed and stress-free way. Thus, this approach helps students to continue enjoying the learning process, avoid boredom, and maintain long-term motivation in learning to play the drums. Overall, the effectiveness of drumming for elementary school students depends on the synergy between collaborative teaching methods, the availability of adequate facilities, the provision of constructive feedback, and the balanced management of practice time. The implementation of this strategy not only improves students' technical skills in playing the drums, but also instils the values of discipline, confidence, and persistence in learning, which are essential aspects of their musical and cognitive development.

Discussion and implications in drum learning

This study highlights the interaction between fun and discipline in the context of drumming for elementary school students. The findings show that effective pedagogical strategies integrate structured fun and discipline, which ultimately fosters a more comprehensive and lasting understanding of drumming skills. This approach not only facilitates the technical aspects of drumming but also emphasizes the importance of developing a sense of rhythm, coordination and personal commitment, which are essential for mastering the instrument. By incorporating fun into the learning process, students demonstrate a higher level of engagement and motivation, which is an important factor in maintaining interest over time. At the same time, the application of strategic discipline ensures that students understand the need for focus, practice, and perseverance, which are essential elements of any music education. During the drum lessons that have been carried out, students were given the opportunity to choose the songs they like. This is in line with the research findings of Nurishlah et al. (2023) which reveal that giving students the opportunity to choose the songs they want gives them room for autonomy. This allows students to make choices, make decisions, and plan their own learning. Furthermore, in learning, the use of punishment and reward systems has a significant influence in increasing student motivation (Khodijah, 2014; Sidin, 2021).

Comparing these results with previous research, this study is in line with the findings of Harya (2021) who provides a fun learning method, and Dachi et al. (2021), and Sembiring et al. (2025) who explains how supportive methods are in the drum learning process. However, this study distinguishes itself by emphasizing the special relevance of these two elements in the context of elementary school drum lessons, an area that has been under-explored in previous literature. While previous research has generally focused on overall drum education and learning, this study honed in on the challenges and benefits of a fun and disciplined approach to drumming, making it unique in its contribution to the field.

The long-term implications of the findings of this study show that pedagogical strategies that emphasize a balance between fun and discipline can not only improve students' musical skills but can also enrich their learning experience holistically. Teaching that integrates fun elements with a disciplined structure provides long-term benefits for the development of students' character and musical skills in the future. Thus, drumming at the elementary level can be considered an important foundation for the development of further musical skills, which will later have an impact on their success in the broader context of music education.

However, there are limitations to the methods used in this study, especially in terms of generalizing the results. Although the qualitative approach allows for an in-depth understanding of the process of learning to play the drums, the results obtained only reflect the views and experiences of a limited group of students. Therefore, in order to obtain a more comprehensive picture, further research with a larger sample and in a more diverse context is needed. In addition, it is important to consider the role of external factors such as the social environment and family support that may influence the effectiveness of teaching in a broader context.

CONCLUSION

Research confirms that the balance between fun and discipline in drumming is an effective pedagogical strategy that increases students' motivation, engagement, and mastery of technical skills. Interactive approaches that integrate elements of fun, such as Rhythm Rudiment Games and Drum Cover Challenge, have been shown to strengthen students' rhythmic accuracy, motor coordination, and resilience in the face of technical challenges. The results show that enjoyment in learning is not just entertainment, but functions as a pedagogical stimulus that reinforces discipline and the effectiveness of practice. Active interaction, constructive feedback, and directed practice create a conducive learning environment, build mental resilience, and encourage consistency in music practice. These findings contribute to the development of adaptive music learning strategies oriented towards students' needs. Further research is needed to explore the effectiveness of this approach in various contexts and to understand the influence of external factors, such as parental involvement and social support. Therefore, the balance between fun and discipline not only improves technical skills but also builds a sustainable learning pattern and long-term motivation in music education

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