

FORMATION OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY: RESULTS OF AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

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Abstract. The professional identity of a future music and fine arts professional is a key indicator of successful socialization, professional development, and readiness for independent creative and professional practice. It reflects the degree to which music and fine arts students internalize professional values, ethical principles, and responsibilities while developing confidence in their future roles as arts professionals. This article presents the results of a survey conducted among 340 first- to fourth-year students at Ankara Music and Fine Arts University to examine the factors influencing the formation of professional identity during higher education in the arts. The findings demonstrate that several interconnected factors play a significant role in this process, including motivation for choosing an artistic profession, the intensity and quality of creative training, the effectiveness of mentoring relationships, academic engagement, and perceived stress levels. The results indicate that students with strong intrinsic motivation and regular interaction with experienced academic and artistic mentors demonstrate higher levels of professional identity. Furthermore, early immersion in creative learning environments, active participation in extracurricular creative and professional activities, scientific research, volunteer initiatives, and professional organizations contribute significantly to strengthening students' sense of belonging to the arts profession. These findings emphasize the importance of creating supportive educational environments that integrate theoretical knowledge with practical creative experience and foster continuous professional growth throughout arts education. Such educational strategies can enhance the development of competent, confident, and ethically responsible future music and fine arts professionals.

Keywords: student, professional ethics, professional identity, education, socialization, mentoring, stress.

Introduction

The formation of the professional identity of young students in the process of studying at the university is a complex, continuous process with a pronounced social content: "designing" the personality of a professional who has chosen a particular profession and becomes the creator of his or her own artistic and professional practice.

The training of a professional in the process of studying in the university system involves the gradual inclusion of the student in the system of professional relations, the formation of knowledge and skills necessary for the independent reproduction of these relations in further professional activity. It is universities that should provide training for specialists with higher education, who act as carriers and transformers of professional culture and are competitive and in demand by society. In the context of music and fine arts education, this process aims to develop creative, competent, and socially responsible professionals capable of contributing to cultural and artistic development.

According to foreign scientists R.L.Cruess, S.R.Cruess, Steinert Y. Cruess, the professional identity of a specialist is considered as a dynamic structure that includes a value attitude towards the profession, acceptance of the norms of the professional community, and awareness of its role in the healthcare system [1]. Foreign studies emphasize that the formation of identity begins at the stage of learning and depends on the «hidden curriculum», as if informal norms transmitted through interaction with teachers and patients [2].

For example, it is believed that in the context of the digital transformation of higher education and the increasing integration of creative technologies, the process of professional socialization of future music and fine arts professionals is facing new challenges, including the need to balance traditional artistic training with digital competencies and interdisciplinary collaboration. The key factors influencing identity in the literature are:

- motivation for choosing an artistic profession (altruistic and pragmatic) [3];
- volume and quality of creative and practical training [4];
- the role of mentors and role models [5];

psychological well-being and stress levels [6].

At the same time, it has not been sufficiently studied how these factors manifest themselves in the conditions of a modern university of music and fine arts. The purpose of this study is to empirically assess the contribution of these factors to the formation of the professional identity of young students and future music and fine arts professionals.

When the purpose of education becomes to help students at all levels of music and fine arts education develop their own professional identity, the focus shifts from the teaching staff teaching professionalism to a new paradigm in which students actively participate in the development of their own professional identity.

The role of the teaching staff is to help students understand the process of identity formation and socialization, as well as to guide them in the transition from novice learners to competent arts professionals. We believe that the true purpose of music and fine arts education has always been to foster the development of a strong professional identity among future artists, musicians, designers, and art educators. If this transformational perspective is embraced, a new educational approach based on the integration of knowledge, practical skills, creativity, and professional identity will be required, where each component receives equal attention.

Materials and methods of research

The development of adequate methods for managing professional socialization in modern conditions is hampered by the lack of a comprehensive theoretical and methodological framework. Scientific research on the process of professional socialization of students is limited to setting a problem or transferring it to the field of social psychology and pedagogy. The factors of professional socialization of students that influence the success of professional preparation in arts education have been insufficiently studied and remain on the periphery of research interest. There is no comprehensive system of sociological diagnostics for monitoring the process of professional socialization of music and fine arts students, which significantly reduces the effectiveness of managing and optimizing this process.

Considering professional socialization within the framework of management sociology as a two-pronged process involving the gradual acquisition of specialized knowledge and skills (training) and, more importantly, the internalization of the culture and values of the professional community, we propose the following definition. Professional socialization is the process by which an individual internalizes the fundamental values, norms, and standards of behavior of the artistic and creative professional community, which subsequently guide professional behavior.

This definition reflects the social essence of the process—the deep assimilation of the principles governing the functioning of the professional community, which become structural elements of the personality of an arts professional. These principles are reflected both in professional activities and in informal interactions, including communication style, artistic expression, professional ethics, and creative lifestyle.

It is important that the proposed definition does not limit professional socialization to a specific stage of education but considers it a lifelong process that continues through formal and informal interactions within the artistic and cultural community. This conceptualization of professional identity was used as the theoretical basis for the empirical study of students' professional identity development during university education.

Study design – a one-stage cross-sectional study using anonymous online questionnaires.

Participants – 340 students of the 1st–4th years of Ankara Music and Fine Arts University. The distribution of participants was as follows: first-year students – 60%, second-year students – 18%, and fourth-year students – 22%. The average age was 21.2 years. The gender distribution was 71% women and 29% men, corresponding to the overall student population.

Our research instrument included a questionnaire consisting of four sections:

–Motivation for choosing an artistic profession (a 5-point scale adapted from Borges et al., 2012);

–Assessment of creative and practical training (number of creative projects, exhibitions, concerts, workshops, or internships completed, and satisfaction measured on a 10-point scale);

–Mentoring (availability of an academic or artistic mentor, frequency of interaction, and evaluation of mentoring effectiveness);

–Professional identity (6-point scale, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.84$) and stress level (PSS-10).

The selection of the first, second, and fourth years as the stages of the study was based on the following considerations:

1. first-year students are at the initial stage of professional socialization. Ideas about the future profession have an unformed, largely chaotic character. Adaptation to the university's educational environment takes place through the development of formal standards and rules, and relationships with classmates and teachers are just beginning to be established. Factors of the pre-university environment play a leading role in confirming the correctness of choosing a future profession and university;

2. second-year students are maximally involved in the professional training process, are fully adapted to the educational environment of the university and actively participate in the complex of intra-university formal and informal communications. In the fourth year, the question of the correctness of choosing a profession and specialization within its framework is finally resolved. At this stage, the role of factors regulating the content and professional socialization of students and shaping the personality of a future professional is maximally expressed;

3. students of the final (fourth) year are at the final stage of professional training at the university. Many participate in concerts, exhibitions, performances, artistic productions, internships, or collaborative creative projects, which provide direct experience within the professional artistic community. Their interaction with this environment serves as an important indicator of the effectiveness of university-based professional socialization.

Results and its discussion

Statistics. Processing in SPSS 26. To compare the groups, the Student's t-test and ANOVA are used. The Pearson correlation (r) is used to identify links. The significance level is $p < 0.05$.

3. Results

3.1. Motivation. Altruistic motives ("the desire to help people") prevailed among 71% of students, pragmatic ("stability, prestige") – among 21%, family tradition – among 8%. Students with altruistic motivation showed a significantly higher level of identity ($M=7.4$ vs 5.8 , $p < 0.01$). The correlation between altruism and identity is $r=0.34$ ($p < 0.001$).

3.2. Clinical practice. Students who completed 3 or more internships had an average identity score of 8.1 ($SD=1.2$); those who completed 1-2 internships — 6.5 ($SD=1.8$); without practice (1-2 years) — 4.9 ($SD=2.0$). The differences are significant ($F=28.4$, $p < 0.001$). Satisfaction with practice was also correlated with identity ($r=0.41$, $p < 0.001$).

3.3. Mentoring. 64% of respondents noted the presence of a curator. Regular communication (at least once every 2 weeks) increased identity by 1.6 points compared with rare or absent contact ($p < 0.001$). Assessment of the mentor's influence ("does he help you feel like a doctor?") correlated with identity at the level of $r=0.52$ ($p < 0.001$).

3.4. Stress. The average PSS-10 score was 18.4 ($SD=6.2$), which corresponds to a moderate stress level. A negative correlation with identity was revealed ($r=-0.38$, $p < 0.001$). Students with high stress (upper quartile) had an identity of 5.6 , while those with low stress had an identity of 8.0 ($p < 0.001$).

3.5. Extracurricular activities. Participation in scientific circles (26%) and volunteering (19%) increased identity by 1.2 and 1.5 points, respectively ($p < 0.01$).

The results of our study confirm the key role of clinical practice and mentoring in the formation of professional identity, which is consistent with the data of Yardley et al. [4] and Passi et al. [5]. The revealed effect of extracurricular professional activity as an independent factor of socialization is new. High stress levels (negative correlation) require the introduction of psychological support programs, as recommended by Dyrbie et al [6]. Limitations: one-step design, self-reports. Perspective is a longitudinal study. However, our findings extend the existing knowledge by demonstrating that extracurricular professional activity (scientific circles, volunteering) acts as an independent and significant factor of socialization, increasing identity

scores by 1.2–1.5 points ($p < 0.01$). This supports the concept of «professional identity as a multi-contextual construct» (Monrouxe), where identity is shaped not only within formal curricula but also through informal professional engagement.

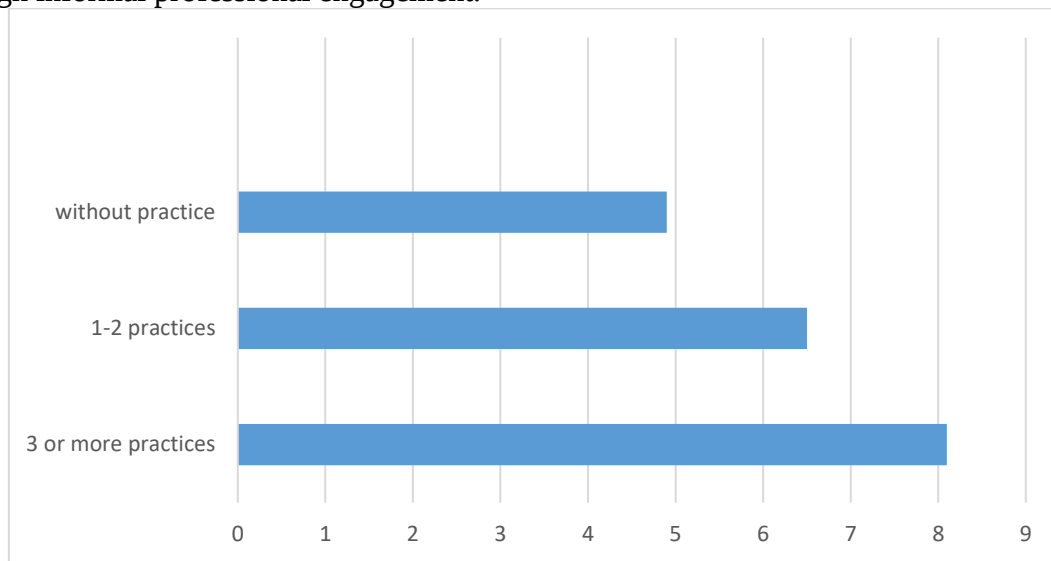


Diagram 1. The level of professional identity depending on the number of practices

Note: The differences between the groups are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$, $F = 28.4$).

A novel finding is the strong negative correlation between stress levels and professional identity ($r = -0.38$, $p < 0.001$). Students with high stress (upper quartile) scored 5.6 compared to 8.0 in the low-stress group. This finding suggests that emotional exhaustion negatively affects students' confidence in their future creative and professional roles. Our data indicate that stress reduction programs should be considered not only as a strategy for improving students' well-being but also as an effective means of strengthening the formation of professional identity among music and fine arts students.

The correlation between altruistic motivation and identity ($r = 0.34$, $p < 0.001$) confirms that intrinsic motivation is a stronger predictor of professional commitment than extrinsic factors. However, the relatively moderate strength of this correlation indicates that motivation alone is insufficient—it must be reinforced by creative practice, active participation in artistic projects, and effective mentoring. Our results support the sociocultural theory of identity formation, which posits that identity develops through participation in communities of practice. The significant increase in identity scores from 4.9 (students with minimal practical creative experience) to 8.1 (students who had participated in three or more creative projects, exhibitions, concerts, workshops, or internships) empirically validates this framework in music and fine arts education. Furthermore, the strong mentoring–identity relationship ($r = 0.52$) is consistent with Bandura's social cognitive theory, according to which mentors and professional role models foster observational learning and strengthen students' self-efficacy.

Practical implications. The data suggest that music and fine arts curricula should:

- Introduce creative practice and artistic performance opportunities from the first year rather than postponing them to senior years;
- Formalize mentoring programs with regular structured meetings between students and experienced artists, musicians, and academic mentors;
- Integrate stress management training as a mandatory component of arts education;
- Encourage and formally recognize participation in extracurricular creative, artistic, research, and community engagement activities.

This study has several limitations. First, the cross-sectional design prevents causal inferences—we cannot determine whether higher professional identity leads to greater engagement in creative practice or whether practical experience enhances professional identity. Second, self-

report measures may be subject to social desirability bias. Third, the sample from a single music and fine arts university limits the generalizability of the findings. Future research should employ longitudinal designs and multi-center sampling involving students from different higher education institutions specializing in music, fine arts, and related creative disciplines.

Conclusion

The formation of professional identity among music and fine arts students is a multifactorial and dynamic process determined by the interaction of motivation, creative and practical training, mentoring, stress levels, and extracurricular engagement. Our empirical study provides the following scientifically grounded conclusions:

1. Creative and practical training is the strongest structural factor influencing professional identity formation. Students who participated in three or more creative projects, exhibitions, concerts, workshops, or internships scored 8.1 compared with 4.9 among those with little or no practical creative experience ($p < 0.001$). This confirms that professional identity develops through legitimate peripheral participation in professional communities (Lave & Wenger) [7].

2. Mentoring is the strongest relational factor ($r = 0.52$, $p < 0.001$). Regular interaction with academic and artistic mentors increases professional identity by 1.6 points, supporting role-modeling theory (Passi) and emphasizing the importance of institutionalized mentoring programs within music and fine arts education.

3. Stress is a significant inhibitor of professional identity formation ($r = -0.38$). This finding extends Hobfoll's Conservation of Resources Theory to higher arts education, suggesting that when students' psychological resources are depleted by stress, their investment in professional identity decreases.

4. Intrinsic motivation provides the foundation for professional identity, but it must be reinforced through creative practice and artistic experience. The correlation of $r = 0.34$ suggests that motivation alone explains only about 12% of the variance in professional identity, highlighting the importance of experiential learning.

Extracurricular creative and professional activities (including research projects, artistic performances, exhibitions, competitions, community arts initiatives, and volunteering) make an independent contribution to professional identity, increasing scores by 1.2–1.5 points. This finding supports Côté's Identity Capital Model, according to which active participation in professional communities strengthens the personal resources required for professional identity development.

Recommendations for music and fine arts education:

- Implement creative practice, artistic performance, and project-based learning from the first year of study.
- Establish formal mentoring systems with mandatory regular meetings between students and experienced artists, musicians, designers, and academic mentors.
- Integrate stress management and resilience training into the curriculum.
- Create structured opportunities for extracurricular creative, artistic, research, and community engagement activities.

Develop longitudinal monitoring systems to evaluate the formation of professional identity throughout all years of study.

Our study demonstrates strong empirical validity and practical relevance. Its future extension through longitudinal research involving students of music and fine arts programs is expected to provide valuable evidence for optimizing higher education curricula in music and fine arts and strengthening students' professional identity.

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ЖОҒАРЫ ОҚУ ОРНЫ СТУДЕНТТЕРІНІҢ КӘСІБИ БІРЕГЕЙЛІГІНІҢ ҚАЛЫПТАСУЫ: ЭМПИРИКАЛЫҚ ЗЕРТТЕУ НӘТИЖЕЛЕРІ

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Аңдатпа. Болашақ музыка және бейнелеу өнері маманының кәсіби бірегейлігі – оның табысты әлеуметтенуінің, кәсіби дамуының және шығармашылық-педагогикалық қызметке даярлығының маңызды көрсеткіші болып табылады. Ол өнер университеті студенттерінің кәсіби құндылықтарды, шығармашылық этиканы және кәсіби жауапкершілікті қаншалықты меңгергенін, сондай-ақ болашақ өнер маманы ретіндегі кәсіби рөліне деген сенімділігінің қалыптасу деңгейін көрсетеді. Мақалада Анкара Музыка және Бейнелеу өнері университетінің 1-4 курсына білім алатын 340 студент арасында жүргізілген сауалнама нәтижелері ұсынылған. Зерттеудің мақсаты – өнер саласындағы білім беру барысында кәсіби бірегейліктің қалыптасуына ықпал ететін факторларды анықтау. Зерттеу нәтижелері бұл үдеріске мамандықты тандаудағы ішкі уәждеме, шығармашылық тәжірибенің қарқындылығы мен сапасы, тәлімгерлік қарым-қатынастың тиімділігі, оқу үдерісіне белсенді қатысу және студенттердің күйзеліс деңгейі сияқты өзара байланысты факторлардың елеулі

әсер ететінін көрсетті. Сонымен қатар, шығармашылық ортаға ерте бейімделу, тәжірибелі оқытушылармен және тәлімгерлермен тұрақты өзара әрекеттесу, ғылыми-зерттеу жұмыстарына, еріктілік қызметке және кәсіби бағыттағы студенттік ұйымдардың жұмысына белсенді қатысу студенттердің таңдаған мамандығына тиесілік сезімін нығайтып, кәсіби бірегейлігінің қалыптасуына оң ықпал етеді. Алынған нәтижелер теориялық білім мен практикалық-шығармашылық даярлықты тиімді ұштастыратын және студенттердің үздіксіз кәсіби дамуын қолдайтын білім беру ортасын қалыптастырудың маңыздылығын айқындайды. Мұндай білім беру стратегиялары құзыретті, өзіне сенімді және кәсіби этика қағидаларын берік ұстанатын болашақ музыка және бейнелеу өнері мамандарын даярлауға мүмкіндік береді.

Түйін сөздер: студент, кәсіби этика, кәсіби бірегейлік, білім беру, әлеуметтену, тәлімгерлік, күйзеліс.

ФОРМИРОВАНИЕ ПРОФЕССИОНАЛЬНОЙ ИДЕНТИЧНОСТИ СТУДЕНТОВ ВУЗА: РЕЗУЛЬТАТЫ ЭМПИРИЧЕСКОГО ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ

ЗАЙМОГЛЫ О. 

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Аннотация. Профессиональная идентичность будущего специалиста в области музыки и изобразительного искусства является важным показателем успешной социализации, профессионального становления и готовности к самостоятельной творческой и профессиональной деятельности. Она отражает степень усвоения студентами творческих специальностей профессиональных ценностей, этических принципов и профессиональной ответственности, а также уровень сформированности уверенности в своей будущей роли специалиста в сфере искусства. В статье представлены результаты анкетирования 340 студентов 1–4 курсов университета музыки и изобразительных искусств Анкары. Цель исследования заключалась в выявлении факторов, влияющих на формирование профессиональной идентичности в процессе получения художественного образования. Полученные результаты свидетельствуют о том, что значительное влияние на данный процесс оказывают взаимосвязанные факторы, включая внутреннюю мотивацию выбора творческой профессии, интенсивность и качество творческой подготовки, эффективность наставничества, академическую вовлечённость и уровень воспринимаемого стресса. Установлено, что раннее погружение в творческую образовательную среду, регулярное взаимодействие с опытными наставниками, активное участие в научно-исследовательской деятельности, творческих проектах, волонтерских проектах и работе профессионально ориентированных студенческих организаций способствуют укреплению чувства принадлежности к профессии в сфере искусства и формированию профессиональной идентичности. Полученные данные подчёркивают важность создания образовательной среды, обеспечивающей эффективную интеграцию теоретической подготовки и практической творческой деятельности, а также поддержку непрерывного профессионального развития студентов. Реализация подобных образовательных стратегий способствует подготовке компетентных, уверенных в себе и этически ответственных будущих специалистов в области музыки и изобразительного искусства.

Ключевые слова: студент, профессиональная этика, профессиональная идентичность, образование, социализация, наставничество, стресс.