

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Bloom & Lahey (1978, p. 4) defined language as “a code whereby ideas about the world are represented through a conventional system of arbitrary signals for communication. The key words in the definition are code, ideas, convention, system, and communication.” This definition of language shows it acts as an essential tool in society. Being able to convey these codes both verbally and non-verbally is essential in language acquisition and development. To some individuals who have compromised communicative abilities, being able to verbalize a greeting may require them to take more time and even seek professional help. It is for this exact reason that interventions such as Speech Language Pathology/Speech Therapy, Occupational Therapy, and Music Therapy services are provided.

Music therapy in Early Childhood is a type of intervention that may assist children in their development. The definition given by the World Federation of Music Therapy (WFMT) is:

Music therapy is the professional use of music and its elements as an intervention in medical, educational, and everyday environments with individuals, groups, families, or communities who seek to optimize their quality of life and improve their physical, social, communicative, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual health and wellbeing. Research, practice, education, and clinical training in music therapy are based on professional

standards according to cultural, social, and political contexts. (World Federation of Music Therapy, 2011, para. 1)

Music Therapy can be used to address the cognitive, physiological, emotional, and social needs of an individual. In this setting, the music therapist used song-based music therapy methods to help in the development of the communicative domain with children.

Through direct observation and the use of assessments by the music therapist, the therapist will be evaluating how this approach can be beneficial towards children ages four to six years old referred for having speech and language delay. The importance of addressing speech and language delay within this age group is to improve their quality of life due to the developmental expectations and social needs of children. According to Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Development theory (1986), this age-group is when children regularly interact with peers their age. Hence, play and social skills have a large influence towards their development. Communication is one of the main skills needed in order to partake in any form of social interaction, such as play, therefore children who have speech-delays at this age group will not be able to have optimal and proper interactions with their peers (Papalia & Martorell, 2015, p. 27).

A speech and language delay is when a child's development within this domain is lagging in comparison towards their peers. This means that the child is not able to reach the developmental milestones, with regards to their speech and language, but some form of development is still present. Therefore, children who have speech delay

need to receive intervention in order to keep up with their peers and to avoid experiencing further social and academic struggles. In order to address this situation, a song-based method will be applied in Music Therapy in order to target multiple aspects of speech and language, to subsequently improve the child's ability to communicate.

Nicholson and colleagues (2008) acknowledges the non-threatening attribute of music and the fact that music is an activity that is enjoyable towards kids. They put emphasis on the act of singing as the main musical activity to help children reach their developmental milestones. The music therapy program done within this case-study was used to assess the effectiveness of song-based music therapy in improving the child's speech and language skills (Nicholson et al., 2008, p. 227). Through implementing a song-based approach in this case-study, the researcher used activities that revolved around singing and using a Fill-in-The-Blank (FITB) structure in the songs. Through using a FITB format, the therapist is able to formulate phrases that can be used to produce musical and verbal interactions with each client.

Music Programs like *Kindermusik* and *Sing & Grow* have been structured and researched to assist families and their children to achieve developmental milestones. *Kindermusik* is one of the programs that provide music activities for early childhood development in Asia. This program's objective is focused on educational and developmental goals in a 'class' setting (Kindermusik, n.d., para 3.), whereas *Sing & Grow* was founded in Australia and is more focused on therapeutic goals. *Sing & Grow* is a form music therapy for early intervention that is typically advised for families who

have children at risk or young parents to help for optimal child development (Sherwin & Freeman, 2009, p.55).

A study done by Donoghue (2016) helps provide a more specific situation where the *Sing & Grow* program was used to tackle the communicative domain. The journal presents two dyads (a mother and their child) and how using the *Sing & Grow* program helped the mothers and their children with Down Syndrome (DS). Music can be used in order to improve both their verbal and non-verbal communication and offers a learning process and provides a unique sense of motivation (Donoghue, 2016, p. 3). Seeing as how this study provides findings that support the use of music therapy for children with developmental disorders, this case-study aims to further contribute and expand to this field. Through using a specific approach and applying it to clients within selected age group, the therapist aims to personally observe the possible outcomes within each participants progress as they go through the music therapy program.

Looking at studies done by Donoghue (2016) and Sherwin & Freeman (2009), both programs show the therapeutic effect of singing for children. Since *Sing & Grow* is a community music therapy program, applying it towards an individual session setting would provide a more focused treatment plan in order to fully observe the effects of a song-based approach towards children with speech and language delays. *Kindermusik* similarly provides their services through using some song-based activities in obtaining academic and/or developmental goals. Seeing as how children ages four to six years old are within schooling age, this allows the therapist to also use

Kindermusik as a reference towards the expectations, format, and goals expected within this age group. Therefore, this study aimed to adapt and implement the similar elements from both *Sing & Grow* and *Kindermusik* and apply it towards a different client setting. Elements such as song-based activities, structured sessions, and a holistic approach, were implemented and administered towards individual sessions.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the therapeutic effect towards the speech and language development of selected children with speech delay using song-based therapy approach.. This research uses a qualitative case study method. The qualitative data is obtained through observation by the therapist and the parents as well as a survey filled out by the two parties. Through this method, the findings in this paper are hoped to contribute to the client population related to this area of study.

1.2 Research Questions

The questions that will be the focus of this paper will be:

1. Does a song-based approach in music therapy affect the speech and language development of selected children with speech delay?
2. What are the effects of using a song-based approach in music therapy for the development of speech and language towards selected children with speech delay?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The aim of this research is to evaluate the therapeutic effect towards the speech and language development of selected children with speech delay using song-based therapy approach.

1.4 Scope of the study

In this study the variables will be through:

1. Structured sessions
 - a. The sessions will be 30-45 minutes, once a week, for nine sessions
2. Specific Client Demographic
 - a. Clients with specific referral for speech and language impairments / delay
 - i. Number of Participants: three
 - b. Participants age range: four to six years old
 - c. The participant **may** be accompanied by their parent or care giver.
3. Assessment
 - a. Student therapist assessment of all nine sessions
 - b. Data gathered from recordings: audio/video

- c. Observations and analysis of behaviors through initial, ongoing, and final assessment – done by the therapists
- d. Parents - through written feedback at the start and at the end of the research.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The findings of this research will hopefully be of significance through:

1. Theoretical significance
 - a. This study aims to contribute to the continuous exploration of the effects of song-based approach in music therapy towards this specific client demographic.
2. Practical Significance
 - a. This study helped raise awareness and inform local communities about the effects of music therapy as an intervention for individuals with speech delay.
 - b. Participants had the opportunity to experience and learn more about song-based music therapy that is intended to promote their interpersonal relationship and developmental progress.
 - c. This study is available as reference for music therapists that aim to use this method and further investigate the other methods and techniques that could be used for this client demographic