

A Bibliometric Analysis of Sustainable Music Education Research in Malaysia: Trends, Themes, and Scholarly Influence

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Abstract

In this paper, the thematic focus and development of research in music education in Malaysia has been examined by a bibliometric analysis of the articles using VOSviewer. Peer-reviewed journals with the keywords music, education, and Malaysia were gathered in the sources of credible databases to visualize the patterns of co-occurrence and thematic relations of research topics. The analysis shows that the most central keywords are education, music and Malaysia, which are directly related to such themes as teacher development, parental involvement and philosophies of music education. The results prove that the cultural context, educator identity and collaborative practices in teaching affect the research on music education quality and in Malaysia. This research provides an overview of the academic discussion of quality music education in Malaysia by combining quantitative mapping with qualitative interpretation. Not only the existing research strengths are addressed in the results, but also existing gaps and opportunities for further investigation are also outlined. Finally, the research has implications in practice for teachers, researchers, and policy makers who may take music education further by being data-driven, sustainable and culturally responsive.

Keywords: *Quality Education, Music, Malaysia, Collaborative Practices, Cultural Context.*

Introduction

Music education in Malaysia has been a constantly unfolding process whose development was predetermined by the philosophies of pedagogy, cultural aspects, and experience of music teachers and students. Being an art and pedagogy profession in music, music education in Malaysia is a multidimensional dynamic and which incorporates tradition and innovation, policy and praxis, and localized knowledge and global debates. The search terms, which are integrated in the title of this research, music, education, and Malaysia, signify more than topical interests of the research. These topics involve broad spheres that determine the knowledge boundaries of such research. The interconnection of these topics within academic discussions provides crucial information on intellectual knowledge boundaries of music education research as it pertains to Malaysia.

In the current research work, "A Bibliometric Analysis of Music Education in Malaysia Using VOSviewer," bibliometric analysis techniques have been used to analyze and represent the scientific production on "Music Education in Malaysia." The technique of bibliometric analysis has been assisted by the VOSviewer tool and helps researchers identify patterns of keyword co-occurrence, citations, and clustering. The technique provides a broader view of research work at the macro-level in terms of structure and orientation of scholarly outputs. The technique provides an interpretative as well as quantitative understanding of research work.

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Various aspects of music education in Malaysia and around the world have been studied in preceding research. The role of collaboration between parents and teachers in group music classes has been discussed by Ang, Panebianco, and Odendaal in 2023. The role of philosophical reflection for the creation of teacher identity and professional growth has been studied by Wong in 2024. Psychological factors influencing the self-efficiency of non-music major teachers have been investigated by Abidin and Jamaludin in 2022. In a wider perspective, Yan et al. presented posthuman aestheticism and epistemologies in music education in 2025. The role of music in cultural tourism and preservation has been discussed by Mazlan et al. in 2025. Although those studies presented important findings, none of them seem to approach music education research from an integrated perspective. The academic landscape of music education research in Malaysia has been unduly overlooked. The interconnectedness of those above-mentioned research aspects has been inadequately studied.

This research fills the gap in the literature by providing a data-informed perspective of the landscape via bibliometric mapping. Through keyword correlations and patterns of citations and topics, it has been made possible to discern the trending topics as well as the non-trending subjects of research. The originality of the research stems from the combination of bibliometric analysis cum visualization and qualitative analysis. As opposed to a literature analysis, it provides an opportunity to discern patterns and topics that may not be overtly evident by a cursory analysis.

Ultimately, it is the hope of this research that it may inform future scholarship by providing a better understanding of the academic landscape that exists within the field. As such, it contributes to a growing body of literature concerning a culturally responsive and data-informed approach to education that sees Malaysian music education as part of an international landscape of scholarship.

Literature Review

| Rank | Authors | Title | Year |
|------|-------------------------------|--|------|
| 19 | Y Xie | Designing music education curriculum in a multicultural environment: Vocal training in China | 2025 |
| 20 | M Sun, HYC Wong | A Review of Children's Music Education | 2025 |
| 35 | L Yan, S Chuangprakhon... | Posthuman Aesthetics and Indigenous Knowledge: Elunchun Folk Songs in Contemporary Music Education | 2025 |
| 56 | T Guan, J Liu, N Luo | Exploring the changes in cultural identity of primary school students in a Chinese orchestra | 2025 |
| 90 | I Ngadni, WZ Hui | Exploring the Challenges of Implementing Music in Enhancing Preschool Children's English Language Acquisition | 2025 |
| 92 | CAN Mazlan, MH Abdul... | Music in cultural tourism: insights from a dual approach of scoping review and bibliometric analysis | 2025 |
| 106 | E Januar, N Gistituati, Y ... | Enhancing Civic Literacy through VCT in the One Month One Song Program at Sekolah Indonesia Kota Kinabalu | 2025 |
| 130 | C Ding, S Kim Geok, H S... | Does music counteract mental fatigue? A systematic review | 2025 |
| 133 | Z Lin, S Li, X Huang, S L... | Function of traditional culture in contemporary society: A case of Teochew opera in Malaysia | 2025 |
| 138 | H Hassan, N Adnan, MF... | Langue and Parole Analysis on Aesthetic Setting of The Last Emperor of Tang Dynasty/Musical Theatre | 2025 |
| 166 | Al Bin Jamil, K Mohd Kh... | Beyond boundaries: unravelling the journey of multi-religious education in Malaysia | 2025 |
| 177 | H Abubakar | A systematic literature review on teaching teachers pedagogy through YouTube video technology | 2025 |
| 181 | A Bautista, J Yeung, YL ... | Globalization and glocalization in preschool education: The case of artistic creativity in East and Southeast Asia | 2025 |
| 185 | Y Feng, M Wang | Effect of music therapy on emotional resilience, well-being, and employability: a quantitative investigation of mediation and moderation | 2025 |
| 191 | N Annamalai, M Hashi... | Exploring the representation of multiple intelligences (MIs) in self-instructional materials (SIM) materials in the learning management system (LMS) | 2025 |
| 199 | R Liu, S Chuangprakhon... | Cultural Heritage in Transition: The Role of Baxian Folk Music in the Posthumanist Era | 2025 |

Figure A: Overview of 2025 Publications Related to Music Education

The academic dialogue on music education in Malaysia has become more diverse than before. The subject of music and educational research in Malaysia reflects the global landscape of educational research. The keywords that are embedded in this research work: music, educational research, and Malaysia. These sectors intersect with each other. These topics and sectors have been examined through various perspectives. The educational research on music and Malaysia portrays that there's an array of research being conducted on specified topics without a comprehensive analysis of the gestalt of these subjects.

Figure A offers a careful selection of music-related scholarship that has appeared in 2025. These titles not only represent an array of authors but also reflect the multidisciplinary focus of music scholarship. For instance, there are multicultural curriculum issues discussed by Xie (2025), music pedagogy and outcomes in children as discussed by Wong et al. in 2025, knowledge from indigenous cultures and posthumanism as discussed by Yan et al. in 2025, as well as cultural tourism and well-being as discussed by Mazlan et al. in 2025. These examples of music-related scholarship represent a wider range of scholarship in music that uses an interdisciplinary approach based on cultures. For instance, multicultural curriculum as outlined by Xie relates to pedagogical theories within these multicultural settings. Similarly, the music pedagogy outlined by Wong relates to both pedagogical theories and outcomes.

Some literature also examines research on philosophical and psychological aspects of music education. For instance, Feng & Wang (2025) carry out an investigation on the role of music in the development of human resilience. The authors provide a philosophical account on the significance of

participating in music as an aspect of improving human emotional well-being. Similarly, Wong et al (2025) explore the issue of artistic creativity and human resilience in East and Southeast Asian communities. The authors emphasize music education as one of the factors that enhance psychological development of humans. The contributions explain that music education is not limited to instructional knowledge.

It is possible to agree that both of these works contain a lot of information, but it could also be observed that the field of music research seems to be very fragmented in its literature. Most of the studies which have been carried out apply the qualitative research methods pertaining to case research, ethnographic research, and theme analysis of specific classroom practices. Such research techniques are valuable but might lack the capability of revealing the trends in the topic. The absence of data research on music research patterns can be observed.

The absence of such methodology has particular implications given the escalating number of scholarly outputs being published and the intricate nature of educational issues within the particular geographic area. Without an integrated perspective on research output, it inevitably becomes difficult to determine the concentration of topics studied and the intellectual collaborations of scholars. The use of bibliometric analysis stands out as it provides a means of visualizing keyword co-occurrence, citations over time, as well as the collaboration of scholars. VOSviewer helps to create such visualizations that determine the intellectual structure of a research subject.

In an effort to bridge such a gap, the present research utilizes bibliometric analysis to explore the evolution of music educational research in Malaysia. Through an analysis of a database of literature that has been mined with the help of Publish or Perish software and visualized by VOSviewer software, it has been possible to identify both important themes as well as patterns of research by scholars. In addition to qualitatively investigating the subject matter of music educational research in Malaysia, it may also offer a wider perspective.

In conclusion, it can thus be said that despite the various contributions that some of the latest research efforts have made towards increasing the richness of music educational knowledge, there appears to be a certain gap that has been covered by the current research endeavor by providing an overall bibliometric perspective.

Methodology

Bibliometric analysis is the technique that was employed in this study to explore the landscape of research on music education in Malaysia. Bibliometric analysis is a technique of research applied to quantitative analysis of academic literature. Bibliometric analysis allows critically examining the trends and connections that are present within the academic literature. The method is perfect in articulating the mental framework of a subject area and estimating research output. To the end of analyzing the issue within the framework of this study, bibliometric analysis is a valuable method of comprehending music education in terms of subject area intellectual structure in Malaysia.

The analyzed data set was obtained with the help of the Publish or Perish software. The information is accompanied by references to the real academic sources. The search keywords were music, education and Malaysia. These search terms have been employed in order to make sure that the data set includes the information related to the topic of research. The research articles in the analysis have been narrowed down to a given time range of 2022 to 2025. The logic of relying on the 2022 data to 2025 can be attributed to the increasing popularity of music education research in Malaysia. Based on such information, it is possible to determine the current trend.

To analyse bibliometric data as a VOSviewer output, a specific bibliometric mapping software called VOSviewer has been applied. The software will assist in generating data visualization of bibliometric data in map format that defines the relationship between citations, authors and subjects. In the framework of the research work, there has been the analysis of the co-occurrence of keywords. In the analysis of co-occurrence of keywords, a node in the co-occurrence matrix or graph is used to represent each of the keywords. The node size indicates the popularity of the keyword in the bibliometric data set. The proximity of the nodes and the thickness of the links that connect the nodes to each other shows that there are strong connections in the key words.

In addition to the procedure of mapping keywords, the other field in which the study is conducted is author collaboration and citations as the factors to investigate the structural dynamic of knowledge exchange in Malaysian music education. The maps offer an understanding of the influential authors and

the level of interconnectedness of the community. The research combines the various components of analysis to provide a multidimensional perspective of the evolution of the subject.

The approach of the research that utilizes bibliometric analysis as the methodology stands out as particularly important in the context of the scattered nature of musical research that exists in Malaysia. Although research has been carried out that has given important perspectives on pedagogic practices as well as cultural considerations now found in those practices in music educational research, it appears that very little research has been conducted that views the subject from the perspective of data. The research that uses bibliometric analysis now contributes towards filling that gap by providing an important perspective on the subject as it stands at the current moment.

Results and Discussion

Results and Discussion: Keyword Co-Occurrence Network

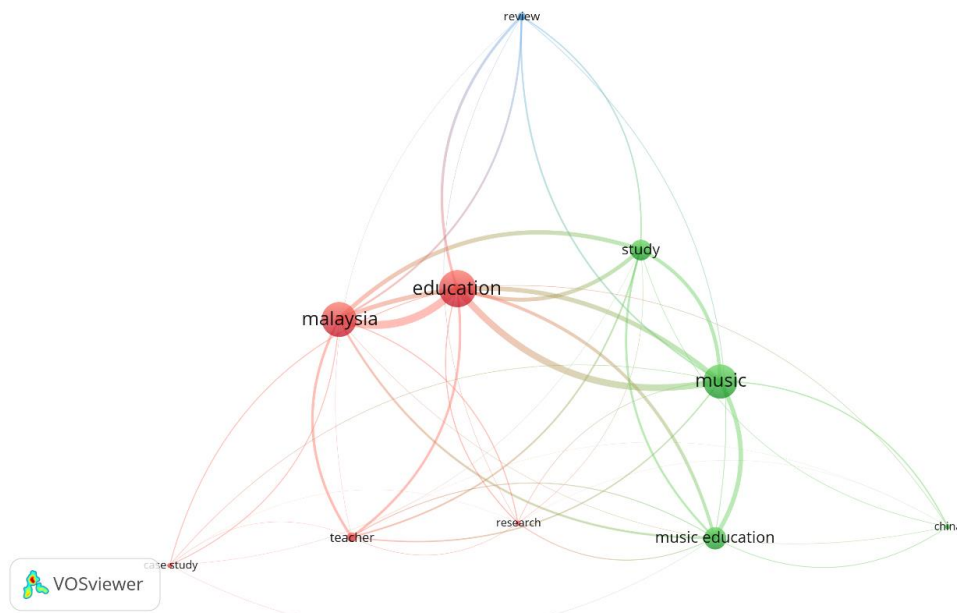


Figure 1: Network Visualization of Music Project

Figure 1 above shows a keyword co-occurrence diagram produced by VOSviewer that provides an insight into the relationships existing in music education research carried out in Malaysia and the wider Asian context. The nodes in the diagram represent the various keywords that have been used in scientific research outputs. The size of the nodes varies depending on the document frequency. The links that connect these nodes illustrate co-occurrence intensity. The various nodes have been colored to create groups of related nodes.

The red cluster is oriented towards the keyword of education as the keyword that is also the most noticeable and intertwined. The closely related words are Malaysia, teacher, research, and e-study, and they indicate that they are more related to pedagogical frameworks, teacher development and e-learning environments. The tendency is an indicator of the national focus on the educational reform and professional growth in Malaysia, especially in the manner of technological integration and the changes in teaching and learning following the pandemic. Wong and Chiu (2017) showed that philosophical reflection and teacher identity are crucial in the development of educational practices because Malaysian teachers usually have to maneuver through complicated cultural and institutional demands. The nearness of these terms in the network reveals that the Malaysian research often incorporates the discussion of the national context, the roles of educators, and the used instructional technologies.

The research curiosity of e-study may also represent a new trend of blended and online learning methods. This falls under general trends in Southeast Asia where online resources are becoming more popular in support services of music education as well as teachers and students. Digital platforms and in-person learning environments, e.g. YouTube and online learning platforms, have become significant to the improvement of music pedagogy and accessibility (Concina, 2023). Therefore, an online educational resource incorporation has been a highly significant field of research interest. The reasons

as to why the teacher and research are grouped as a research area further accentuate the role of teachers as not only practitioners but also as participants in the academic dialog.

The green cluster identifies the field of music education inquiry. The nucleus of the green cluster is formed by the search terms of such words as music, music education research, study, and China. The ultimate connotation of the green cluster seems to be an indication of an overlap in the scope of research interests which is not only limited in Malaysia but also in China. The research by Xie (2025) relates to multicultural vocal training practices in China that seem to bear certain pedagogical similarities with Malaysia. The co-location of these terms appears to signify an emerging trend of increased research similarities relating to music education research that incorporates cultural diversities of various Asian nations.

The appearance of China in this cluster may also represent collaboration on research or topics borrowed across national boundaries. As observed by Wong et al. (2025), artistic expression as well as resilience as topics of concern have become particularly transnational in emphasis. Music education as noted by these sources has been seen as crossing boundaries of both traditions and current educational objectives. The appearance of research as a keyword topic that appears frequently supports the significance of research – whether it be qualitative research or quantitative research within the topic.

Keywords such as re-view form a smaller blue cluster that probably symbols meta-analyses of existing literature. Although it contributes to the diagram marginally in comparison to the remaining groups, re-view shows that the early synthesis of existing research and analysis of tendencies in research methodologies have begun. Rather than an exhaustive bibliography of music pedagogical approaches that apply digital resources such as YouTube to increase engagement and accessibility of music education in Malaysia, as found by Concina in 2023 in his systematic review on efficient music pedagogical approaches, it appears that research synthesis analysis encourages fragmented knowledge domains.

The analysis also shows that there is a field that is both thematically varied and structurally integrated. The concentration of keywords on education and music education shows that these two fields of research are the most actively pursued by scholars, with the co-occurrence of the set of keywords that include 'review' showing evidence of a maturing community of scholars who now have enough output to reflect on it. This confirms the argument made by Abidin and Jamaludin in 2022 that Malaysian music education research is gradually becoming more complex in terms of research design. The analysis of publication patterns by these scholars shows a movement away from isolated instances towards more integrated levels of analysis.

Crucially, some possible knowledge gaps in the literature are also made clear by the co-occurrence analysis. For example, teachers and Malaysia appear to be major co-occurrences, but other co-occurrences that may be connected to community involvement or policy are mostly overlooked. This is consistent with the suggestion made by Mazlan et al. (2025) that music education studies should take a more integrative approach to tourism policy and music education in relation to cultural assets. Significantly, Mazlan et al. stress the importance of multidisciplinary research that could situate music education within more general societal objectives. The conspicuous absence of keywords such as policy and assessment may reflect that very little research has been conducted in these important domains.

In conclusion, Figure 1 above not only functions as an analytic descriptive device but also as a strategic pointer on which research pathways in music education should be pursued in the future. The graphic representation helps to highlight the patterns of research interests and lacunae of knowledge in music education research that may act as a stumbling block to the growth of the knowledge base of the subject. The above bibliometric technique fits into the gap that may arise from the comprehensive scanning of existing literature on music education.

Results and Discussion: Temporal Trends in Keyword Co-Occurrence

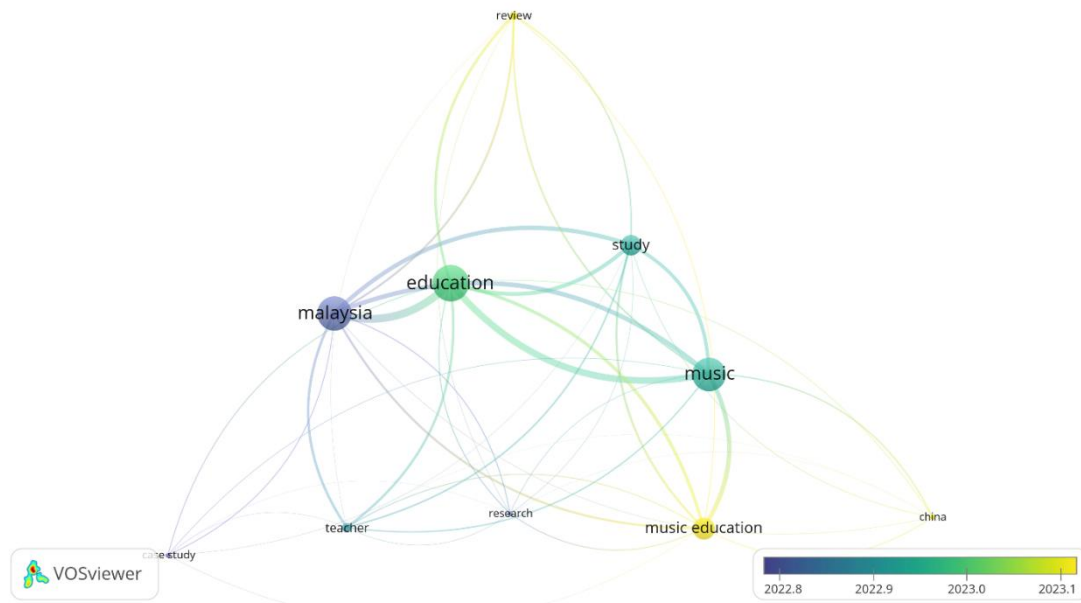


Figure 2: Overlay Visualization about Music Project

In Figure 2 above, the co-occurrence pattern of these topics through the years has been made visible by VOSviewer. The nodes in the diagram represent topics that were derived from academic literature on music education and general education. The size of these nodes varies depending on the co-occurrence of these topics. Co-occurrence levels are represented by the linkages that unite these subjects. The color hue in the diagram varies from purple to yellow based on the average year of publication. The most dominant and central node of the picture, education, asserts its foundation work in academic studies. The interconnectedness between the words "music education," "teacher," "creativity," "Malaysia," and "China" indicates that these subjects are continuously researched together with other broader educational contexts. Wong and Chiu (2017) focus on multicultural and creative pedagogies' use in Malaysian classrooms, aligning with this trend. Education and creativity's close relationship illustrates growing focus on learner-centered methods and innovative pedagogy, especially in music education situations.

The frequency of the word "China" appearing is high, indicating research interest of the region is similar. Xie studied voice training in multicultural environments in 2025 from a future perspective. The study established the intersection of music instruction in China's multicultural environment and Malaysia. Physical proximity of the nation to educational activities and music education reform emphasizes the applicability of the concerns within the national agenda in Malaysia. The nation is actively participating as a contributing member in international talks on educational reform, as seen by its comparatively close closeness to educational initiatives.

The nodes' color labeling makes it easier to see how research has changed over time. Purple-colored keywords like "education," "teachers," and "Malaysia" were common in the early literature search (about August 2022), while yellow-colored keywords like "creativity," "music education," and "China" were found in the latter research results (around January 2023). This observed change could be an evolution from a description of the educational system to more specialized and creative study themes. According to Price in 2024, the change in the topic of study may be a reflection of the new global evolution of music education. Online resources, emotions, and a merger of information seem to be taking center stage in the field of music education.

A significant change in instructional techniques toward meeting the requirements of student agency, resilience, and artistic expression is indicated by the growing importance of creativity as a keyword in recent literature. The impact of music therapy on the development of students' resilience and wellness emphasizes the important role which creative engagement can play in these processes (Feng and Wang, 2025).

The findings presented above serve to support the position that creativity should not only be used as a pedagogical approach but that it has the power to transform and improve educational outcomes.

Besides the thema evolution, the visual representation also spotlights regions that were not extensively covered. For example, although teacher and Malaysia emerge as very relevant names within the data set, those that may be connected to music educational policy or community service remain relatively obscure. The challenge of Malaysia music educational policy having been previously outlined by Abidin and Jamaludin (2022) in the subject of music educational research often lacks systemic policy analysis and tends to focus on isolated pedagogical practices. Mazlan et al. (2025) also stressed the requirement for integrated research in Malaysia music educational contributions to the country's cultural heritage tourism policy.

The keyword positions of review and research imply an emerging pattern of synthesizing existing research and assessing approach-oriented trends. In particular, a systematic review by Concina in 2023 examined effective music pedagogy practices that incorporate digital resources such as YouTube. The keyword of 'review' that appears in the above network implies that meta-analytic research may not be very prominent yet, but it occupies an important position within approach-oriented boundaries by filling knowledge gaps.

In summing up, Figure 2 above provides a dynamic and multidimensional perspective on various interconnections and developments within music education topics of research. The dynamic aspect of both education and the new concept of creativity in music education shows that there is both continuity and change within music education. Using such patterns for research objectives within music education research topics can ensure that researchers become familiar with research priorities as well as develop knowledge within music education research within Malaysia. The process above complements qualitative research within music education.

Results and Discussion: Keyword Density and Thematic Prominence

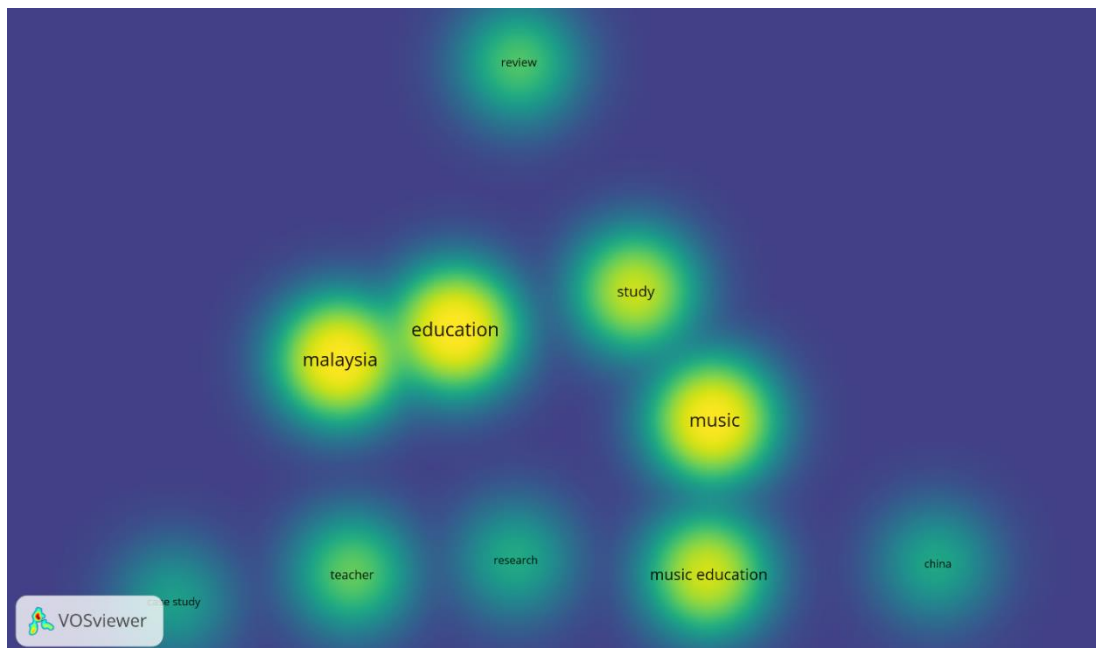


Figure 3: Density Visualization about Music Project

In figure 3 above, a keyword density analysis has been conducted to highlight the significance of research themes based on music educational research in Malaysia and China using VOSviewer. The various nodes represent various research topics used in academic research. The size of the node varies depending on the density of the research topic. The brilliance of the node varies depending on the significance of the research topic. Co-occurring study subjects are represented by the nodes that are close together.

The most common and prominent keyword within the content that is being analyzed is education, highlighting its pivotal significance. Framing this pivot are other common keywords such as Malaysia, music, teacher, study, and music education. These topics are probably explored at the same time as a

result of their relation to education, thus forming a thematic cluster that captures pedagogical practice, national context, and subject matter teaching. This trend is confirmed by Li et al.'s (2024) thematic analysis of folk music education, where the significance of education frameworks in the perpetuation of traditional music throughout Southeast Asia was highlighted.

Malaysia and music occurring frequently as two words together suggest that the study corpus is subject- and nation-focused. Malaysian researchers have been examining the dialogue between cultural identity and music education. According to Mazlan et al. (2025), Malaysia's music education system is finding it difficult to synthesize Western music education approaches with the indigenous music of the country. The concurrent presence of study and teacher along with music education implies that empirical scholarship of teaching and educational results has been in the spotlight of theoretical investigation of this arena.

Critical information about ongoing relationships between specific themes is also given by where the keywords are placed on the matrix. For example, the co-placement of music education, teacher, and study on the matrix shows that scholars are very concerned with the pedagogical approach used in music education. Concina (2023) contention about the importance of music teachers using technology in the classroom and embracing effective teaching practice is supported by this study. Researchers are interested in knowing what is being taught and how to teach something, as supported by the co-positioning of the two keywords on the matrix.

Inclusion of China as an open term provides greater opportunities of comparison and cooperation at the regional level. The emphasis on "social harmony," "nationalism," and "globalization" has led to a significant change in the function of music education in Chinese society over the last 10 years (Law et al., 2011). The mention of China within the Malaysian data set may indicate a research focus on shared topics or academic collaborations that bridge boundaries to recognize comparable cultural and educational patterns. Li Ji and others (2024) examined the preservation of music in both Malaysia and China, indicates that comparison of topics often occurs due to shared histories and cultures.

The density mapping also shows emerging patterns and perhaps some lacunae. Although terms such as education, music, and Malaysia figure prominently on the map, others such as policy, assessment, and community engagement seem to remain on the fringes. This explains that while educational or curriculum-related dominant patterns in music education seem to have been canvassed satisfactorily on the subject, the more encompassing patterns of music education in society seem to remain uncharted. Mazlan et al. (2025) propose that music education tourism research should adopt more integrated approaches than at present that incorporate tourism-related research on cultural heritage and national development patterns.

Furthermore, the brightness and size of nodes such as review and research indicate a growing interest in reflective and methodological studies. The presence of review suggests that scholars are beginning to synthesize existing literature, identify gaps, and propose new frameworks for inquiry. This pattern is consistent with the evolution of the field as researchers move away from individual case studies and toward more comprehensive and analytical approaches. As noted by Abidin and Jamaludin (2022), the evolution of Malaysian music education research is marked by increasing methodological sophistication and thematic diversity.

In closing, Figure 3 offers a complex visual portrayal of keyword salience and connections within music education research. The salience of education as a keyword concept, combined with the salience of Malaysia and music as connections within that research area, offers evidence of a focused area of research. At the same time, it appears from the data that there may be opportunities within music education research to explore connections with community outreach and multidisciplinary research. The data may also offer evidence of research flow and connections among various disciplines.

Results and Discussion: Temporal Co-Occurrence and Emerging Themes

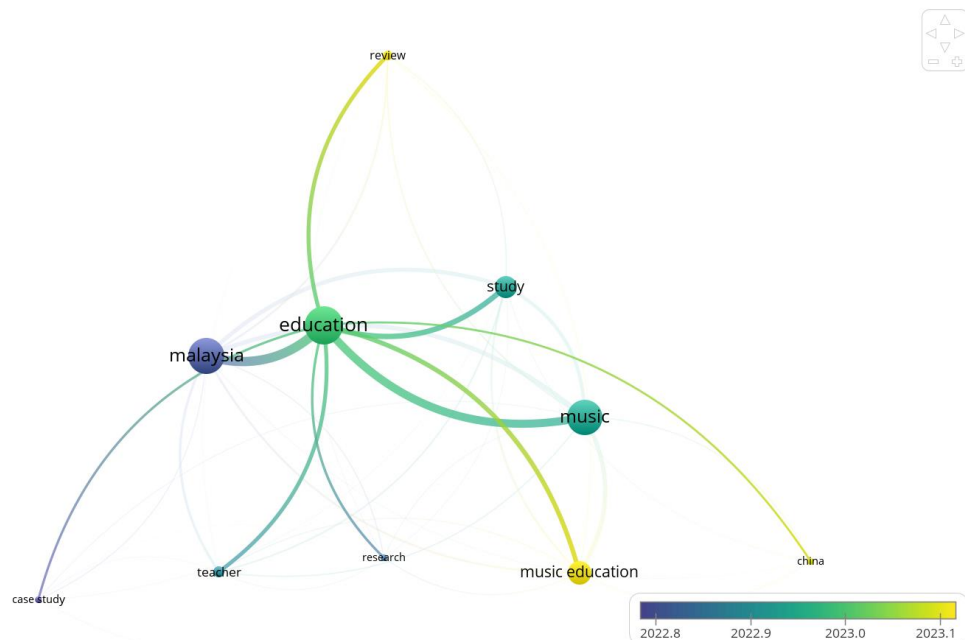


Figure 4: Overlay Visualization about Music Project Focus on Education

In Figure 4 above, the VOSviewer output provides a co-occurrence timeline of research topics on education in particular music educational research from August 2022 to January 2023. In the diagram above, every node stands for a keyword that appears in academic literature. The size of the node shows keyword frequency and the lightness of every node shows keyword timeliness. Edges between nodes denote the strength of co-occurrence. Change in color from blue to yellow shows an average year of publication of research that contains a certain keyword.

The most prominent and centrally located keyword is education, underscoring its foundational role across the dataset. The strong relationship between the phrases "music," "Malaysia," "teacher," "study," and "research" suggests that most of the articles are writing about pedagogical frameworks, instructional techniques, and national context. The close relationship between music and education shows how music pedagogy is incorporated into wider educational ideas, particularly in Malaysian and China. This is aligned with the studies done by Law et al. (2011), who emphasized the role of music education in promoting social harmony and national identity in China.

An concentration on educational practices and research is shown in the coexistence of teachers, music education, and research in space. As discussed by Concina in 2023, the role of successful educational practices and technology in music classrooms cannot be overstated. The suggestion here is that more recent research being carried out not only emphasizes what is taught in music classes but also emphasizes the process of music being taught. The co-occurrence of Malaysia as a found term further supports the country's role in these foci.

The color coding of nodes helps identify dynamism in terms of timelines. Keywords such as Malaysia, 'case-study,' and 'teacher' that were colored blue were found to be of high significance in earlier published research work (around August 2022), whereas those colored yellow such as China, 'review,' and 'research' were found of significance in later research work (around January 2023). This helps infer that there has been a shift from localized to reflective research. In Chinese music education research, as noted by Law and Ho in 2011, there has been an increased 'Philosophical reflection on music and music education, an ongoing search for Chinese music's character and role in constructing societal cohesion through musical experience.' The above-mentioned factors may now tend to influence the realm of music education research.

The appearance of 'review' as a new keyword shows that there has been an increasing trend towards synthesizing existing literature and reviewing methodologies. This shows that the scholarly

community has matured enough to start integrated findings and provide strategic pointers towards the future of research. As put by Abidin and Jamaludin in 2022, the research on music education in Malaysia has begun to develop increased methodologies of bibliometric analysis and systematic reviews.

The mention of China as a recent keyword shows that there is more research on collaboration and comparison. Lei in 2024 discussed Chinese music education from the influence of digital technologies and folklore motifs. The mention of both China and 'review' as well as 'music education' could imply that the community of scholars has been writing more on finding similarities in pedagogical processes from Malaysia and China.

Although the subject area appears to be very rich and diverse, there seem to be certain niches that have been overlooked. The keyword used here includes policy-making, evaluation, as well as community engagement. These seem lesser in prominence due to certain uncharted domains of research. Mazlan et al. in 2025 stressed the need for research that integrates music education with cultural heritage and tourism policy. The absence of these keywords thus suggests that there is far less emphasis given to the structural aspects.

In conclusion, Figure 4 above offers a dynamic perspective of interconnections and developments of topics in music research. The role of centrality of education, progression of the role of review and China, as well as the shift from practical to reflection research indicate both continuity and new developments in these research topics. The data can therefore be used from a perspective of understanding research foci and anticipating future research directions in music research in Malaysia.

Results and Discussion: Temporal Co-Occurrence and Thematic Shifts

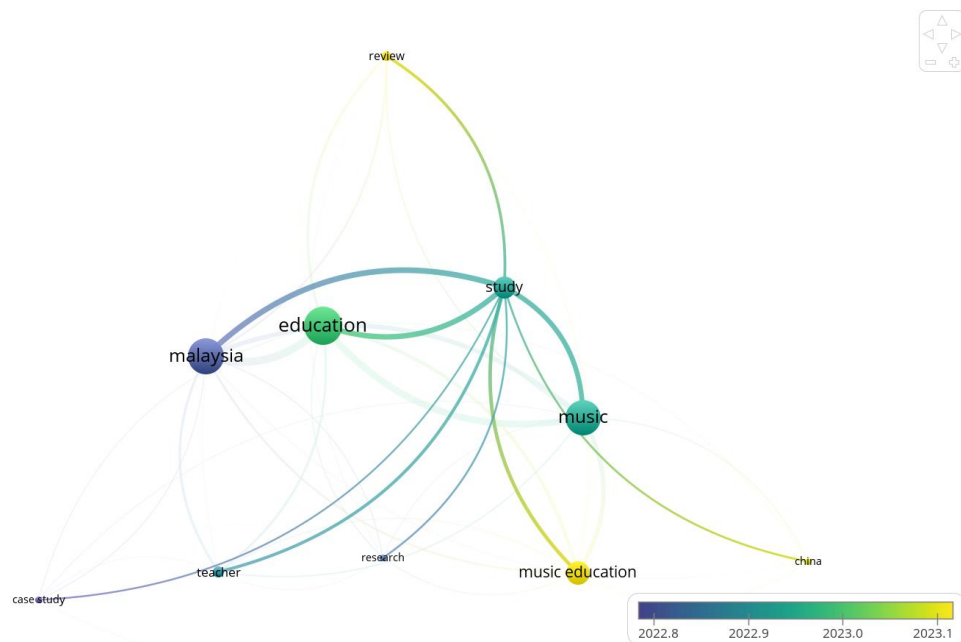


Figure 5: Overlay Visualization about Music Project Focus on Study

In Figure 5 above, a temporal co-occurrence analysis map developed by VOSviewer shows the connections of important domains of research in music education as well as the dynamic pattern of prominence from August 2022 to January 2023. In the map, each node symbolizes a keyword harvested from academic literature. The size of the nodes shows relevance and frequency. The bigger nodes like education, music, and study show that these domains have been predominantly manifesting in the literature.

The links denoting connections between these nodes represent co-occurrence. These links become thicker as the co-occurrence increases. For example, it appears that the links that join music education, teacher, and study have high co-occurrence. This finding verifies the findings of Concina (2023), who stressed that high-quality educational strategies and reflection within music classrooms play an important role.

The color gradient added to the nodes which runs from dark blue to yellow shows the average publication year of publications that contain each keyword. Terms that were found to be more common

in previously published works (about August 2022) such as Malaysia, case-study, teacher and research are indicated in dark blue. Terms like China, review, and music education are shown to be more common in relatively recent published works around January 2023.

Law and Ho (2011) observed similar thematic changes in Chinese music education, noting that scholarly discourse increasingly emphasizes national identity, philosophical contemplation, and the role of music in promoting societal harmony. The rise of the terms China and review as recent keywords may be indicating a changing research landscape that values synthesis and cross-cultural analysis.

The rise of the terms review and study as the new buzzwords is another indication of a methodological change. Scholars are increasingly engaging in literature reviews and meta-analyses to consolidate fragmented findings and identify strategic directions for future inquiry. Abidin and Jamaludin (2022) highlighted this trend in Malaysian music education, noting a shift toward more rigorous and evaluative approaches.

Despite the richness of the network, certain gaps remain. Keywords related to policy, assessment, and community engagement are less visible, suggesting underexplored areas in the literature. Mazlan et al. (2025) advocate for more integrative studies that connect music education to cultural heritage, tourism, and national development strategies which are the dimensions that remain peripheral in the current dataset.

In brief, Figure 5 above offers an innovative way of capturing the relationship between themes as well as the evolution of these themes over time within music educational research. The emphasis on both education and music, the growth of the emphasis on the review and China, and the movement from practical to reflectively based research indicate the dynamic nature of research emphasis within music educational research. The above map provides an important resource that helps in the determination of new research emphasis.

Results and Discussion: Temporal Connectivity and Regional Focus

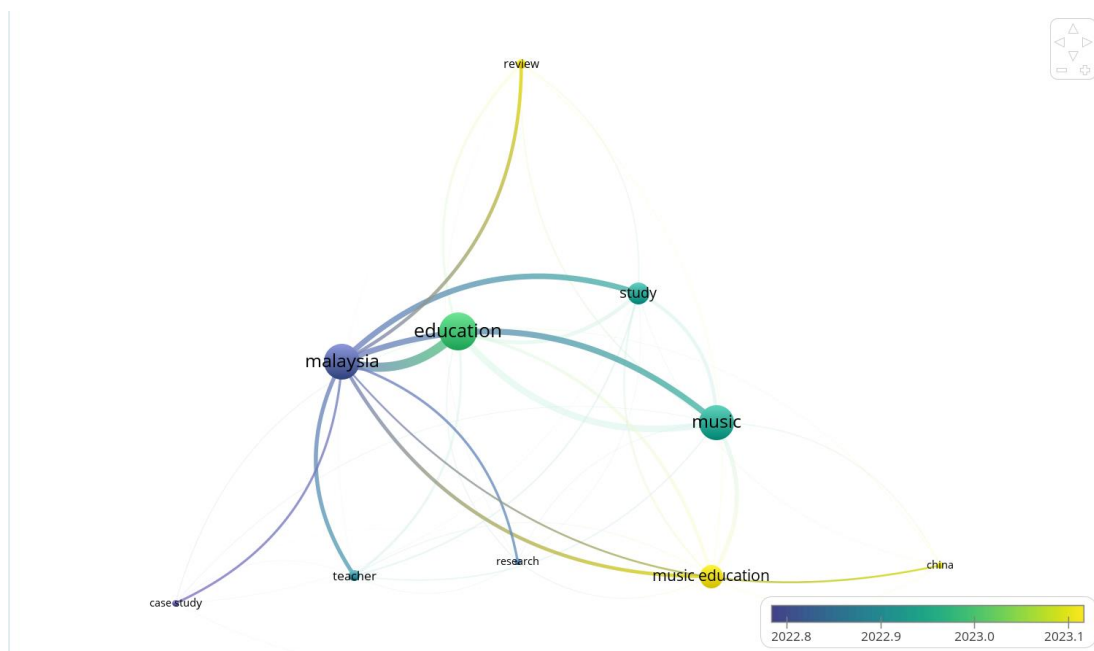


Figure 6: Overlay Visualization about Music Project Focus on Malaysia

Figure 6 above shows the co-occurrence analysis timeline of important topics related to music education research from August 2022 to January 2023. The nodes signify the keyword identified from educational literature. The size of the nodes shows the level of significance of the keyword. For instance, Malaysia, education, and music have larger nodes since they form the core of the data and thus important in academic discussions.

The edges that connect these nodes represent the strength of co-occurrence and are depicted by thicker edges that reflect high instances of co-occurrence in research articles. For instance, the strong edge that connects Malaysia, music education, and music shows that music education research in the Malaysian setting mainly revolves around these two topics. This supports the findings by Abidin and

Jamaludin (2022), who suggested that research on music education in Malaysia mainly involves pedagogical practices and countrywide curriculum guidelines.

The color gradient used in the nodes from purple to yellow represents the average year of publication of the documents that contained each keyword. Keywords colored purple such as Malaysia, case study, and teacher were given emphasis in earlier years of publication roughly August 2022. Keywords that were given emphasis in relatively latest years of publication roughly January 2023 include China, review, and research. The change from purple to yellow shows a shift in focus from local empirical studies to comprehensive research.

The rising popularity of the terms "China" and "review" may indicate growing local collaboration and a changing research landscape. The music education in China is impacted by ideological goals like nationalism and social harmony, which might be impacting comparative studies involving Malaysia, according to Law and Ho (2011). The increase of the term reviews also indicates a greater interest in combining the collections of current knowledge, suggesting that the discipline has a tendency toward methodological consolidation and strategic planning.

The previous keyword "case study" indicates that academics first concentrated on particular institutional contexts or classroom procedures. There is a discernible shift in the discipline toward more comprehensive analysis, such as bibliometric reviews and cross-national comparisons. The findings of Mazlan et al. (2025), who support more integrated methods that link music education to cultural heritage and policy development, are in line with this trend.

Despite the high level of resourcefulness that appears within the network, there remain certain lacunae. The search terms including assessment and community engagement remain less visible. This indicates that these topics remain unexplored. The lacunae that remain within the search terms include music assessment as well as music community engagement.

In brief, Figure 6 above illustrates dynamic links of research on music education and timelines. The prominence of Malaysia – education – music topics and the rise of China and review, to Malaysia & China – review illustrate the shifting research agendas. The significance of the above map-derived diagram as a strategic resource for research agendas emerges as it helps in charting emerging research agendas and understanding research trajectories in music education research in Malaysia.

Results and Discussion: Interpreting Thematic Continuity and Change

The bibliometric visualizations presented in Figures 1 to 6 above highlight that there is a dominant theme pattern observed in music educations in Malaysia. The dominant theme observed throughout the images of various bibliometric maps includes the central position of the important keywords like educations, music, and Malaysia. The important aspect here is that these central images position these important topics persistently throughout various images.

The continued mention of teacher, study, and music education supports such an observation. These keywords illustrate continued engagement with pedagogical practices such as design and implementation of teachers' training. As noted by Abidin & Jamaludin in 2022, the continued engagement of scholars in Malaysia's music educational research includes designing topics relating to teachers' identities and engagement of students that remain prominent in music educational research as of late. The continued emphasis on such subjects can only be termed as a revival of a chorus that had long been echoed.

But continuity does not imply stagnation. More recent keywords occurrence like review, study, and China particularly in Figures 4 to 6 indicating a topic extension. This suggests that the field is evolving to include reflective, comparative, and cross-cultural elements. For example, China occurs as a co-occurring keyword with music education and review, suggesting greater local collaboration and interest in pedagogical parallels across Southeast Asia. Music education in China is guided by ideological goals like nationalism and social harmony, which contribute to be shaping comparative research with Malaysia, according to Law and Ho (2011).

The rise of the keywords "review" and "study" as more recent keywords is another sign of a shift toward methodological consolidation. Scholars are doing more and more literature reviews and bibliometric analysis to integrate diverse findings and guide future studies. This pattern indicates a growing body of research that places a high importance on strategic planning and evidence-based scholarship.

Additionally, the color gradients from purple to yellow or blue to yellow in the visualizations emphasizes the dynamic change in keyword prominence over time. The earlier studies were mainly localized and involved investigations based on practices. The latest research work emphasizes various reflective topics. The shift can be recognized as an adaptation of the area of research due to new challenges.

In conclusion, on the basis of the continuity of subjects that have been identified among the various figures, a strong foundation has been established for research on music education in Malaysia. At the same time, the evolution of new subjects and the passage of time reflect that music education research in Malaysia has been undergoing dynamic evolution.

Results and Discussion: Comparing Past and Present Research Directions

The temporal co-occurrence maps in Figures 4 to 6 provide an enticing perspective from which comparison of the more earlier and recent research avenues in music education in Malaysia can take place. The use of keywords that were either blue or purple-themed in nature like Malaysia, case study, and teacher appeared to have been used more often in August 2022. This indicated that the initial research that had been conducted had been based on localized research that had been set within a practical framework.

Keywords that were colored yellow, such as China, 'review,' and 'research,' experienced an increase in prominence in January 2023. This shows that there has been an increasing awareness of critical analysis or synthesis as well as comparison on the global arena. This was also noted by Law and Ho in 2011. The emphasis on nationalism and philosophy as well as harmony had become an aspect of scholarly discussions in Chinese music educational circles. China may have been added to the Malaysian database as part of an investigation into the shared cultural heritage.

Another notable methodological change is the emergence of review as a term. Scholars are moving from individual case studies to conducting systematic reviews and bibliometric analysis, as seen in the case of Abidin and Jamaludin's (2022) research. This growth is reflective of the discipline having become self-aware and trying to quantify information, identify knowledge gaps, and provide strategic directions for future research.

Comparison of the foci of the more recent piece with those of the older piece shows it to have a leaning towards investigating somewhat more sophisticated problems. The previous work highlights a focus on a great deal of emphasis being placed on issues of practicality in the classroom. Far more recent pieces, though, examine such things as the role of music education within society and the use of music as a means of interdisciplinary cooperation.

In addition, use of the keyword China conveys willingness to talk and compare regionally. This particular feature seems particularly fitting given Malaysia is established in a multicultural environment and has had past ties with other countries in Asia. Comparisons can provide valuable information about issues and solutions.

Concisely, in contrasting trends of studies in the past with current activities, intellectual growth in Malaysian music educational scholarship is delineated. Description in context has been giving way to integration and analysis in this field of inquiry. Since the shift, it can presently contribute more substantively to sub-regional debate and discussion.

Results and Discussion: Methodological Maturity and Gaps in the Literature

Figures 3-6 show that keywords like review, research, and study are increasingly prevalent, pointing to methodological maturation of Malaysian music education research. The use of bibliometric approaches, systematic reviews, and reflective inquiry by researchers show a trend towards evidence-based scholarship and strategic planning.

This is supported by the reality that the word "review" has become more popular. Concina's (2023) ideas, which highlight reflection as a key to enhancing music education and teacher quality, are a result of these reflections. Utilizing research and study as a subject of emphasis indicates that the document embraces thorough research.

Some of this data appears to be underrepresented, though. The topics that are either peripheral or not touched at all are policy, assessment, community engagement, and collaboration. In order to fill the observed gap, Mazlan et al. (2025) assert that further in-depth studies are needed on topics like national development, cultural heritage tourism, and music education. In addition, the discipline's limited

interaction with themes like technology, diversity, and inclusiveness suggests that it has not yet fully addressed contemporary educational issues. As music education becomes more interactive with digital technologies, multiculturalism in classrooms, and inclusive pedagogies, future research must widen its agenda to confront these challenges. The absence of the word "policy" appears particularly noticeable given the significance of education policy and how it dictates staff development, funding, and curricula. Moreover, without policy being given priority as a topic, research loses its grounding in the essential elements of education provision. Furthermore, the study's ability to determine learning outcomes is impacted by the exclusion of assessment as a term. Community participation is yet another area that would be worth additional research. The literature available in print has been neglecting music education, despite the fact that it can be utilized as a strategy that breeds cohesion as well as collective knowledge and expression. Community interaction, when included in research, could bring more relevance as a whole.

In conclusion, much more would seem to need to be done in the realm of system-level and policy-level studies, even with the increased levels of research methodology sophistication being offered in the field. This keeps music education research diverse and relevant.

Conclusion

This study uses bibliometric analysis and visualization with VOSviewer to present a complete, data-driven overview of Malaysian music education research. The findings focus on essential themes such as teacher development, family participation, and music education ideologies, emphasizing the close relationship between pedagogical methods and cultural contexts. By mapping keyword associations and research trends, this study highlights dominating and emerging topics that constitute Malaysia's music education scholarly landscape. The analysis not only closes a gap in our understanding of how research in this subject has progressed, but it also provides significant insights for educators, researchers, and policymakers to improve future curriculum design, teaching practices, and academic collaborations. Finally, this research helps to provide a more educated, reflective, and culturally based framework for promoting music education in Malaysia.

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