



BMPF7010 – Module 6

Managing Music Performance Anxiety:

A mixed-methods investigation into the impact of 'MPA & Me' on music performance anxiety in professional vocalists

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The problem with MPA is...

My observations from practice + theory + reflection (Nelson, 2022)

Prevalance

**1 in 3 affected with singers
among the most vulnerable**

(Fernholz et al., 2019; Fishbein et al., 1988; Shaw, Juncos and Winter, 2020; Vaag et al., 2015)

Research

Response + Development

(Herman and Clark, 2023; Yang et al., 2025)

Treatment

For example: CBT, ACT, PST

(Burin and Osório, 2016; Clarke, Osborne and Baranoff, 2020; Juncos and de Paiva e Pona, 2018)

Barriers

**Scheduling restraints,
financial barriers, percieved
stigma**

(Shaw, Juncos and Winter, 2020)

**Methodological
Weaknesses**

**Role of
the Voice
Teacher**

(Burin and Osório, 2016; Kenny, 2011; Kinney et al., 2025)

(Gulliver et al., 2018, Heasman-Cossins, Winter and Juncos, 2025; MacAfee and Comeau, 2022)

My contribution

MPA & Me

Self-Help Resource

Underpinned by research:

CBT, ACT, PST

(Craske et al., 2014; Kenny, 2011; Weinberg and Gould, 2023)

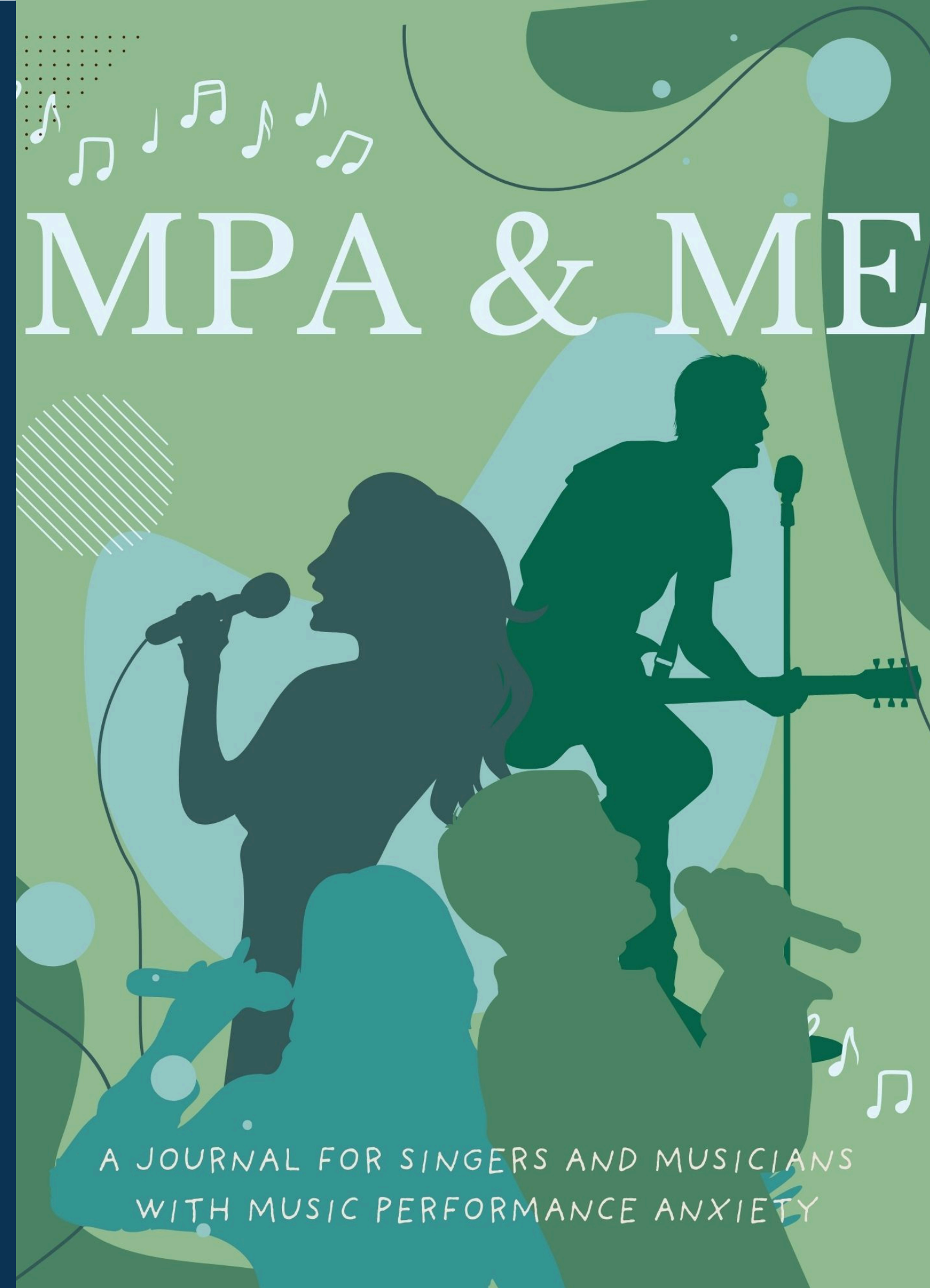
Grey Literature Best Practices

(Buswell, 2006; Cornett, 2019; Jones, 2000; Juncos and Pona, 2021; Klickstein, 2009; Nagel, 2017)

10+ years of experience

Professional and Personal

Now... does it work?



Research Aims

What changes occur in the severity of MPA after engaging with MPA & Me?

How do singers perceive and experience the resource?

Effectiveness

Facilitates
development in
my own practice



Explatory pilot
study that
addresses research
gap for self-help
interventions



Development in the
field for the benefit
of musicians and
voice practitioners

Experience

Valuable insight for
resource development

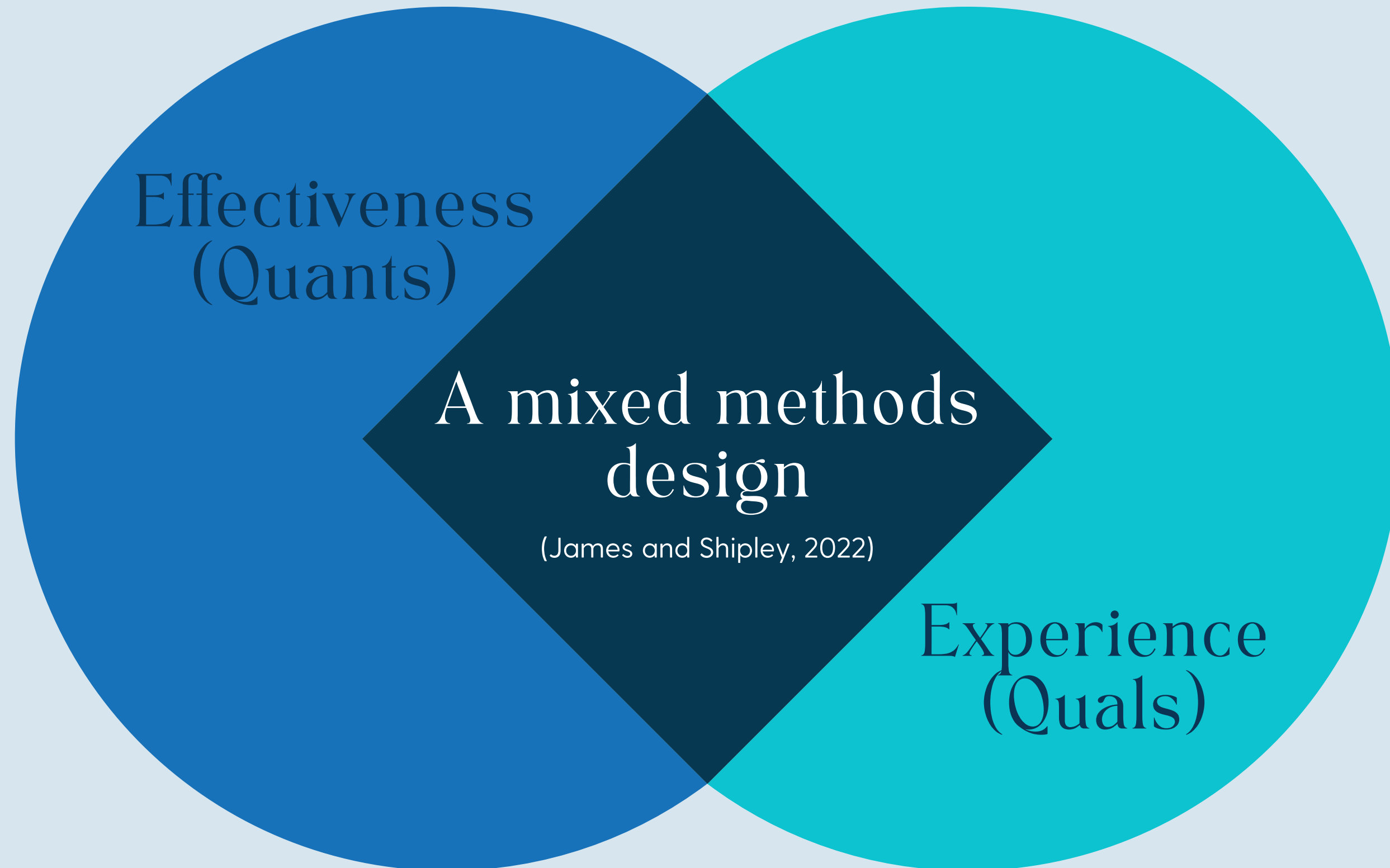


Valuable insights
into the complex
experience of MPA



Expansion of resource
into a wider curriculum
or training for voice
practitioners

My
positionality



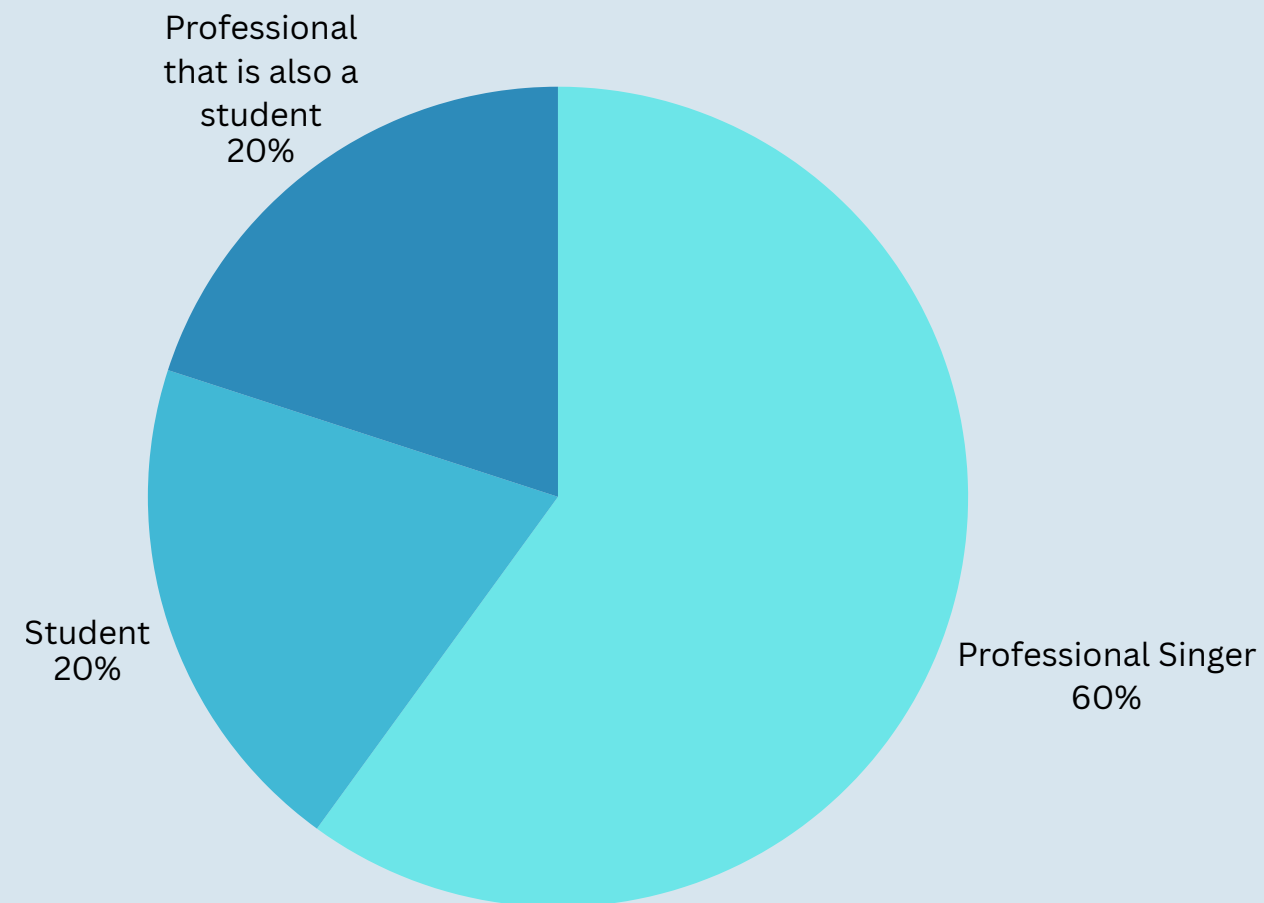
Mixed Methods results = Comprehensive and Confirmatory (Castro et al., 2010; Robinson et al., 2011).

Participant Characteristics (n=5)

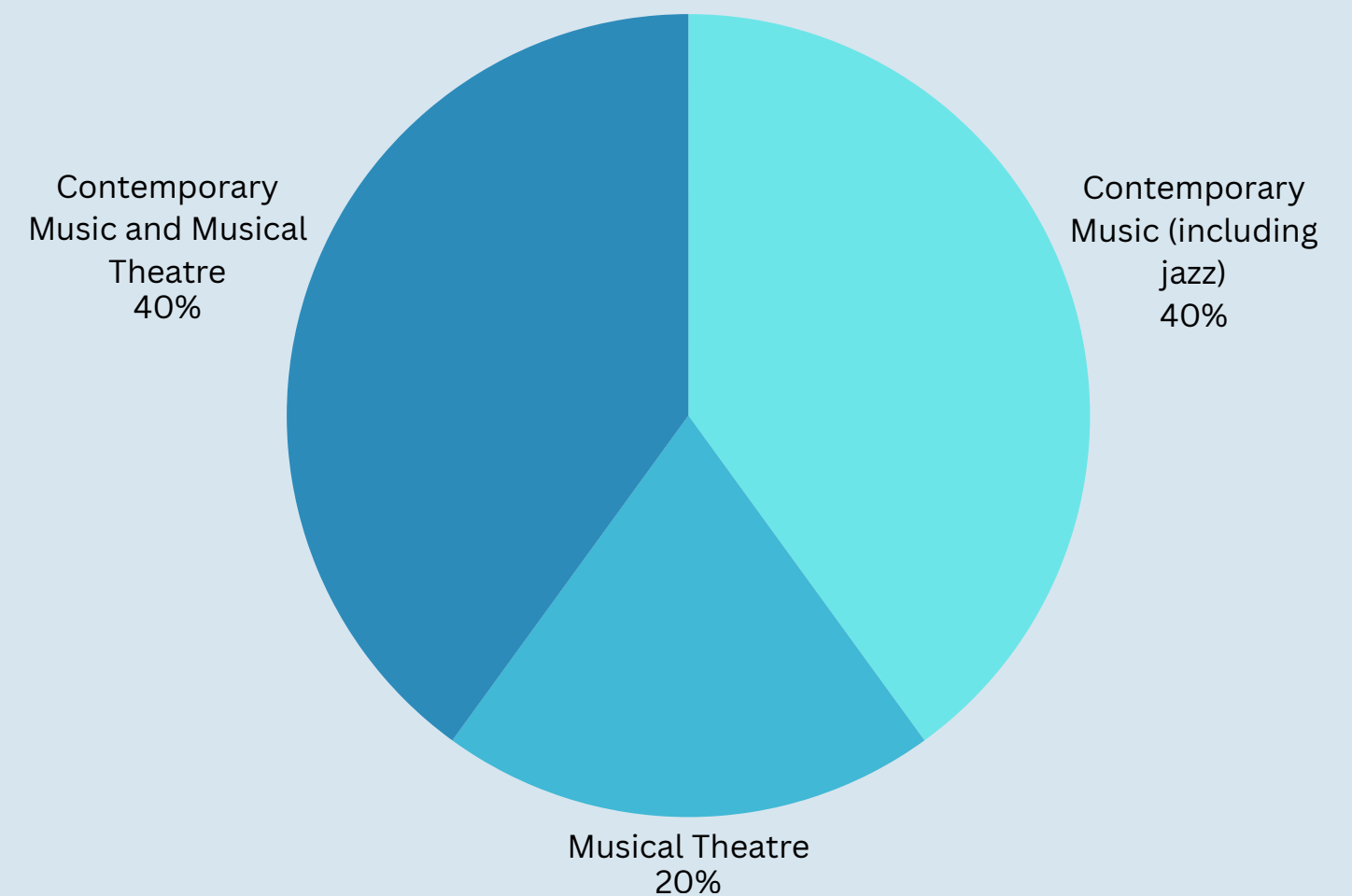
Participant Recruitment via social media (purposive followed by snowball sampling)

100% Female Sample

Professional Status of Participants



Genres in which participants perform



Phases of the Mixed-Methods Study

To explore effectiveness and experience

Pre-Intervention Phase (Quantative)

- Completion of the K-MPAI (Kenny, 2009; Kenny, 2016):
- Somatic Anixety/ Worry about performance
- Worry focus on self/other scrutiny
- Depression/Hoplessness
- Parental Empathy
- Memory
- Trait Anxiety
- Anxious Apprehension
- Biological Vulnerability

Intervention

- Participants recieved intervention in their desired format:
 - Physical copy
 - Interactive PDF
 - Plain PDF
- Participant engagement period - 6 weeks (Wang, 2024)
- No specified engagement requirements - just completion of a log book

Post-Intervention Phase

(Convergent Parallel Quants & Quals)

- Completion of the K-MPAI (Kenny 2009; Kenny, 2016) once more to reveal new scores
- Eight qualitative questions - Experience of MPA, Previous Treatment and Resource Feedback
- Qualitative responses analysed using Thematic Analysis producing 4 superordinate themes

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval granted by UWTSD Ethics Committee prior to study commencement.



Participant Consent Form

Participant consent form outlined all study overview, study information, inclusion criteria, and outlined the steps taken to protect data & anonymity.



Mitigating Risk to Participants

The participant right to withdraw was made explicit within the consent form. Contact details for three mental health services were provided.



Insider Researcher

Reflexivity, triangulation, member checking to mitigate researcher bias
Potential Impact on Participants:

- Links to the industry
- Personal relationships



Results and Discussion

Quantative Findings

Overview

K-MPAI scores Pre-Intervention	K-MPAI scores Post-Intervention	p value (extracted from t-test)
M = 120 Med = 137	M = 115 Med = 121	0.744

The K-MPAI deems that a score of 120 classifies an individual as having “above average” performance anxiety (Kenny, 2016)

Individual

Participant ID	K- MPAI Score Pre Intervnetion	K- MPAI Score Pre Intervention
Participant 1	128	89
Participant 2	29	65
Participant 3	137	121
Participant 4	158	166
Participant 5	147	136

Qualitative Results

Superordinate Themes

Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3	Theme 4
Contextualising Initial K-MPAI Scores	Contextualising Final K-MPAI Scores	Perceived Benefits of Resource	Perceived Limitations of Resource
Example quote from Participant	Example quote from Participant	Example quote from Participant	Example quote from Participant
<i>"I would scrutinise every...imperfect note. I have turned down a lot of gigs...due to fear of not being good enough"</i>	<i>"I would say that I have a better handle on the performance anxiety. Even though it's still there, I manage it better"</i>	<i>"I loved the self statement prompts, as I struggle to think of positives, but from suggestions, I can find ones that fit me better"</i>	<i>"I just didn't have many opportunities to test it out"</i>
Highest recurring subtheme codes	Highest recurring subtheme codes	Highest recurring subtheme codes	Highest recurring subtheme codes
• Lack of confidence causing MPA • Affected by external factors • High pressure situations • Judgement from others	• MPA is more manageable (60%) • Improved self efficacy • An improved positive outlook • Management of post event rumination	• Reframing negative thoughts • Goal setting • Identifying triggers • Reminder of MPA strategies	• Study potentially triggering • Time related issues • Remembering to work through exercises - suggesting this is not always possible

Results Divergence

Participant ID	MPA is more manageable, though still present	Pre-Intervention K-MPAI Score	Post-Intervention K-MPAI Score	Changes to score as a percentage
Participant 1	✓	128	89	↓ 30.46%
Participant 2	✓	29	65	↑ 124.14%
Participant 3		137	121	↓ 11.68%
Participant 4	✓	158	166	↑ 5.06 %
Participant 5		147	136	↓ 7.48 %

Divergence Analysis

Exploration of Unexpected Results

Factor	Pre-Intervention	Post-Intervention
Somatic Anxiety/ Worry about performance	M = 35.40	M = 34
Worry focus on self/other scrutiny	M = 29.40	M = 26.40
Depression/Hoplessness	M = 20.20	M = 19.60
Parental Empathy	M = 8.20	M = 8.60
Memory	M = 5.20	M = 4.40
Trait Anxiety	M = 9.60	M = 11.20
Anxious Apprehension	M = 9.20	M = 8.00
Biological Vulnerability	M = 2.60	M = 3.20

Potential for Systematic Error

T-test comparison between overall K-MPAI scores, and with three factors removed
Parental Empathy (PE) - Trait Anxiety (TA) and Biological Vulnerability (BV)

Paired Samples T-Test

			statistic	df	p	Effect Size	
Pre_W/o_PE_TA_BV	Post_W/O_PE_TA_BV	Student's t	0.670	4.00	0.539	Cohen's d	0.300
Score_Pre	Score_Post	Student's t	0.350	4.00	0.744	Cohen's d	0.157

Recall Bias in
Pre / Post Testing

(Institute for Child
Success, n.d.; Sato &
Kawahara, 2011)



Not K-MPAI
Specific

(Clarke, Osborne and
Baranoff, 2020)

MPA & Me: Causing MPA?

MPA & ME: TRIGGERS

What makes you feel anxious about performing music?

By identifying triggers, you can start to notice when anxious thoughts might start to creep in, and this can help you look out for anxiety in the future. Music Performance Anxiety is very normal - writing down your thoughts and feelings can help you accept that anxiety is a very normal part of anxiety.



MPA & Me contained exercises rooted in CBT, designed to help individuals restructure maladaptive thought patterns to change problematic behavioural outcomes (Kenny, 2004; Kenny, 2011; Spahn, 2015)

EXAMPLE:

Here is an example of an event (A), followed by some unhelpful thoughts and feelings (B). These negative thoughts are likely to contribute towards a negative outcome (C):

A

An upcoming audition for a meaningful opportunity

B

I am nervous about making mistakes, which makes me feel sick when I think about the audition

C

I will be too nervous to perform to the best of my ability and fail at the audition

If we can reframe our B (our thoughts and feelings) in a more positive light, it can help us to focus on a more positive outcome (C):

B
I have practised extremely hard and I have performed my piece many times with no mistakes



C
I trust myself to do my best and I am happy knowing that that's all I can do

"Fluctuating! It's definitely decreased as I have grown in confidence, but doing this study has made me realise it's still very much present"
(Participant 3)

Further study - Participant Interviews

Perceived Benefits of MPA & Me

“I loved the self statement prompts, as I struggle to think of positives, but from suggestions, I can find ones that fit me better”
(Participant 4).

“[I found] ‘The Mind Section’
[useful]”
(Participant 5).

[My MPA is] “Easier to manage thorough more positive means of self-control”
Participant 2

The book has helped me think about my accomplishments as well as getting comfortable with making a few mistakes here and there without obsessing over them.

(Participant 1)

“The reframing of my own value to intrinsic goals and using preparation to boost confidence”

(Participant 3).

Insider
Researcher
Influence

Percieved Limitations of MPA & Me

“I didn’t use this much as my physical health makes it very difficult to stick to set times and plans” (Participant 4)

“I found the exercises really helpful and wish I had more opportunities to implement them.. just didn’t have many opportunities to test it out” (Participant 5)

Resource Engagement - Interpreted low engagement with MPA & Me

Participant ID	Excerpt of Qualitative Responses
Participant 1	“I used the book mainly when I practiced to get in the habit of using the techniques described to remain calm when singing. I have performed 3/4 times since getting the book and each time I used the breathing exercises described to get myself in a calm headspace before I sang.”
Participant 2	“I used the book the night before my gigs for about 30 minutes, and practised the breathing exercises the morning of my gig”
Participant 3	75 minutes (recorded within the personal log)
Participant 4	“I used the book at home twice and took it with me to a performance I was nervous for”
Participant 5	“I used the exercises in preparation for a workshop, the mind section was especially helpful for me.”

Barriers

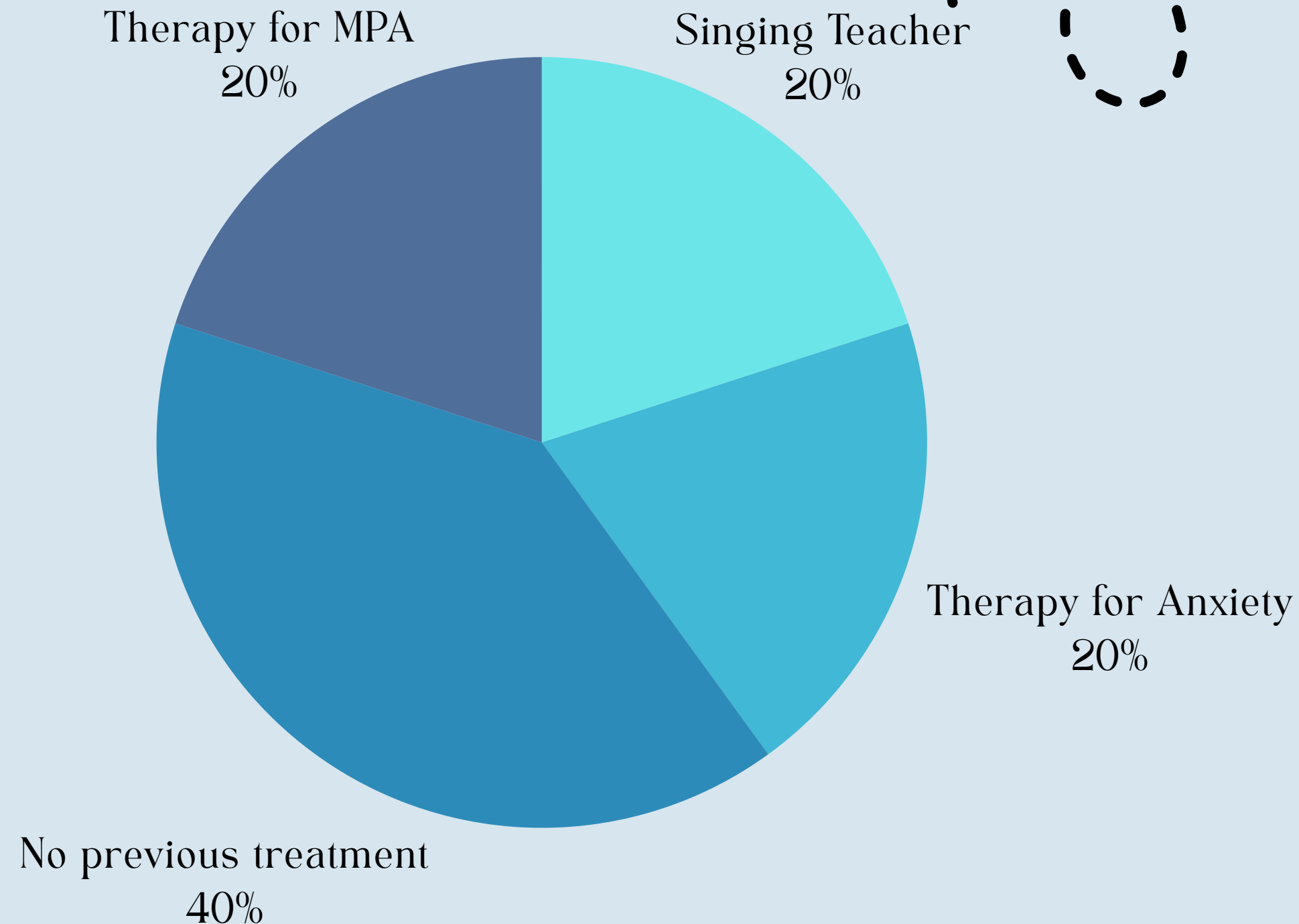
**Scheduling restraints,
financial barriers, percieved
stigma**

(Shaw, Juncos and Winter, 2020)

Music Industry

Participant Background

Previous Engagement with MPA Treatment



22% of lecturers replicate the teaching methods they were exposed to during their own education (Oleson and Hora, 2013).

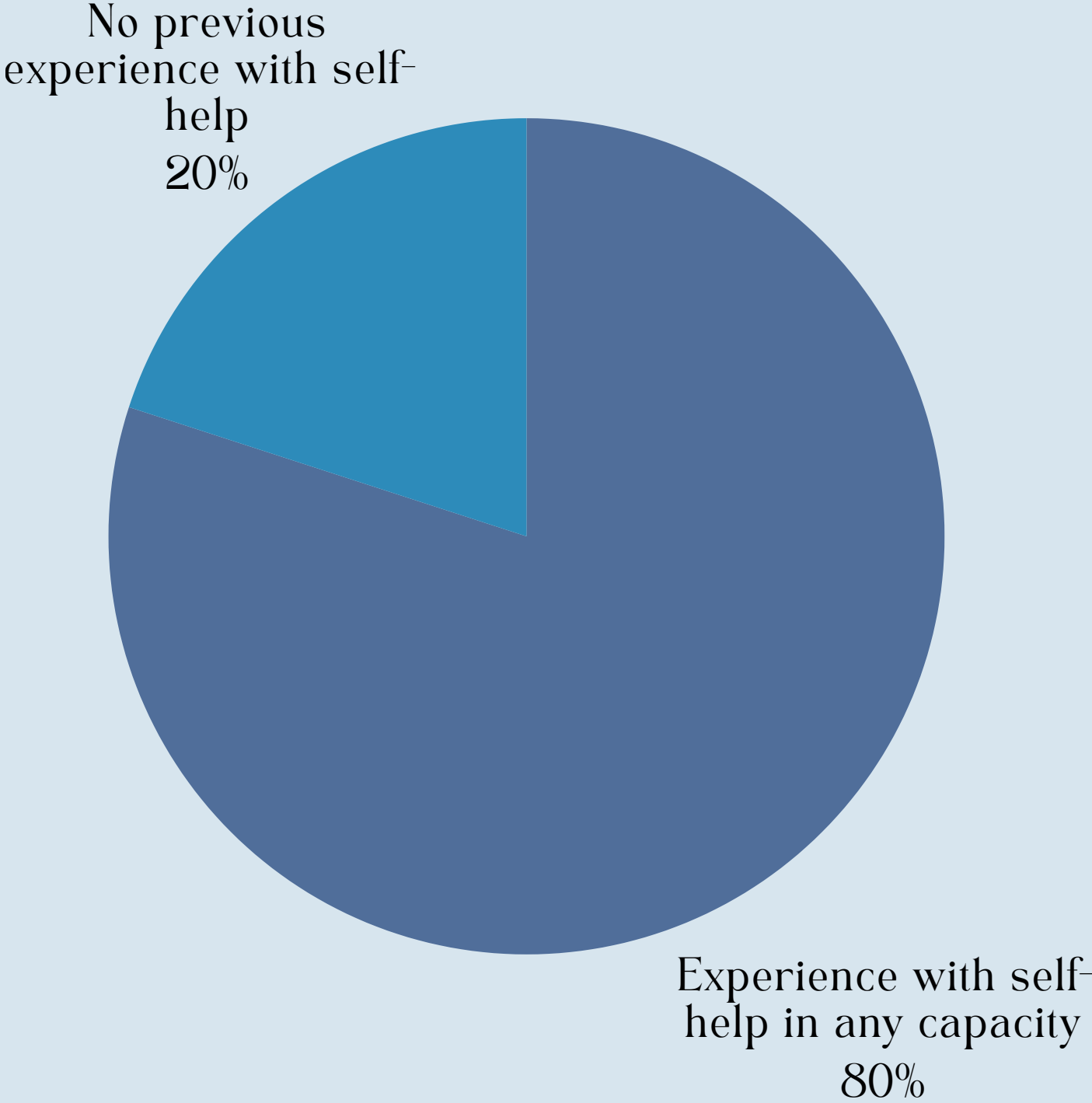
"...my previous singing teacher and music teacher did help me with my performance anxiety. It was mainly just exposure with them encouraging me to sing more but it sometimes just made my nerves worse"

(Participant 1)

Up to 30% of musicians who leave the profession due to debilitating MPA become educators (Bonnevill-Roussy, Hruska and Trower, 2020; Patston, 2014)

Participant Background

Previous Engagement with Self-Help Pre-Interventions (Wilson and Cash, 2000)



Participant ID	Self Help Experience	Changes to score as a percentage
Participant 1	X	↓ 30.46%
Participant 4	✓	↑ 5.06 %

“I have used a lot of self-help books. Books on breath, mindfulness, self-help journals... which is great for me

(Participant 4)

Conclusion

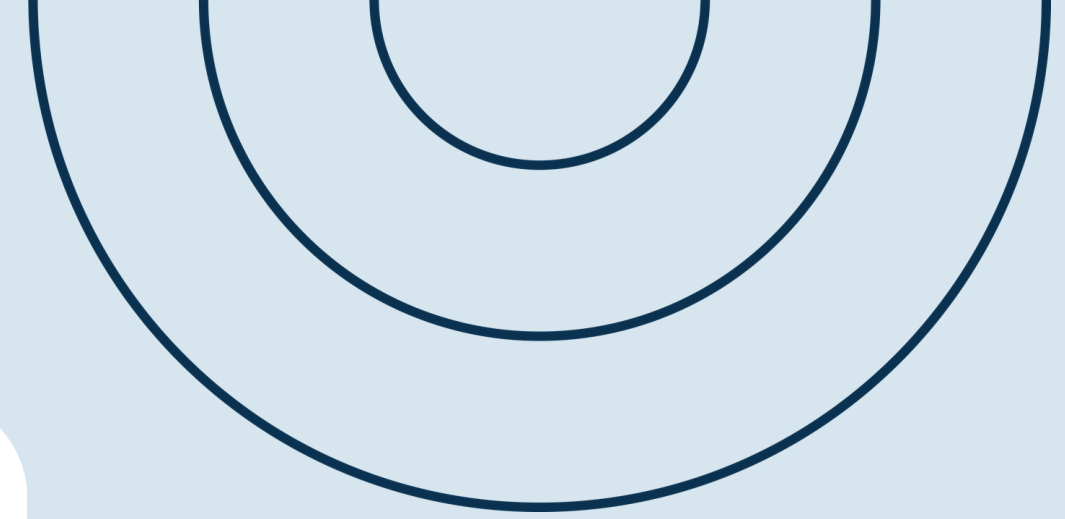
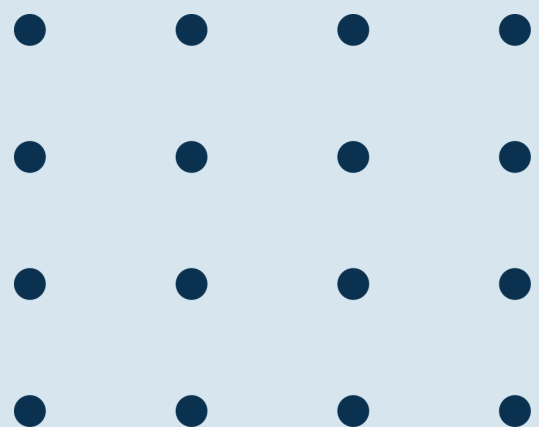
- No statistically significant results in the reduction of MPA
- Perceived benefits and improvements reported in qualitative findings
- MPA measurement is complex
- “MPA & Me” warrants further study

Limitations

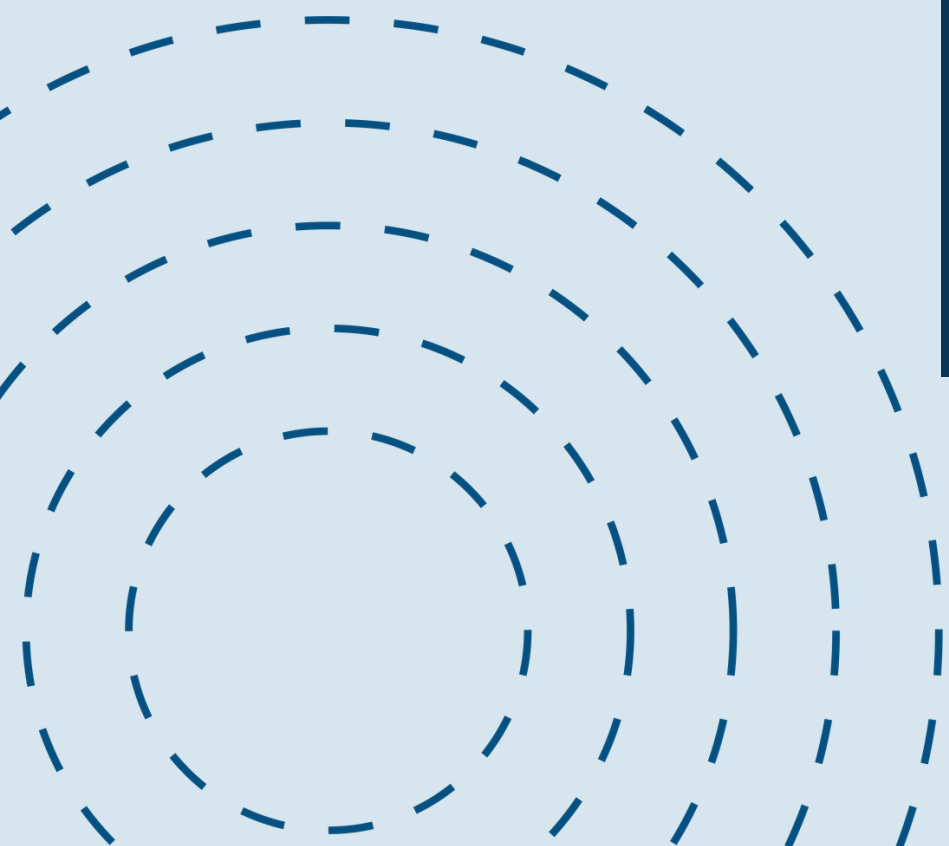
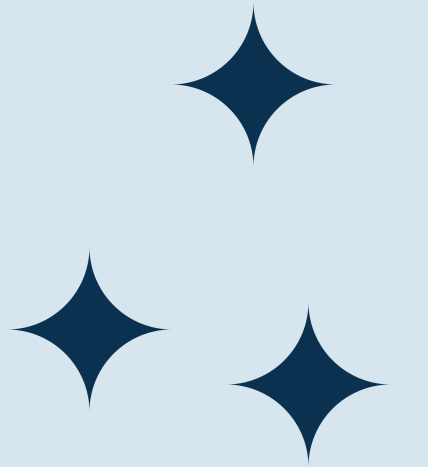
- Potential researcher bias due to insider role and intervention design
- Small, all-female sample limits generalisability
- Short (6-week) intervention period may have restricted engagement (Furmark et al., 2009; Ritzert et al., 2016)
- Possible influence of participant–researcher relationships

Recommendations

- Use larger, more diverse samples to improve reliability and generalisability
- Extend study duration and include long-term follow-up
- Consider control groups and potential measurement biases
- Explore barriers to accessing MPA support (e.g., time constraints)
- Develop flexible resources and training for music educators



How does this now impact my practice?



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