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Social media affordances in music learning and performance: a systematic review of empirical evidence, 2020–2026

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ABSTRACT

Social media platforms have become integral to how musicians practise, perform, and learn, yet research on this topic remains fragmented across disciplines, platforms, and educational levels. This systematic literature review examined how social media influences music learning and performance. Following the PRISMA 2020 framework, a Scopus search conducted on 24 July 2026 identified 657 records; after duplicate removal and screening, 249 full-text articles were assessed against predefined eligibility criteria, and 50 studies published between 2020 and 2026 were included in the synthesis. Studies were analysed using thematic synthesis (Thomas & Harden, 2008), while screening and eligibility assessment were conducted by a single reviewer. Four themes emerged: social media, particularly YouTube, Instagram, and WeChat, supports informal and self-regulated learning while complementing formal instruction; platforms are increasingly integrated into teaching, feedback, and professional communities; platform visibility and engagement metrics contribute to social comparison, performance anxiety, and impostor phenomena; and a smaller body of research critiques the platformization of music education and musical labour. The review extends self-regulated learning and communities-of-practice frameworks to digital learning environments and suggests that educators should intentionally scaffold social media use to enhance learning while reducing comparison-related harms. Future research should prioritize longitudinal studies, cross-platform comparisons, and greater representation of under-studied regions and non-Western musical traditions.

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Introduction

Music learning and music performance have historically been organised around embodied, co-present relationships between teacher and student, performer and audience. Over the past decade, however, digital platforms have reconfigured where and how these relationships occur, extending music pedagogy and performance into networked, asynchronous, and globally distributed spaces. This shift sits within a broader transformation of education and cultural production described across the social sciences, in which platforms mediate not only communication but also the acquisition and demonstration of skill. Understanding how this transformation plays out specifically within music, a domain historically dependent on close observation, imitation, and feedback, is therefore of pressing importance to educators, policymakers, and the creative industries alike.

Within this broader shift, a specific and increasingly visible phenomenon has emerged: musicians and learners using mainstream social media platforms, rather than purpose-built educational software, as sites of practice, instruction, and public performance. Self-regulated instrumental practice documented through Instagram challenges dos Santos Silva et al. (2023), string-instrument lessons conducted over video-conferencing platforms Utermohl de Queiroz et al. (2025), and informal instruction absorbed through YouTube tutorials Vizcaíno-Verdú et al. (2021) together illustrate how music learning has migrated onto platforms not designed for pedagogy. This narrower phenomenon, rather than digital learning in general, is the focus of the present review. For the purposes of this review, "mainstream social media platforms" are operationalised as general-purpose, non-music-specific applications (e.g., YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, WeChat) that were not purpose-built for music pedagogy, as distinct from dedicated educational or practice-management software.

Quite an impressive collection of literature has already tackled this phenomenon, but mainly from a narrow perspective. One research pointed out the existence of informal YouTube learning videos which contain information on how to play music Schmidt-Jones (2022); another found that some teachers used Facebook groups for discussion on work Gee (2026); and still another described Instagram's role in teaching not only traditional but also popular music Hakim et al. (2024); Pacheco-Costa (2025). Similar to other research, a study on WeChat revealed that classical Chinese music teachers communicate and engage their students through such channels even outside the classroom settings Chen (2024). Overall, the articles cited above have pointed out the fact that social media is used to a great extent beyond merely being a content-sharing platform, rather it acts in a pedagogical as well as performative manner.

Recently, various methodological and technological innovations have been introduced through this line of inquiry. The trend shifted from descriptive methods to analyzing through theories. For example, some studies applied self-regulated learning frameworks to online practice behavior of musicians Holm-Davis (2026). Others, such as Bell et al. (2026) , looked into the ways how digital audio workstations and YouTube are together influencing production teaching. Researchers have also documented how conservatoire-level organizations share content on their various social media accounts (i.e. Urpí-Cámara et al., 2024). In addition to reflection and case studies, Dockan et al., 2023) have employed these methods to record teachers' use of platform-mediated tools such as Soundtrap during the pandemic which was a disruption (O'Leary & Bannerman 2023; Clark et al. 2024).

Despite the growing evidence, the literature still remains fragmentary in two ways. Firstly, a systematic review of these works in that exact overlap is a limited undertaking. The previous reviews have mainly been on different aspects such as YouTube as an informal tool for adolescent learning by Monreal-Guerrero and Gozalo (2023a), social media, in general, as an adolescent learning agent by Monreal-Guerrero and Gozalo (2023b), or even a social network's influence on adolescents' formation of music in Spanish contexts by De Moya Martínez and de la Cruz Ramos (2025). None yet among the reviews has been able to summarise the evidence across platforms, ages, and learning and performance outcomes in an international perspective. Therefore, we do not know yet if conclusions made from a single-platform/single-population study can be applied to the wider world of music instruction when one considers different factors and combinations.
Second, there is a theoretical gap in the field: most empirical papers report platform use through mere descriptions while a minority more critical and socially grounded studies are raising questions about platformization from the angle of structural effects on aspects of labor, identity, and pedarogy among musicians O'Leary (2023); Stuart-Hitchcox (2025); Treß (2025). Besides the motivation and community-building that visibility metrics provide, these critical analyses warn that students and novice teachers may experience problems like social comparison and the impostor phenomena as a result of the high visibility of their work Rinn (2025); Nápoles and Rinn (2025). Currently there is no literature combining the instrumental and critical studies.

There is a real need to close these knowledge gaps as both platforms and their functionalities are changing at an ever-increasing rate, and as music teachers as well as educational institutions face a set of practical questions and decisions about whether and to what extent they should use social media in their curricula, assessment, and professional development. Without a combined source of data to base one's decision on, one single platform or one particular context study might not give the right information for the situation you are in. That is when the educators and school leaders are trying to guess based on limited information. PRISMA 2020 is a guideline which outlines a method of reviewing medical literature thoroughly and objectively, and a systematic one can be a good way out providing the sound methodological framework that will back up your choice.

This article investigates three questions, one that relates to each of the previously mentioned gaps in the literature. To start with, it looks at how social media platforms serve as informal and self-directed music learning spaces. Then it analyzes the ways in which they are being used by formal music education providers, professional communities, and institutions. Lastly, it explores psychosocial and critical issues that arise with platform-mediated music learning and performing. What sets this article apart is the fact that it combines different aspects

Scopus, several platforms, and different populations to carry out a synthesis for the very first time that could be used both to guide the teaching-learning situation and to plan scientific research. This study is conducted as a full systematic review following the PRISMA 2020 statement, rather than a scoping-review protocol, given that its aim is to synthesise and appraise evidence against explicit eligibility criteria rather than to map the breadth of a literature.

RQ1: *What is the role of social media platforms in the learning of music and the informal and self-regulated practices through music?*

RQ2: *Integrating social media platforms into formal music education, teacher professional communities, and institutional practice the question remains: how is it being done?*

RQ3: *What are the psychosocial, critical, and pedagogical effects of turning music learning and performance into platform activities?*

Method

Research Design and Framework

This paper follows the format of a systematic literature review, and we mainly referred to Tranfield et al. (2003) and Liberati et al. (2009) regarding the procedures of a systematic review and report, respectively. It also conforms to the PRISMA 2020 statement (Page et al., 2021). We chose an SLR rather than a narrative review since the subject of the research is not only a multi- platform but also multi-disciplinary and multi-method one thus a need for a transparent and replicable approach to the process of identification, screening, and synthesis of the research evidence.

Search Strategy

Following is the Boolean search query we used in the Scopus TITLE-ABS-KEY field to retrieve the relevant papers:

("music" OR "musician*" OR "vocal" OR "singing" OR "choir" OR "instrument*") AND ("social media" OR "TikTok" OR "Instagram" OR "YouTube" OR "Facebook" OR "WeChat" OR "digital platform*" OR "online platform*") AND ("learning" OR "education" OR "pedagog*" OR "teachteach*" OR "performance" OR "practice" OR "instruction")

We utilized truncation (*) to obtain variant forms (e.g., "musician*"). To avoid searching the whole paper field, only title, abstract and author keywords were searched using TITLE-ABS-KEY field code which only searched those fields. At the search stage, we didn't restrict the results using other Scopus limiters (e.g., subject area). During screening, we narrowed down the topics (Section 3.5).

Database and Information Sources

The manuscript aims at publication in Q1 Scopus-indexed journals and the selection of Scopus as the sole bibliographic database aligns with this target. The database was searched on the 24th of July 2026. Other additional bibliographic databases were not searched which limitation is admitted in Section 5.5. Scopus was chosen specifically because its broad multidisciplinary coverage spans the education, communication, and music-studies literatures relevant to this topic and because it provides consistent, exportable metadata for PRISMA reporting; we nonetheless acknowledge that a single-database search may have excluded records indexed only in Web of Science, ERIC, or PubMed.

Eligibility Criteria

We used the inclusion and exclusion criteria from Table 1 when we screened. That table shows them clearly.

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Language	English (or English abstract available)	Non-English with no translatable abstract
Document type	Journal article	Conference paper, book chapter, editorial, note
Publication period	2020–2026 (search date: 24 July 2026)	Before 2020

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Subject focus	Music education, music learning, music performance, digital/educational technology	Unrelated disciplines (e.g., clinical medicine, unrelated computer science) despite incidental keyword match
Topical relevance	Explicit engagement with a social media platform (e.g., YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, WeChat) in relation to learning, teaching, or performing music	Tangential or single-sentence mention of "social media" or "music" with no substantive analysis
Accessibility	Full text retrievable via Scopus-linked DOI	Abstract only, no accessible full text

Study Selection Process

We used a two-step screening process. In the first screening step, the titles, abstracts and author keywords of all 656 non-duplicate records were checked against the topic criterion of having at least one music related term, a named or generic social media/platform term, which were combined without any tangential reference. The records not meeting this combination were excluded (n = 407), resulting in 249 records that needed full-text eligibility verification. In the second step of the process, the entire content (or at least, in case the full text was not available, the full abstract plus any other metadata which could be found) of all of the 249 remaining records was checked against the criteria from the Table 1. The reviewer worked alone on this single-reviewing process and he used a keyword-based system to help him organize the paper, which made the reviewer's decisions as well as the entire process traceable and consistent. The methodology and its limitations of this process are discussed in detail in Section 5.5 of paper. Because screening was conducted by a single reviewer rather than two independent assessors, no inter-rater reliability statistic (e.g., Cohen's kappa) could be calculated; this constraint is treated as a limitation of the review in Section 5.5.

Quality Assessment — FICO Framework

Included studies were additionally examined using the FICO (Focus, Information, Context, Outcome) framework. According to this framework, a study could be eligible only if it had a clearly expressed focus on music-related learning or performance, was methodologically described in sufficient detail as to make an assessment of its reliability possible, had context that was identifiable (population, platform, and country), and a study outcome or finding was reported. Studies failing to meet even one of the four FICO criteria were dismissed at the reading of full-paper stage.

Data Extraction Procedure

Five fields were extracted for every one of the 50 publications included, the information coming directly from the Scopus records: author(s), publication year, country/context (where it was mentioned), publishing journal, platforms under study, type of investigation, and main results announced. These information have been made use of to construct Tables 1 and 2.

Network and Bibliometric Analysis Methodology

We directly extracted from the Scopus export the metadata needed to produce a descriptive bibliometric profile of the included corpus (publication year distribution, dominant journals, and platform frequency). However, the authors did not run a full co-citation or keyword co-occurrence network (e.g., through VOSviewer or Bibliometrix) at this stage and that methodological point has been left out as a possible area for the next bibliometric study and included in Section 5.5.

Data Analysis and Synthesis

The included studies were subjected to thematic synthesis (Thomas & Harden, 2008). Each paper described its focus, platform, and outcome, upon which we assigned relevant descriptive codes; the codes were thereafter inductively clustered into four interpretive themes, that are discussed together with research questions in Section 5.3.

Reporting and Documentation

This review outlines how the methods and findings were addressed using the PRISMA 2020 checklist (Page et al., 2021, BMJ, 372:n71, https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n71).

PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram

Figure 1 depicts a PRISMA 2020 flow chart outlining the steps involved in identifying, screening, being eligible, and being included, as explained in Section 3.5.

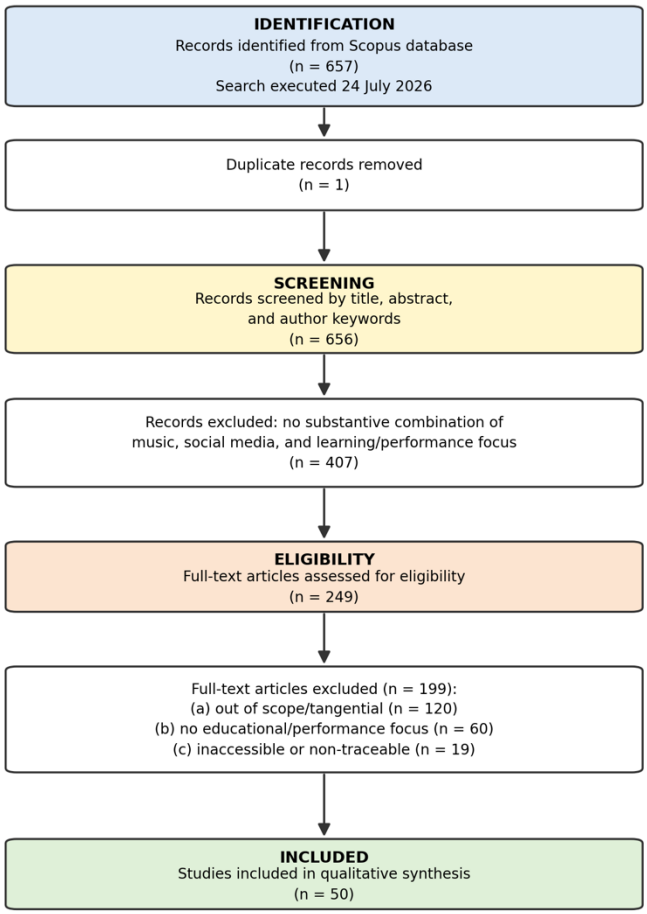

Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 flow diagram of study identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion (Scopus search, n = 657; final synthesis, n = 50)

Results and Discussions

Study Selection Results

The Scopus search done on 24 July 2026 generated 657 records. Of these, two were duplicates that were removed, leaving two identical ones as one. So 656 papers were subjected to title/abstract/keyword screening. The application of the topical eligibility criterion resulted in the removal of 407 papers. There were 249 records left after screening for eligibility at the topic level. The full-text evaluation with Table 1 and the FICO framework led to a rejection of 199 papers (120 out of scope or tangential, 60 lacking and educational or performance-learning focus despite keyword match at surface level, and 19 not traceable or lost), ending with a corpus of 50 studies for qualitative syntheses, which matches flow diagram in Section 4.

Descriptive Characteristics

The total of 50 studies that were reviewed were published in the period from 2020 to 2026. Of these, most were concentrated in 2023 and onwards, which is consistent with the increased use of platform-based musical learning in the post-pandemic period as documented in our corpus itself, see for example (O'Leary & Bannerman 3018)3 and (Clark et al. 2024). Studies included in the review used many different online platforms, with YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and WeChat as most widely accessed ones. They came from various locations around the world Brazil, Spain, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, the United States, Australia, and even online-lesson platforms with users in multiple countries. Mostly from a methodological standpoint, the collection consists of qualitative case studies, content analyses, and mixed-methods designs whereas there are only few systematic reviews and quasi-experimental studies. Table 2 presents a descriptive view of characteristics of ten typical studies, which were chosen, among others, to represent a wide range of platforms and methodological approaches in this review; meanwhile, Table 3 lists the themes, technologies, and outcomes that relate to the same ten studies.

Table 2. Summary of Included Studies (n = 10)

Author(s) & Year	Country/Context	Platform	Method	Key Focus / Findings
dos Santos Silva et al. (2023)	Brazil	Instagram	Autoethnographic case study	Self-regulated learning strategies sustained daily guitar practice during a 100-day Instagram challenge.
Pacheco-Costa (2025)	Spain	Instagram	Qualitative, higher education	Instagram supported student-centred, informal assessment of popular music learning.
Chen (2024)	China	WeChat	Quasi-experimental	WeChat-mediated instruction improved communicative and cognitive skills of classical music students.
Vizcaíno-Verdú et al. (2021)	Spain / global	YouTube	Survey, content analysis	YouTube musicians self-report multimedia, hypermedia, and transmedia competencies developed informally.
Lei et al. (2021)	Hong Kong	Multiple platforms	Mixed methods	Social media use assisted self-directed musical instrument learning among adult learners.
Monreal-Guerrero & Gozalo (2023a)	Spain	YouTube	Systematic review	Synthesizes evidence that YouTube functions as an informal music-learning resource for adolescents.
Utermohl de Queiroz et al. (2025)	Multi-country	Online lessons (video-conferencing)	Qualitative	Self-regulation, motivation, and social interaction shape online string-instrument learning environments.
Hakim et al. (2024)	Indonesia	Instagram	Qualitative case study	Instagram was integrated into performance and instruction of Gamad traditional music at a teacher-training program.
Gee (2026)	United States	Facebook	Content analysis	Elementary music teachers' Facebook group reveals dominant discussion trends shaping informal professional learning.
Holmes-Davis (2026)	United States	Multiple platforms	Qualitative, applications to education	Rock musicians' self-regulated learning behaviors online suggest transferable strategies for formal music education.

Table 3. Study Classification by Theme and Method (n = 10)

Author(s) & Year	Theme/Focus	Technology	Outcome Domain
Dos Santos Silva et al. (2023)	Self-regulated practice	Instagram	Sustained daily practice behavior
Pacheco-Costa (2025)	Informal/non-formal learning	Instagram	Student-centred assessment

Author(s) & Year	Theme/Focus	Technology	Outcome Domain
Chen (2024)	Formal instruction augmentation	WeChat	Communicative & cognitive skills
Vizcaíno-Verdú et al. (2021)	Informal learning competencies	YouTube	Transmedia competency development
Lei et al. (2021)	Self-directed instrument learning	Multiple platforms	Instrumental skill acquisition
Monreal-Guerrero & Gozalo (2023a)	Evidence synthesis	YouTube	Informal learning resource use
Utermohl de Queiroz et al. (2025)	Online lesson environments	Video-conferencing	Motivation & social interaction
Hakim et al. (2024)	Cultural/traditional music pedagogy	Instagram	Performance & instructional integration
Gee (2026)	Teacher professional learning	Facebook	Community discourse & practice-sharing
Holmes-Davis (2026)	Self-regulated learning transfer	Multiple platforms	Applications to formal pedagogy

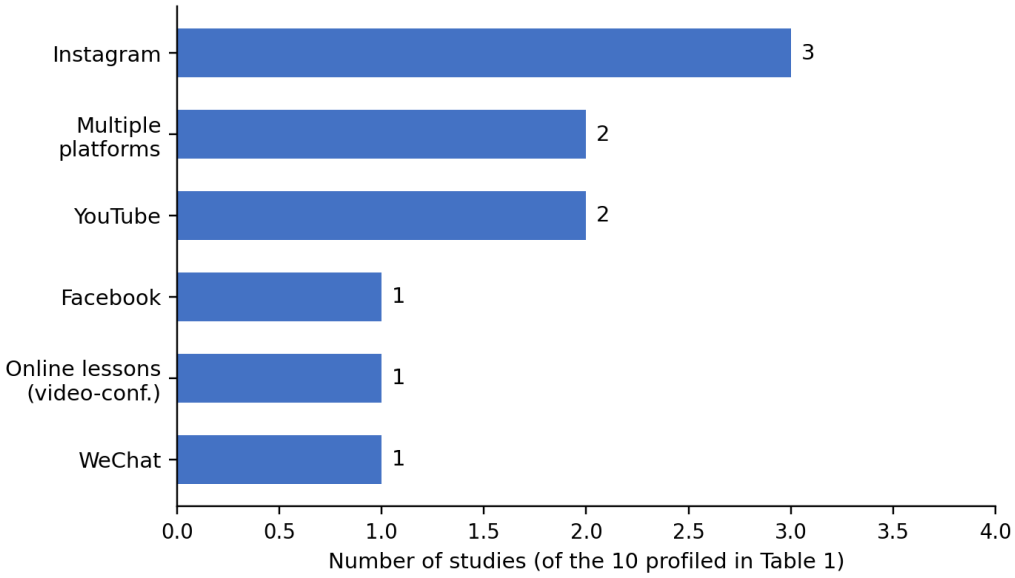

Figure 2. Platform frequency among the ten studies profiled in Table 2

Thematic Synthesis

Findings for RQ1

The results that relate most closely to RQ1 have a general agreement that social media is, in a way, the music learning place parallel to the formal way of learning and teaching, where a student is taught by a teacher. Analytical approaches based on self-regulated learning dominated the results. Dos Santos Silva et al. (2023) showed that using a 100-days Instagram guitar practice challenge allowed a classical guitarist to self-regulate himself through the different phases of music production processes, such as playing and composing, that a self-taught musicians do normally. On the other hand, in her 2026 study, Holmes-Davis pointed out the potential application of rock musicians informal learning practices, that she had observed, to formal education contexts. Similarly, Utermohl de Queiroz et al. (2025) concluded that motivation, social interaction, and learning environment were the factors that together led to self-regulation of the learners in the online string-instrument lessons. So, they indicated that one's self-regulated learning online is hardly purely an individual act but is largely a product of the social and the online environment.

YouTube came out on top every time as the main informal platform through which people learn music in a largely self-directed way. Vizcaíno-Verdú et al. (2021) highlighted that the musicians they studied via YouTube were getting a lot of training not only in performing but also creating and producing songs, and they were doing it in an environment that allowed them to be very flexible with time and space; at any rate, the authors concluded, they were developing skills that would help them as future performers but also give them some technical and media literacy to work on their own musical content. Also, Schmidt-Jones (2022) found a great diversity of starting points and obstacles that can affect people throughout the time they play an instrument on a particular platform. These results were confirmed by reviews focusing on how YouTube contributes to the informal learning for teenagers. Monreal-Guerrero and Gozalo (2023a) also discussed how, by the use of social media such as YouTube, education can be extended beyond the formal setting into teenagers' everyday life and that the two forms of learning can be considered as one another's complement (Monreal-Guerrero & Gozalo 2023b).

Other platforms displayed similar yet more modest patterns. For instance, Instagram was found to have a dual role as a means of performing as well as teaching traditional Gamad music in a teacher-training program in Indonesia by Hakim et al. (2024). Furthermore, it helped facilitate student- centred, informal assessment of music learning in Spanish higher education by Pacheco-Costa (2025). In China, WeChat-facilitated instruction was correlated with significant improvements in classical music students' verbal and reasoning skills (Chen, 2024), whereas social media as a whole, was instrumental in the self-directed instrumental learning of adults in Hong Kong (Lei et al., 2021). Cole et al. summarize, these different situations and cases reflect that it is the features or capabilities (short-form videos, DM, forum communities) of the platform that determines how the learning is done and hence, what type of learner or what types of learning can happen.

Findings for RQ2

Regarding RQ2, the corpus reveals a distinct transition pattern from incidental use to deliberate institutional adoption of social media by institutions for music education. Conservatories have begun to produce content across their social media accounts in line with the institutional policy rather than relying on individual staff members' contributions (Urpí-Cámara et al., 2024). At the same time, music teacher professional groups have gathered on specific platform spaces, like the FB group discussed by Gee (2026) for primary music teachers.

The pandemic due to COVID-19 was a major driver for further implementation of this integration. The paper of Dockan et al. (2023) is about adaptation strategies of music teachers for the use of the digital platform 'Soundtrap' during the pandemic disruption whereas other mixed-methods along with survey-based evidence supported by O'Leary and Bannerman (2023); as well as Clark et al. (2024) has proved the significant shift of technological integration in music education happened during and after pandemic closures. This trend of rapid acceptance is not limited to one specific country or software. Instead, the results from different studies such as the confidence levels of Australian educators with ICT and music technology by Merrick and Joseph (2025), or even formation of professional identity among music student teachers by Li and Tayrattanachai (2023) show that the pattern is rather widespread across different educational systems and music technologies used.

Issues of equity, representation, and professional identification were also discussed among the institutional integration topics at this stage. As stated by Salvador and Sierzega (2023), the authors explored the professional backgrounds of diversity, equity, and inclusion leaders in the context of music education professional associations; in contrast, Adorno et al. (2025) demonstrated that K-12 music teachers' utilization of social media and their involvement in social justice matters outside their classrooms were highly related. Vinuales, in his research conducted in 2020, also revealed that the music teacher professional activities on various social media platforms could be further extended with a component relating to teachers' mental health and overall well-being, thus adding another, health-focused aspect to the platform-facilitated professional community.

Findings for RQ3

Findings concerning RQ3 present a more cautious counter-narrative that is running parallel to the overall positive report of platform-supported learning. Public performance and visible metrics that allow social comparison processes led to music undergraduates experiencing their work as "impersonal, " i.e., they saw themselves as fake in front of others, as per Rinn (2025) and to perfectionism among choir teachers, according to Nápoles and Rinn (2025), which suggests that although visible features help motivate and build community, they can also impose psychological challenges on both students and educators.

A parallel body of critical literature examines the structural, rather than just psychological, implications of platformization. O'Leary (2023) claimed that the general trend of platformizing our musical lives presents certain challenges to music education itself while these challenges are extended through a critique of music education that takes place in what is called capitalist-realist cybertime by Stuart-Hitchcox (2025) and through Treß (2025)'s description of how an algorithmic system's "musical habitus" works.

Other research papers have been describing critical tensions that are more localised in their focus: Coppola (2021) questioned the "woke" social media culture among influential voices in music education discourse, using a Freirean approach as their theoretical framing; Simpson (2023), on the other hand, critiqued traditional PDF-based publication outlets for music education scholarship and advocated for greater creativity and innovativeness in the use of digital resources for sharing knowledge. By doing this, Abramo (2020) uncovered a so-called "social justice plot" that links the learning, consumption, and re-creation of music activities, taking place on social media, and Jost, 2020) highlighted the ways in which didactic authority and musical expertise are shown and expressed within the framework of online tutorials. When taken as a whole, the studies indicate that music learning that takes place through a platform cannot be judged solely on teaching grounds but should also be considered in terms of the structural and psychosocial expenses that it may incur.

Community, Identity, and Institutional Applications

Several sets of other papers examine the role of community making, representation within institutions, and developing various skills that relate to social media and music topics, going beyond the scope of three research questions that were tackled separately. Looking into examples of online traditional-virtual musical sessions explains to a great extent how the musical, teaching, and community activities can be carried on online. Mary O's Virtual Irish Traditional Music Session (Ward, 2023) is one case that shows how such online social continuity takes place, a pattern repeated in broader analyses of music communities, both online and offline, (Mantie et al., 2023). Reflective practices have also been captured in students' music production pedagogy via journals (Coghlan, 2023) and have described how a single YouTuber, Jaime Altozano, through his videos, found his way into Spanish music-education classrooms as an informal pedagogical influence (Montoya Rubio, 2021). Moreover, Indonesian research evidence supports that YouTube played the role of pop-jazz vocal learning for an academic music-education music program (Suryati, 2021).

Institutional and applied aspects bring a deeper understanding to this. A study found that the way self-representation of specialist music secondary schools was carried out on institutional websites was more a visual representation of exclusiveness than of openness (Lilliedahl, 2022). On the other hand, the study of the general skills and knowledge gap in higher music education was done in an empirical way (Toscher, 2020). Classical musicians and music hobbyists were found to use Instagram for communication practices differently at the metaphorical "side stage" of performance (Jaakkola, 2023). Moreover, Filipino musicians reported ambiguous experiences in the sense of feeling compelled to create for TikTok while at the same time feeling free when they were able to do so (Tintiangko et al., 2023). In addition, TikTok, apart from music, was used for educational purposes, supporting movement, dramatization and musical learning in higher-education sports-science contexts (López-Carril et al., 2024). Identity formation was examined through a case study about coming out as a "Trans Synth Queen" via YouTube-documented electronic music composition (Cayari, 2023). A middle-school music classroom made use of the #SaveTheAmazon campaign for building students' global competence (Barcellos & Wade-Chung, 2022). Furthermore, augmented-reality facial-recognition web content has been developed to push music-education technology beyond social media platforms (Park, 2023).

Comparative and Critical Analysis

In general, the studies are mostly case studies and content analyses. This suggests that the work is being done in a way that is exploratory and not fully developed yet. Quasi-experimental and systematic-review designs are quite limited. Only three systematic reviews have been found that directly deal with this combination (Monreal-Guerrero & Gozalo, 2023a, 2023b; De Moya Martínez & de la Cruz Ramos, 2025;), but the topics and populations covered in those reviews are different from and narrower than the ones discussed in this review. From a methodological point of view, research has shifted from the early descriptive portrayals of platform use to more theory-guided applications of self-regulated learning and communities-of-practice models. However, studies with a longitudinal or comparative approach across multiple platforms are still very few.

Discussion

Interpretation of Findings

All in all, the research points to the fact that social media not only represents an exciting new form of engagement in the world of music learning but it has also taken its place as an integral part of learning, practice, and performance in this field through sharing of one's artistic work on public platforms, learning, and collaborating with others. In addition, social media is used as the main tool, both by learners and teachers, for self-directed learning, gaining informal new skills, joining professional communities as well as sharing performances with the public but they also have to cope with the comparison-related, and structural pressures, which are the inevitable consequences of having one's musical productions visible to the public.

Theoretical Implications

The theoretical corpus develops the conceptualization and understanding of self-regulated learning and communities of practices in online contexts of networks and platforms. They indicate that self-regulation on the

internet is not only an individual cognitive process but also influenced by the platform's design, visibility to an audience, and algorithm-generated content (Holmes-Davis, 2026; Utermohl de Queiroz et al., 2025). This platform-embedded view of self-regulation is corroborated across a wider set of the included studies: dos Santos Silva et al. (2023) and Vizcaíno-Verdú et al. (2021) show informal learning being shaped by platform-specific affordances (challenge formats, video tutorials), Chen (2024) and Hakim et al. (2024) extend the same logic to formally integrated instruction, and Vinuales (2020) and Gee (2026) show communities-of-practice forming around platform-specific spaces (professional groups, content-sharing norms) rather than emerging independently of them. Taken together, these studies support treating platform design as a co-constitutive element of self-regulated learning and community formation, rather than a neutral backdrop.

Practical Implications

In terms of practice, the paper argues that if social media platforms like Instagram, YouTube and WeChat are deliberately and progressively incorporated into class time or homework (Hakim et al., 2024; Chen, 2024), it not only enhances learner motivation but also facilitates implicit skill transfer. However, it warns that teachers should be aware of students' peer pressure and mental well-being issues highlighted by these studies (Rinn, 2025; Nápoles & Rinn, 2025).

Comparison with Prior Reviews

While the overall results of this review align largely with those of previous systematic reviews that investigated the topic from a narrower and YouTube-centered perspective, (Monreal-Guerrero & Gozalo, 2023a) as well as a single-language or a single-region-focused informal educational agent within the context of social media (Monreal-Guerrero & Gozalo, 2023b; De Moya Martínez & de la Cruz Ramos, 2025), the study went further and combined different evidence across several platforms, several countries and a combination of outcomes which include both learning & performance.

Contradictions in the Literature

One major conflict seems to be whether being seen mainly via social media platforms is mostly helpful or mostly harmful: those highlighting the value of professional camaraderie and concentration, for example, are at odds with those illustrating psychological stress due to constant comparing (Vinuales, 2020; Gee, 2026 vs. Rinn, 2025; Nápoles & Rinn, 2025), the former vs. latter difference is most probably a result of different platforms, different population groups and how visibility is arranged rather than a disagreement in terms of factual proof.

Research Gaps

Three concrete issues appear to be missing from this synthesis: First, the scarcity of time tracking methods that can monitor a person's learning pattern over many years; second, comparative research across platforms that can find out platform effect by platform feature is not very active; third, the study of non-Western music traditions and the music scenes of low- and middle-income countries, apart from a small set of studies listed here, are scarcely represented in research (Hakim et al., 2024, Wang & Webb, 2025).

Limitations of This Review

This review is not without its limits. One thing this work lacked was the use of an additional database (besides Scopus): this means some research that may be relevant to the topic could have been missed. Also, the process of selecting articles based on content was done only by one person who used a combination of keywords, while instead of two independent assessors, a system would have been more reliable and fair. Lastly, the presentation of the topics in Section 5.3 is somewhat limited as it is based only on the main keywords without taking into account their network relations through bibliometric techniques (e.g., VOSviewer).

Future Research Agenda

Next steps in research should involve: (1) longitudinal and mixed methods studies to identify learners' self-regulated learning paths across different platforms for at least a three year period; (2) comparison studies that distinguish between different types of pedagogical functions of short form videos, live-streaming, and persistent-community platforms; and (3) broader representation of non-Western musical traditions and educators beyond the limited number of studies mentioned here involving these subjects (Hakim, et al., 2024; Wang& Webb, 2025; Ward, 2023; Lockwood, 2024).

To directly address the three research questions put forward in the review paper we see that: (RQ1) social media, especially YouTube and Instagram, serve as real life informal self-regulated music learning environments that actually assist formal instruction (dos Santos Silva et al.2023; Vizcaíno-Verdú et al.2021; Monreal-Guerrera & Gozalo, 2023a); (RQ2) formal educational institutions and teacher professional communities are gradually, and often pandemic-accelerated, bringing these platforms into curricula, curation, and professional development (Urpí-Cámara et al.2024; Gee, 2026; O'Leary & Bannerman, 2023); and (RQ3) such a shift has been reported to carry psychosocial risks of social comparison and impostor phenomena in the context of broader structural critiques of platformization (Rinn, 2025; O'Leary, 2023; Stuart-Hitchcox, 2025).

Conclusions

This systematic review synthesised 50 Scopus-indexed studies to examine how social media shapes music learning and performance. In answer to its three research questions, the review found that social media functions as a genuine site of informal, self-regulated music learning that complements formal instruction; that formal institutions and teacher professional communities are increasingly integrating these platforms, a trend accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, into curricula, curation, and professional development; and that this integration carries documented psychosocial risks, including social comparison and impostor phenomena, alongside broader structural critiques of the platformization of musical pedagogy and labour. The review's core contribution is the first cross-platform, cross-population synthesis of this literature, extending narrower prior reviews confined to single platforms or regional contexts (e.g., Monreal-Guerrero & Gozalo, 2023a, 2023b, confined to YouTube and adolescent samples; De Moya Martínez & de la Cruz Ramos, 2025, confined to Spanish-language adolescent contexts). Practically, the findings suggest that music educators and institutions can deliberately scaffold platform use to support motivation, informal skill development, and professional community, while proactively attending to the comparison-related and structural risks documented across the corpus. This review is limited by its reliance on a single database, single-reviewer screening, and the absence of a formal bibliometric network analysis. Future research should pursue longitudinal, cross-platform, and geographically broader designs to build on the foundation established here.

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