

Title: Playing-Related Musculoskeletal Disorders Across the Musical Career: A Survey-Based Study on Prevalence and the Role of Preventive Strategies

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Introduction and Purpose. Playing-related musculoskeletal disorders (PRMDs) are among the most common health issues affecting musicians and can significantly impact their careers. However, comparative research on PRMDs in music students versus professionals remains limited. This study aims to examine differences in prevalence, severity, risk factors, and the role of preventive strategies among bachelor students, master students, and professional orchestral musicians.

Methods. Data were collected between August 2024 and April 2025 through a quantitative cross-sectional study involving participants from the Syddansk Musikkonservatorium in Odense and the Odense Symphony Orchestra. A standardized online survey was administered, including the Nordic Musculoskeletal Questionnaire, the Disabilities of the Arm, Shoulder and Hand questionnaire, and the Musculoskeletal Pain Intensity and Interference Questionnaire for Musicians. Seven statements on potential preventive measures were also included.

Results. Surveys were completed by 45 bachelor students, 30 master students, and 41 professional musicians. Overall, 48% reported PRMDs in the past year, with similar prevalence across groups. Current complaints were more frequent among professionals (34%) than bachelor (18%) and master (17%) students, though this difference was not statistically significant. Nearly all participants reported using breaks and relaxed posture as preventive strategies. Other strategies—such as posture variation, stretching, and warming up—were also common but varied more between groups. Avoiding to bend the body or back while playing was reported significantly more in the group of professional musicians. No association was found between strategy frequency and PRMD occurrence.

Conclusions. PRMDs are present from the early stages of music education, underscoring the need for early awareness and personalized prevention. Further research is needed to assess the effectiveness of multifaceted preventive strategies and their implementation throughout musicians' careers.