

What are the impacts of ensemble singing
on the mental health of non-professional
singers?

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1. What are the impacts of ensemble singing on the mental health of non-professional singers?

2. The Context

The relationship between singing and mental well-being has been extensively analysed across various domains, including dementia, postnatal depression, escapism, and cognitive rehabilitation, with the majority of studies reporting favourable outcomes (Chong & Kim, 2010; Pearce, Launay & Dunbar, 2015; Grape *et al.*, 2003; Dowlen, Clift & Camic 2017; Perkins, York & Fancourt, 2018, Clift & Hancox, 2001). There is currently a substantial body of research available that looks at ensemble singing in varying settings throughout adult populations, however there is a notable gap in the literature concerning younger adults, particularly those who are not from lower socioeconomic backgrounds or considered disadvantaged. In this research, I aim to examine the impact of singing on mental well-being across different socioeconomic and adult age groups, with a focus on identifying potential similarities and differences in how singing affects mental health across these diverse populations..

3. The Justification

Singing, for the foremost, has been an integral part of my life, serving as an important extracurricular activity that has helped enhance my confidence and manage stress levels. It has also proved to be a great function of escapism from everyday life and work pressures. Although I now sing professionally, my engagement with singing has never been motivated by ego but rather by a desire for self-centering and emotional regulation. This personal experience has influenced my desire to explore this topic in more detail and why I have chosen to further research it in an academic context.

In selecting this topic for research, my aim is to focus on groups of individuals who sing purely for pleasure and do so non-professionally, to examine how ensemble singing affects their mental well-being over an extended period (Damsgaard & Brinkmann, 2022; Grape *et al.*, 2003; Gick, 2011, Kreutz, 2014) . This study will involve an in-depth exploration of individual experiences, as well as inputs from various group settings, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of how group singing influences mental health (Clift & Hancox, 2001; Dingle *et al.* 2013) . By

doing so, I hope to uncover some nuanced connections between ensemble singing and its impact on psychological well-being (Gick, 2011).

4. The Intended Impact

In engaging in this project I wish to conduct exploratory research that observes Non-professional singers, in varying ensemble settings, conducting singing as a hobby or creative outlet. Over the course of 8 weeks I wish to observe groups as well as individuals to see if ensemble singing has helped at all with their mental well being. Each participant will engage in the process for the full duration, documenting their experiences in relation to the research question. The primary objective is to determine whether participation in ensemble singing has a measurable impact on mental health regulation and to identify any psychological benefits or challenges encountered during the process. This research seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the potential therapeutic effects of communal musical engagement, especially with regard to singing and how it might impact individuals and their ability to regulate emotions and improve social interaction and bonding.

5. The Outlined Intention

In alignment with the research undertaken by my participants, I will conduct a comprehensive literature review to examine the existing body of research on the effects of ensemble singing on mental well-being among non-professional singers. This ongoing literature review aims to both substantiate my preliminary assumptions and knowledge and identify potential gaps in the literature where further research may be warranted.

The research project will employ a mixed-methods approach, beginning with a preliminary survey involving an anticipated 10-30 participants from diverse groups. The data collected from this initial survey will inform the design of subsequent research processes and refine the questions to be explored with a smaller cohort of participants, ideally 3-4 individuals from different groups. Following approximately 8 weeks of ensemble singing, the selected 3-4 participants will participate in one-on-one online interviews, conducted in a semi-structured format utilising both open and closed questioning methods. These interviews will be recorded and transcribed to identify recurring themes, patterns, and shared experiences that will contribute to the findings and discussions of the research.

The findings derived from the aforementioned processes will be exploited to inform and support my written report through the application of descriptive analysis for the quantitative data and a grounded theory approach using closed, axial and selective coding culmination in methodical triangulation to get a more rounded overview of all the processes conducted. This report is to be submitted by April 14, 2024.

6. The Ethics and Insider Research

This project deals with quite sensitive issues and also the collecting of sensitive data, so it is of great importance that ethical considerations are addressed meticulously. The confidentiality and anonymity of all participants needs to be incited from commencement of the project with all information being stored in encrypted manner and on password protected devices and cloud drives. Consent form should clearly detail how information will be stored and that confidentiality will be of utmost importance throughout the research process, including confidentiality between participants when engaging in focus groups.

Participants will also be notified that participation is completely voluntary and that at any time they feel that they cannot continue with the research they have the right to withdraw without any repercussions. They will also be advised that in engaging in a research project that possibly recollects feelings of unnerve and distress, they have the right to abstain from answering certain questions that may be triggering, or in possibly more extreme instances, if they require additional support the consent forms will list specialist support network numbers and contacts to help address these issues (Beauchamp & Childress, 2013, Guillemin & Gillam, 2004).

As the researcher it is also important to acknowledge the risk bias when further interpreting data collected (Hellawell, 2006). With this in mind it is important to keep an open mind so as not to affect the studies data result. Objectivity needs to be observed at all times so that results are reliable and to also help mitigate biases, it is essential to adopt reflexive practices, continuously questioning assumptions (Berger, 2015).

While being an insider researcher can bring unique advantages to the project, such as trust and enhanced comprehension, it also poses significant ethical challenges, especially regarding bias and power dynamics (Mercer, 2007). To ensure ethical integrity, the researcher must implement strategies to minimise bias, protect participants' well-being and privacy, and uphold the principles of voluntary participation and informed consent.

7. Personal Learning Outcomes

- Expanding knowledge in correlation to using ensemble singing as a rehabilitation tool
- Exploring the importance of ensemble singing as a way of promoting inclusivity
- Exploring Ensemble singing as a method of cognitive behaviour therapy
- Learning about descriptive statistics in more depth
- learning about Grounded theory and the coding process
- Conducting a research project on a larger scale

What are the impacts of ensemble singing on the mental health of non-professional singers?

Introduction

Music has long been a means for humans to express and regulate emotions, with a particular emphasis on its power to foster a sense of community and connection (Hallam & Himinades, 2022; Clift & Morrison, 2011). Ensemble singing has been shown to help individuals feel a sense of belonging, shared purpose, and emotional release, without the need for prior experience or expertise (Williams, Dingle & Clift, 2018; Camlin, Defern & Zeserson, 2020). This current study aims to contribute to the ever-growing body of evidence and ongoing research that supports the psychological benefits of ensemble singing, exploring its positive impact on mental well-being in non-professional settings.

In recent years, especially post-pandemic, there has been a heightened focus on supporting mental health and well-being in many differing settings with particular emphasis on specialised groups such as dementia patients, postnatal depressions patients and acute medical conditions such as cancer. Many organisations now provide financial support for therapy (Mind, 2023), yet alternative therapies to help improve mental health are very under explored, such as engagement in the creative arts, and only marginally accessible. Can activities like choir and ensemble singing provide individuals with a healthy outlet for self-expression and escapism? Group singing, particularly in non-professional settings like amateur choirs and community groups, has gained some traction of late for its mental health benefits in correlation to differing needs (Smith *et al.*, 2022; Damsgaard & Brinkman, 2022; Dowson & Schnieder, 2021). The research I choose to conduct will examine the importance of ensemble singing and its social and emotional impact on individuals within differing communities. This research holds both professional and personal importance. As a vocal coach and singer, I have observed the transformational power ensemble singing can have on individuals not only in correlation to personal development but also in supporting emotional well-being, confidence, and social connection. Professionally, the research I am proposing to do helps to reinforce that vocal practice can serve as a holistic and therapeutic activity,

while personally, it reflects my belief that singing can be a restorative, ego-free form of expression, offering connection and catharsis.

The human voice is innate to communication, and singing, particularly ensemble singing, is one of the most accessible forms of expression, other than speech, to help individuals express themselves emotionally and can be viewed as very cathartic (Cohen, 2011; Fancourt, *et al.*, 2019; Baliga, 2024). It can be enjoyed by individuals of all ages and abilities, making it an inclusive activity that fosters a sense of community (Siber, 2005; Fancourt, *et al.*, 2019). Unlike professional settings, non-professional ensembles prioritise enjoyment over perfection, alleviating the pressure often associated with performance (Lui, Li & Bin, 2023). Engaging in this activity often leads to emotional release, personal fulfilment, and stronger interpersonal connections (Macaffrey *et al.*, 2011; Jang, 2020).

Research suggests that the psychological benefits of ensemble singing extend beyond the immediate experience, with participants reporting long-lasting improvements in mood and well-being (Bailey, 2023). The production of endorphins and oxytocin during group singing promotes relaxation, happiness, and social bonding, supporting the notion that ensemble singing is not only an emotional outlet but also has biochemical underpinnings (Fancourt, *et al.*, 2016; Dunbar, 2023). Additionally, the deep breathing and controlled vocalisation involved in singing resembles that used in mindfulness practices that are known to alleviate symptoms of anxiety and depression (King, 2011; Clements-Courtes, 2013; Thomas *et al.*, 2015; Fu, *et al.*, 2018; Balega, 2024).

Beyond the physiological effects, ensemble singing offers significant social and emotional benefits. Participation in choirs and singing groups provides individuals with opportunities to form new social connections, reduce isolation, and create a sense of belonging (Siber, 2005; Fancourt, *et al.*, 2019; Manrique & Gutierrez, 2021; Joseph & Southcott, 2014; Jang, 2020). These factors are especially important in mitigating the mental health risks associated with loneliness (Bailey, *et al.*, 2002). In these supportive musical communities, individuals are valued regardless of their skill level, fostering positive self-expression and promoting resilience in the face of life's challenges.

(Macaffrey *et al.*, 2011; Macaffrey & Edwards, 2016, Jang, 2020; Damsgaard & Brinkmann, 2022).

The therapeutic potential of ensemble singing has been demonstrated in many differing settings, some of which are clinical as well as non-clinical. The findings from a number of studies into the benefits of group singing found that group singing can lead to improvements in mood, cognitive functioning, and emotional regulation (Fancourt, *et al.*, 2016; Kang, Schlop & Jiang, 2018; Dunbar, 2023). This includes benefits for populations dealing with depression, anxiety, chronic stress, and neurodegenerative conditions like dementia (Camlin, Defern & Zeserson, 2020; Perkins *et al.*, 2018; McCaffrey & Edwards, 2016). These findings suggest that the benefits of ensemble singing are not limited to any particular demographic or health condition, making it a versatile and accessible form of therapy (Fancourt, *et al.*, 2016; Ørjasæter, *et al.*, 2018; Smith, Klinermann & Cohen, 2022)

The potential for ensemble singing to serve as a cost-effective, accessible mental health intervention has significant implications for public health and community development. Unlike traditional therapies or medications, group singing requires minimal resources, making it an attractive option for community-based mental health programs. By fostering environments where individuals can connect, express themselves, and experience collective joy, singing groups offer a holistic and preventative approach to mental health care (Macaffrey, Edwards & Fannon, 2011; Perkins, Kang, Schlop & Jiang, 2018; Yorke & Fancourt, 2018; Smith, Klinermann & Cohen, 2022; Dunbar, 2023).

In conclusion, ensemble singing is more than just a musical activity; it is a powerful tool for improving mental health and fostering social cohesion. By exploring the psychological mechanisms behind the benefits of group singing, researchers and practitioners can unlock new opportunities for using this accessible art form to enhance well-being across communities (Stewart & Lonsdale, 2016; McQuade & O'Sullivan, 2024). The aim of this project is to explore the above areas in more detail, with a specific focus on its role in supporting mental well-being and fostering social inclusion. The initial literature review will advise my future research and also guide what questions

are needed in the surveys and interviews in order to collect high yielding data. From these data collection sources quantitative and qualitative data will be collected and then methodologically triangulated to form a comprehensive overview of the topic.

What is Ensemble singing

Ensemble singing refers to the act of singing with others as part of a group, rather than as a soloist. It typically involves a number of individuals working together vocally to produce harmonised or coordinated performances. This can include settings such as choirs, vocal groups, community singing circles, amateur theatre groups, or any collective vocal performance where collaboration and shared musicality are central (Durrant, 2005; Clift & Morrison, 2011).

What is mental well being

Mental well-being is a broad and multidimensional concept that refers to an individual's emotional, psychological, and social health. It goes beyond the absence of mental illness and includes the presence of positive mental states, such as life satisfaction, emotional balance, resilience, and the ability to form meaningful relationships (WHO, 2004; Keyes, 2002).

According to the World Health Organization (2004), mental well-being includes many factors such as coping with the stresses of normal life, working productively, feeling a sense of belonging and being able to regulate emotions alongside psychological resilience. Keyes (2002) breaks these components down into three key domains which consist of:

1. Emotional well-being – happiness, life satisfaction, and positive affect
2. Psychological well-being – autonomy, personal growth, self-acceptance
3. Social well-being – social integration, contribution, and acceptance

Literature Review

When examining the effects of ensemble singing on mental well-being in non-professional singers, it is important to consider the existing literature on vocal pedagogy and mental health and well-being in relation to ensemble singing. This narrative literature review provides a comprehensive exploration of the expanding body of research focused on the psychological impacts of ensemble singing for non-professional singers, with particular emphasis on its influence on mental health and emotional well-being.

Ensemble singing, particularly in a non-professional context, has more recently had an increase in notability in correlation to improving mental health and well-being (Thomas *et al.*, 2016; Stewart & Lonsdale 2016; Ørjasæter *et al.*, 2018; Smith, Kleinerman & Cohen, 2022). Multiple research studies have explored how collective singing influences various psychosocial outcomes, focusing on mental well-being, social bonding, inclusion, and emotional regulation and this literature review seeks to examine this in more detail. After conducting the literature review many themes were acknowledged. Some areas of particular interest include mental well-being, stress and anxiety reduction, social bonding and inclusion, and emotional regulation.

While delving into the topic there is a substantial body of research highlighting the positive effects of ensemble singing on a person's mental well-being irrelevant of their demographic. The studies that were observed seemed to collectively report that group singing is more than just a leisure activity; it actively contributes to the mental and emotional health of its participants who were all from a non- professional background. Stewart & Lonsdale (2016) and Dingle *et al.* (2017) explored the relationship between choir singing and psychological well-being, focusing on the sense of community and emotional fulfilment that arises from participating in choirs. Stewart and Lonsdale's research found that individuals who participated in choir singing experienced a sense of happiness and fulfilment. These positive emotions were linked to the collective aspect of singing, which fostered feelings such as a sense of belonging, which ultimately was perceived to result in the participants having a sense of improved mental well-being (Stewart & Lonsdale, 2016). Dingle *et al.* (2017) supported this theory, documenting that

participants who engaged in ensemble singing, in this study through the guise of a choir, reported being able to emotionally regulate better after taking part in the activity, even individuals with chronic mental health conditions reported substantial improvement. Livesey *et al.* (2012) substantiated this notion after conducting a research project, whereby a cross-national survey of choir members was undertaken, providing qualitative data as evidence that choral singing supported mental well-being by fostering a sense of connection and reducing isolation in individuals. From doing this survey it was observed that participants alluded to the notion that in engaging in ensemble singing, on a regular basis, they noticed an increase in self-confidence, positive emotions, and also feelings of relaxation, which strongly supports the belief that ensemble singing is notably an excellent tool for supporting mental well-being (Clift, Manship & Stephens, 2017; Pearce *et al.*, 2016; Gick, 2011, Grape *et al.*, 2003; Clift & Hancox 2001). This also aligns with the research Zarobe (2017) conducted exploring how arts activities, including singing, develop resilience and mental well-being in children and young people. This notion was also supported by studies conducted by Chong & Kim (2010) & Lui, Li & Bin (2023), who looked at the effects of ensemble singing in a younger demographic.

While these studies consistently highlight the positive mental health outcomes of singing it is also documented that it may not just be the singing that leads to the feelings of more positive mental stability, but the act of engaging in a communal activity that may also contribute to good mood due to the feelings of belonging and inclusion (Williams, Dingle & Clift 2018; Bailey 2023).

In engaging in this act of togetherness and working harmoniously together it can create an immense sense of good feeling and happiness, due to feeling a part of something and also being understood. With this being said one area that frequently provides discussion is that of how ensemble singing has the capacity to provide levels of social bonding and inclusivity, particularly in diverse and disadvantaged groups (Hargen & Bryant, 2003 ;Weinstein *et al.*, 2016; McCaffrey & Edwards, 2016; Joseph & Southcott, 2014; Jang, 2020; McQuade & O'Sullivan 2024). This sense of being part of a community

and feeling supported helps feelings of isolation be alleviated which in turn leads to a feeling of unity and belonging.

Pearce *et al.*, (2015) introduced the concept of the "ice-breaker effect," where group singing quickly facilitates social bonding among participants. They found that singing helped create social connections more rapidly than other group activities, as it allowed individuals to share a common experience that transcended verbal communication.

Pearce *et al.*, (2016) further emphasised that cooperative singing (as opposed to competitive singing) fosters stronger social bonds, suggesting that the inclusive, non-competitive nature of many amateur choirs contributes to a more cohesive group dynamic. This is firmly supported by research done by Camlin *et al.*'s.,(2020) exploration of group singing as a public health resource and Daffern *et al.*'s.,(2019) research into the associated benefits of ensemble singing in parallel with positive outcomes regarding mental health and well being. Their studies explore the concept that ensemble singing offers a platform for diverse individuals, including those from marginalised communities, to come together in a shared activity that fosters social cohesion and is further supported by research done by Silber (2005) & Manrique & Gutiérrez (2021) who conducted research into niche groups and found the impact of ensemble singing created similar feelings and outcomes demonstrating that choirs often function as inclusive spaces where individuals of varying backgrounds, ages, and abilities can participate, reducing feelings of exclusion and social isolation.

Dingle *et al.*, (2013) provided further evidence for the social and mental health benefits of choir singing, focusing on disadvantaged adults. Their study found that participating in choir singing enhanced social skills and provided a safe environment for participants to express themselves and that choir members reported experiencing feelings of acceptance, inclusion, and support, which contributed to positive mental health outcomes.

Through these findings, it is clear that the social nature of ensemble singing not only improves emotional and psychological health but also serves as a critical tool for promoting inclusivity and social integration, whereby participants are observed to connect on an emotional level. This can ultimately be seen as particularly valuable for participants who may feel marginalised or socially isolated.

In addition to the above research, substantiating that ensemble singing supports emotional well-being, it has also been observed, through several studies, that ensemble singing can also help alleviate symptoms of stress and anxiety (Clift, 2010; Fancourt *et al.*, 2016; Clift, Manship & Stephens, 2017; Williams *et al.*, 2018; Lu & Li, 2023; Balega, 2024) and can be actively encouraged as being used as a therapeutic intervention in helping to manage these conditions incurred from life and work pressures.

Clark and Harding's (2012) research synthesis and Grape *et al.*'s, (2003) empirical investigation into the physiological effects of singing, provided plausible evidence to suggest that group singing reduces anxiety and stress levels, with some of the studies documenting substantial physiological changes, such as reduced cortisol levels which has also been supported by research done by Fancourt *et al.*, (2016), Schalndt *et al.*, (2017) and also research with regard to chanting in Perry *et al.*'s, (2024) research. Participants reported feeling more relaxed, less anxious, and more in control of their emotions after singing sessions suggesting that group singing serves as a cathartic release, providing participants with an emotional outlet to alleviate stress and anxiety. Grape *et al.*'s (2003) empirical investigation went about comparing professional and amateur singers. In using these two groups Grape *et al.*'s, (2003) study examined the physiological responses in differing participants during singing lessons. They found that both groups experienced decreased levels of cortisol, a hormone associated with stress, during singing. This finding scientifically supports the notion that ensemble singing reduces stress and anxiety.

Clark & Harding (2012) and Grape *et al.*, (2003) in their research collectively illustrate that the benefits of ensemble singing extend beyond psychological well-being and help in promoting positive physiological changes that help to attenuate stress and anxiety. The literature suggests that the structured, rhythmic nature of group singing, along with the supportive social environment, plays a role in enhancing participants' capacity to manage stress and anxiety effectively.

In support of the above research Dingle *et al.*, (2017) also did investigations into choir singing but in tandem with creative writing to observe the effects on participants well being and emotional regulation. The demographic of these participants were ones that

dealt with chronic mental health conditions. These participants found that choir singing, in particular, allowed for better regulation of their emotions by providing a structured, yet emotionally expressive environment and the addition of singing in harmony with others helped participants manage their emotional responses, reduce feelings of emotional dysregulation, and cope with the stressors of their daily lives. This supports findings in Perkins, Yorke, and Fancourt (2018) and Greenwood *et al.*, (2024), who explored, in their research, how group singing facilitated recovery from postnatal depression. Their comparative qualitative study found that mothers who engaged in group singing sessions experienced improvements in their ability to manage symptoms of depression through the collective aspect of singing. In doing the group singing sessions they felt it provided them with emotional support and helped them to develop healthier emotional coping mechanisms. Group singing, as a whole, offered a unique way to build emotional resilience and reduce depressive symptoms and helped participants find a sense of normalcy and empowerment, which in turn aided and supported their recovery process.

Chong and Kim's (2010) research was demographically different from Perkins, Yorke, and Fancourt's (2018) and Dingle *et al.*'s., (2017) research and it sought evidence to support that music as a form of therapy was a good intervention for participants with emotional dysregulation and behavioural problems. In the research they conducted some sections which centred around the use of group singing but looked at music in its entirety as a form of therapeutic intervention. Participants that were chosen to be used in this study suffered with emotional and behavioral problems and they similarly, like Perkins, Yorke, and Fancourt's (2018) research, found that participation in these programs helped students develop positive cognitive functions and it also helped improve their ability to regulate their emotions. These findings suggest that ensemble singing can provide a structured environment where participants are encouraged to engage in healthy emotional expression and develop effective coping strategies. The literature thus demonstrates that ensemble singing can be a powerful tool for emotional regulation, particularly for individuals who face mental health challenges. By providing an emotionally supportive and expressive environment, whereby participants

seek to process their emotions in a constructive manner, leading to improved emotional well-being.

Perkins *et al.*, (2018) highlighted how group singing could be used as a therapeutic intervention for individuals recovering from postnatal depression, demonstrating that singing offered a unique way to help emotional regulation and reduce signs and symptoms of depression. By engaging in collective singing on a regular basis, participants found a sense of normalcy and empowerment, which supported their recovery process.

In addition, Unadkat, Camic, and Vella-Burrows (2017) explored the experiences of couples engaging in ensemble singing collectively, where one partner had a diagnosis of dementia and found that group singing allowed these couples to reconnect emotionally, whereby an improved mental state was experienced by both partners. This study further supports the role that ensemble singing can foster emotional resilience and offer therapeutic benefits to many varying demographics, even for those dealing with significant cognitive and emotional challenges.

The literature invariably demonstrates that group singing provides a valuable form of psychosocial assistance for individuals recovering from mental health conditions. Combining emotional expression, social bonding, and structured activity intrinsically found in ensemble singing makes for an effective intervention in promoting long-term mental health recovery. Not only that but whether it be in an individual or collective capacity it encourages escapism too, which can also help people feel less stressed due to it being so cathartic.

In summary, the literature invariably supports the positive impacts of ensemble singing on the mental health of non-professional singers. Thematically, the research highlights several key areas, which are as follows: improved mental well-being, reduced stress and anxiety, enhanced social bonding and inclusion, better emotional regulation, and mental health recovery. Ensemble singing provides a communal, supportive environment where individuals can express themselves emotions, socially connect, and develop healthier coping strategies. Given these findings, group singing offers notable

potential as a low-cost, accessible intervention for improving mental health in a non-professional context, whereby it offers both emotional and psychological benefits for participants.

However, the literature also emphasises that collective singing enhances psychological resilience, self-esteem, and life satisfaction, making it an important and pivotal element for improving mental well-being among non-professionals. In addition to these findings however, there has been evidence to suggest that group activities as a whole can also contribute to the factors mentioned above (Iwasaki, Coyle & Shank, 2010; Murphy *et al.*, 2022; Ngooi *et al.*, 2022; Van der Graaf *et al.*, 2024) with lots of evidence supporting how group activities create a sense of belonging and inclusion, ultimately affecting one's mental well-being and emotions. The future research I wish to conduct will also explore this topic, as well as the above-mentioned points to see if there is any correlation between participation in group activities as a whole or whether the activity itself is what affects a person's mood.

Research Methodology and Methods

In examining the impact of ensemble singing on the mental health of non-professional singers, this study adopts a mixed methods approach.

My literature review will provide valuable insights into my research and help inform themes that I can further research in my surveys and 1:1 interviews. The qualitative component of the research will be informed by Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Cohen, 1969), which allows for the development of a theory directly grounded in the data (Charmaz, 2014). I feel this is particularly suited to the topic I am researching as I feel this area is quite an underexplored area at present. In using a grounded theory approach, I am using a constant comparative method, where data collection and analysis occur concurrently, allowing me to cyclically refine themes, through the process of coding, and develop theories as I move forward. This approach will help generate insights into the lived experiences of non-professional singers and how their mental health is influenced by their participation in ensemble singing. This process puts the participants' experiences at the forefront of the results and findings,

which is extremely important in this type of research (Charmaz, 2014). Grounded Theory's inductive methodology will also enable the identification of emerging themes and patterns, through the use of multiple coding types (Open, Axial and Selective), contributing to a deeper understanding of the psychological and emotional benefits of group singing (Saldana, 2021).

The quantitative component of the data will be informed using descriptive statistical analysis (Field, 2013; Gravetter & Wallnau, 2017). This process will enable the condensing and analysing of numerical data collected through the surveys. This approach allows for the appraisal of subjective experiences, providing a structured and accessible representation of the data, informed by the qualitative findings (Robson, 2024; Bryman, 2016).

In conclusion to this a methodological triangulation design will be implemented to integrate these diverse data sources, enabling a more nuanced understanding of the findings. This integrated approach aims to yield methodical and comprehensive conclusions and by using the combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods it should hopefully enhance the research process by using the strengths of each approach (Morse, 1991; Gray, 2004) and hopefully aim to improve the reliability, validity, and comprehensiveness of the findings (Gray, 2004). With the integration of a literature review I am hoping to further strengthen the framework, providing a thorough understanding of the complex relationship between group singing and mental health and highlight gaps for which future research can be based upon and explored (Noble & Heale, 2019).

The combination of these methods enables an overarching exploration of the therapeutic effects of ensemble singing, providing both theoretical insights and practical implications.

Paradigmatically, the research I am conducting is rooted in a pragmatic philosophical framework, which prioritises practical outcomes and real-world application over the

pursuit of absolute truths (Morgan, 2013). In line with this perspective, I do not seek an objective truth about the impacts of ensemble singing on mental health; rather I want to hone my focus on how participants experience and perceive these effects in their own lives when engaging in ensemble singing. The surveys conducted will seek to gain the information required to inform the questions used in the 1:1 interviews.

The success of the study, I feel, will be defined by the data I receive from the surveys and interviews and the usefulness and applicability of this data in helping to inform future research into how ensemble singing can be perceived in enhancing positive mental well-being among participants who are non-professional singers. By applying a pragmatic paradigm and mixed methods and grounded theory methodology, this research will provide valuable insights into how ensemble singing contributes to mental well-being, offering some evidence-based recommendations for community music initiatives and therapeutic interventions. This could possibly inform further therapeutic intervention, in varying settings, regarding using singing as a form of therapy to help mental health conditions.

Research Setting

Due to logistical considerations and accessibility, surveys and interviews will be done online using Zoom and Google Docs. This helps me to gain a wider area of participation by considering nationwide participants (Nulty, 2008), it also helps alleviate any collaboration in the answers given due to many participants being taken from differing areas who don't know each other prior to engaging in the research. In doing this I feel it also will help findings and results be more valid and credible.

The online approach offers several key advantages, including seamless session recording, which facilitates accurate data collection (Carter *et al.*, 2021) and allows for later review of participants' responses. Additionally, virtual participation can foster a sense of safety and familiarity, potentially encouraging more candid and honest engagement. Drawing on my experience in adapting teaching strategies to virtual environments, I can ensure that sessions remain interactive, structured, and engaging, thereby enhancing the overall participant experience.

Participants

The study will focus on non-professional singers who participate in ensemble singing as a leisure activity. Participants will be recruited through online community forums and social media platforms and must be at least 16 years old due to the nature and sensitivity of the topic I will be researching. I will use a poster to advertise the research project which will have a QR code attached so that people can easily access the survey (Appendix 1). In doing this I am hoping to get a wider selection of participants with geographical diversity so that the results received will be representative of a larger majority. Participants will be advised that they should be participating in singing in a group setting, whether that be a community choir, church, amateur theatre group, on a regular basis and would be asked if they would be willing to possibly engage in a 1:1 online interview after the initial online survey has been completed. All participants will be informed that they will have access to the final document should they wish to see it.

Methods

Literature review

By using a literature review as a method of research, I hope to gain an approach that critically analyses existing studies and further informs my findings and results (Snyder, 2019). By examining relevant literature on the psychological impacts of ensemble singing, with a particular focus on its effects on the mental health of non-professional singers, I aim to identify existing themes, theoretical frameworks, and potential gaps in current research. This analysis will enhance the depth and validity of my study by examining my findings within the broader body of knowledge and contributing to a more refined understanding of the relationship between ensemble singing and mental well-being.

Online survey (Appendix 2)

Anonymous online surveys provide a great resource in research projects due to their cost effectiveness, accessibility as well as providing a solid quick and efficient way of collecting large data sets (Nulty, 2008). With the information being anonymised it implements impression management on my part as I feel that that responses will be more well informed and come from personal recollection, emotional and physical responses instead of being informed by social acceptability (Meyer *et al.*, 2013). Conducting a survey online also means it can be distributed to a wide number of participants from a diverse and wider reaching sample size (Couper, 2008) and is far more user friendly and practical than other traditional methods like paper-based surveys and in person interviews (Sax *et al.*, 2003), it could also help to gain participation from a younger demographic as it is so easily accessible and current. Younger participants would be able to access it on their portable devices. It also is not impacted by geographical or physical constraints so is a highly inclusive method of collecting data as more voices and opinions can be heard creating a more representative selection of results and findings (Evans & Mathur, 2005).

Online surveys are also extremely helpful in adhering to the ethical considerations of the participants as it provides anonymity to all candidates as well as storage of sensitive materials in an ethical way without information being unintentionally shared. Online surveys provide participants the chance to discuss more sensitive information in a comfortable and informal setting, which I hope would inform honest and trustworthy answers in the self-reported data (Gosling *et al.*, 2004).

Online surveys will also help provide an easier way to analyse data as Google Docs has built in quantitative data tools that provide graphs as a way of displaying the data that has been collected (docs.google.com, 2025). The visual representation of findings in the form of graphs can help us to observe patterns and trends in the responses I have been given, thus making the process more efficient and less time consuming. The online surveys will also help to inform the questions I use in the 1:1 interview process and will combine, through a mixed methods approach the qualitative and quantitative data. From the data collected during this process I can produce a well-informed list of questions to

pose in the 1:1 interviews which will further inform my results and findings, resulting in a more in depth collection of data.

Online Interviews (Appendix 7)

Online interviews are perceived as a methodologically sound approach for gathering in depth and multi layered qualitative data. This approach I feel is particularly effective in exploring the lived experiences of non-professional singers and the effects ensemble singing has on their mental well-being. This method links nicely with a grounded theory methodology whereby empirical data is used to inform findings and results through the process of inductive theory (Thomas, 2006; Gray, 2004). It also gives participants the chance to speak honestly and freely, thus hopefully gaining more honest answers and creating more validity to the results and findings.

Online interviews also create greater flexibility to participants in terms of gaining access to the interviews when it is convenient to them and also in correlation to location, as they can be conducted anywhere. This may also alleviate unwarranted stress on the participants too as, previously stated, they may feel more comfortable talking about sensitive issues in familiar and comfortable surroundings instead of doing in-person interviews (Salmons, 2015). This sense of comfort can lead to more open, honest, and reflective responses.

While online interviews offer many advantages it is important to be mindful of the drawbacks that can occur too. The absence of in-person connection can lead to distancing during the interview process and also the lack of body language too. In gaining honest and reliable answers through interviews it is extremely important to gain a good rapport with your interviewee so that they feel comfortable and at ease in talking to you (Lavee & Itzchakov, 2023; Bozeman, 2003). This can possibly be mitigated by introducing ice breakers or even by having an informal chat prior to the interview process to instil a sense of calm. It is also important to maintain a warm and welcoming persona during the interview process with vocal tonality being empathic and calming (Salmons, 2015).

Analysis

Quantitative data will be presented using tables and graphs, which will then be statically evaluated. I will also use the process of inductive coding in a grounded theory context to look at the qualitative data to identify themes and patterns. I will be using the online coding provider delve to help with the coding process and in displaying the codes and themes identified and then will be putting findings into an excel spreadsheet for ease of viewing. As previously stated, all qualitative data will go through the process of Open, axial and selective coding. To strengthen the validity of the findings, these results will be triangulated with data collected from the online surveys, interviews and the literature review and presented in a report displaying results and findings.

Ethics and Data Protection

The ethics of a project are unavoidable and have critical importance in making sure that all participants are safeguarded in response to their rights, dignity and well-being. In fully embracing and addressing ethical considerations from the conception of the research project it also helps support and address the integrity, credibility, and trustworthiness of the research being undertaken. Cohen *et al.*, (2007) emphasise that research is fundamentally an “inescapable ethical enterprise,” underscoring the importance of carefully addressing ethical considerations at every stage of the research process. Once the research question is identified, and methods identified, ethical approval must be sought and granted before any data collection can commence. To adhere to this requirement, I submitted my ethics application (Appendix 3) to the university’s ethics committee, seeking approval for my research project to be undertaken (Bell, 2005; British Educational Research Association [BERA], 2018).

In the planning phase, I want to strictly comply with ethical protocols to safeguard the well-being, dignity, and autonomy of all participants. With the topic being of such a sensitive nature I need to make sure that participants are fully informed about the voluntary nature of their participation and advise them that they could withdraw from the study at any time, without providing a reason and without facing any negative consequences (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Additionally, I want to reinforce open

communication with all participants to ensure that if they wish to raise questions or concerns at any stage of the process, they can do so. In doing this I am hoping to promote transparency and trust with all participants engaging in the study (BERA, 2018). This information will all be available to all participants in the consent forms and research guidelines section in the online surveys. This consent form must be accepted prior to engagement in the survey so that participants know fully what they are engaging in. In these research guidelines I will also reiterate that should any of the participants require any additional professional support throughout the process, due to the sensitive themes being addressed, professional support was at hand at many organisations externally.

Due to the nature of the project and the content I was to be receiving I will make sure that all information collected is fully anonymised. As previously stated, Online surveys will be consented to prior to the commencement of the survey (Appendix 4) with clear guidelines set out about the project and its intention (Appendix 5). Participants involved in the interview process will also be asked to consent to the content in the interviews being used. This consent was either done through an online consent form, or verbally, as some interviewees may find it hard to access the forms electronically, prior to the commencement of the online interviews and I want to keep the process as inclusive as possible. All interviews will be transcribed (Appendix 7) and anonymised and all data collected stored on a password protected computer as recommended by the ethical research standards committee (BERA, 2018; Bryman, 2016). All of the above protocols help me as the researcher fall in line with professional ethical principles that promote respect, beneficence and non-maleficence (Beauchamp & Childress, 2013). At all times the well-being of the participants will always be at the forefront of my mind and participants will continually be reassured that if they experience any physical or emotional discomfort, they are free to discontinue their participation without fear of reprisal. My position as a researcher and also a participant in the singing community has provided heightened sensitivity towards this topic. I did not want at any time for participants to feel obligated to continue with the research if they did not feel comfortable in doing so, I wanted my participants to know that they were fully supported and understood. These ethical safeguards were implemented in order to maintain trust,

transparency, and mitigate any potential power imbalances that could arise from insider research (Coghlan, 2019).

Insider research

This study is also situated within the framework of insider research, as I am taking the role of both a practitioner and participant. The status of insider research offers valuable insights into the emotional and social dynamics of group singing that might not be as easily accessible to an external researcher (Coghlan, 2019; Brannick & Coghlan, 2007, Gray, 2004). As the researcher, my personal and professional experiences in music and mental health will inform the research design and execution of this study. This dual perspective will allow for a deeper empathetic engagement with participants, facilitating a comfortable and open dialogue during the interview process too. While this insider perspective can help to enrich the data collection process, I want to remain acutely aware of the potential for bias. To mitigate this, I will adopt a reflexive stance throughout the research journey, whereby I continually question my assumptions, revise research accordingly and apply systematic methods in coding and analysis. This approach should hopefully ensure that the findings are not only grounded in participants' authentic voices but also critically examined through an objective lens.

Personal Learning outcomes

In doing this research I am seeking to gain a deeper understanding of the effects of ensemble singing in non-professional singers in correlation to mental well-being. I hope to find some positive results in using ensemble singing as a therapeutic intervention in supporting people with mental health and hopefully support the notion that this can be used as a way of supporting differing settings in including this as a cost-effective alternative to other forms of therapy. I am also hoping to gain a better understanding of not only the psychological effects but also the physiological effects ensemble singing can produce in varying individuals. I also want to gain a better insight into how ensemble singing can affect the social dynamics in varying individuals in correlation to

reduced feelings of isolation, feeling a sense of belonging and also building new relationships and strengthening interpersonal relationships too.

Research wise I also hope to develop my research and evaluative skills by applying varying methods and methodologies for data collection and I also want to be able to be more in depth at analysing and critiquing the data presented to me. In combining a mixed methods approach I hope to be able to combine both in order to get a set of nuanced and well-informed findings and results as well as fully embodying the ethical implications of a research project that is heavily influenced by sensitive topics such as mental health and well being.

Timeline for Project (Appendix 6)

Findings and Results

Literature review findings

Prior to conducting the online surveys it was my intention to have a better understanding of the effects of ensemble singing on mental health so that I could create a robust questioning system to help further research the topic. The literature review was extremely helpful in this respect as it helped me to tailor my questions for the survey to support the notions explored in the literature and also include questions that could result in more in depth answers and results. While scouring the archives of literature it was evident that research had been done in support of the positive impacts ensemble singing has on mental health, however there were multiple gaps in the research that could be filled and researched further in order to gain a better understanding. From the literature I had reviewed many of the participants researched were taken from a particular demographic such as dementia patients (Osman *et al.*, 2016; Dowson & Schneider, 2021; Polden *et al.*, 2023), postnatal depression patients (Burton *et al.*, 2024; Estevao *et al.*, 2021; Perkins, Yorke & Fancourt, 2018; young children (Davies, Betham & Duher, 2023; Papageorgi *et al.*, 2022, Dabell, 2019; Grebosz-Haring & Thun-Hohenstein, 2018) and participants from lower socio economic background (

Juan-Morera Manrique *et al.*, 2024, & Gutiérrez, 2021; Dingle *et al.*, 2013) but little research was done with regards to the effects on the general population. It was observed that participation on a regular basis in ensemble singing was key in helping participants feel more self-confident and happier and also feel a sense of belonging. It was also observed that regular participation in ensemble singing led to people feeling less isolated (Hendry, Lynam & Lafarge, 2024; Stewart & Lonsdale, 2016; Dingle *et al.*, 2017; Livesey *et al.*, 2012; Clift & Hancox, 2001). The literature review also revealed that participation in ensemble singing also led to a reduction in stress and anxiety (Perry, Politio & Thompson, 2024; Fancourt *et al.*, 2016; Grape *et al.*, 2003) and helped in participants feeling more empowered and self confident, which in-turn led contributed to emotional recovery and well-being (Clark & Harding, 2012; Silber, 2005).

Also during the process of the literature review it was also evident that ensemble singing also helped improve social bonding and made people feel a sense of belonging (Siber, 2005; Fancourt, *et al.*, 2019; Manrique & Gutierrez, 2021; Joseph & Southcott, 2014; Jang, 2020) which ultimately helped to uplift the spirits of participants and so ultimately impacted their mental well-being also in a positive way

In observing and acknowledging all the points above during the literature review, I wanted to look into these areas in more depth and so I tailor made my survey to include questions that encapsulated the above points and its applicability to the generalised public instead of specific demographics.

The development of the survey questions was directly informed by key themes identified through the literature review. Several studies have highlighted the multifaceted benefits of ensemble singing, particularly in the areas of mental well-being, emotional expression, social connection, and self-esteem. These themes provided the foundation upon which the survey was structured, ensuring that each question was grounded in prior research while remaining relevant to the lived experiences of participants (Appendix 2). Below is how the literature review informed my questions for the online survey:

Question 3

- ***"Does the frequency in which you attend or participate have an effect in a positive or negative way on your mental well being? please give details."***

Question 8

- ***"On a scale from 1 to 4, how would you rate the impact of ensemble singing on your overall mental well-being?"***

The above questions were incorporated into the online survey due to research found in the literature review that was conducted by Grape *et al.*, (2003) for the support of improved emotional regulation and Clift *et al.*, (2017) in response to reduced anxiety. These questions were included to further support the notion that ensemble singing provided a positive impact on reducing anxiety, lowering cortisol levels, and promoting relaxation and if so why?

Question 12

- ***"On a scale from 1 to 4, how would you rate the sense of social connection or inclusion you experience during group singing?"***

Question 15

- ***"Do you believe ensemble singing has helped you form new friendships and/or strengthen existing relationships?"***

The above questions were included in the online survey in support of findings in research conducted by Pearce *et al.*, (2015) and Dingle *et al.* (2013). These questions seek to highlight how, if at all, ensemble singing fosters a sense of social belonging and reduction in isolation in individuals who participate.

Further building upon the study by *Dingle et al.* (2013) and also including a study by Perkins *et al.*, (2018) the questions below help to create a better understanding of how ensemble singing supports emotional regulation and how it can, if at all, be used as a coping mechanism or emotional outlet:

Question 7

- ***"What emotional, musical, or social benefits have you experienced through your participation in ensemble singing?"***

Question 14

- ***"How do you feel ensemble singing compared to other activities (e.g., exercise, meditation, hobbies) in promoting mental well-being?"***

Self-esteem and confidence were two other themes that were acknowledged in research conducted by Livesey *et al.*, (2012) and Clift & Hancox (2001) and findings from this research suggested that regular participation in ensemble singing can help to improve confidence and self-esteem over an extended period of time. In support of these findings, I included the below questions

Question 17

"Have you noticed any improvements in your confidence or self-esteem as a result of participating in ensemble singing?"

Question 18

"Could you provide more details on how it has impacted your self-confidence and self-esteem (these can be positive or negative)?"

From the literature it was established that ensemble singing, in response to mental well-being, was multi-faceted and many differing elements combining helped to create a

positive impact on an individual's mental health and well-being. One of the elements that was discussed in the literature review was creative expression and fulfilment. Research done by Perkins *et al.*, (2018) and Chong & Kim (2010) discussed how ensemble singing was a valuable way of expressing one's creativity and engaging in something personally meaningful. Because of this, I included the question below to explore that aspect of the ensemble singing experience:

Question 5

"What ensemble singing do you participate in?"

"To what extent do you find ensemble singing to be a fulfilling and meaningful activity?" (inferred through open responses)

The open-ended questions below also help to explore this aspect of ensemble singing too as these questions touch on the topic of how ensemble singing provides feelings of fulfilment and meaning in individuals and draw reflections on identity, artistry and motivation.

Question 7

"What emotional, musical, or social benefits have you experienced through your participation in ensemble singing? Please discuss."

Question 19

"In your own words, what do you think are the most significant mental health benefits of participating in ensemble singing?"

In addition to all of the above questions, one area I felt of particular importance to explore, and something I'm personally very passionate about, is the provision of inclusivity and diversity within ensemble singing. I wanted to ensure that this theme was

reflected in the online survey by including questions that gently addressed this topic. Previous research by Silber (2005) and Manrique & Gutiérrez (2021) highlights that singing as an activity can foster inclusivity, especially among marginalised groups. Informed by this, I included open-ended questions focusing on community involvement and interpersonal connection, with the aim of uncovering participants' experiences of diversity within ensemble settings and contributing to further research in this area (Bell *et al.*, 2022; Gray, 2022; Davies & Hughes, 2014,. Here are those questions below and will hopefully help to uncover how ensemble singing fits within broader community experiences:

Question 6

"How long have you been participating in ensemble singing?"

Question 15

"What other group activities do you personally partake in and how do they compare to ensemble singing with regard to mental well-being?"

In conducting the literature review prior to the online survey, I have found it extremely enlightening and have been able to tailor my questions so that I can support previous research but also construct questions that will provide some answers to gaps in the research.

Qualitative Data analysis

Online Survey results and findings (Appendix 2)

The online survey and the questions contained on the survey were constructed from the findings in the literature review and were there to further enhance research into the effects of ensemble singing on mental well-being in non-professional singers. The survey consisted of 21 questions that provided answers in the form of quantitative and qualitative data. From the surveys I would then have to study the data collected from the

participants' responses, to make sure I was fully acquainted with them and observe any patterns or parallels between each answer given (Gray, 2004). The purpose of familiarisation was so that I could then start looking for and identifying codes and themes through the process of open, axial and selective coding. Participants were selected online, and I gained these participants from producing a poster with a QR code attached, for ease of engagement, which was posted on community forums and social media platforms (Appendix 1). I also posted some physical copies of my poster in community centres too to make it further inclusive to a larger group of people. This proved to be a really successful mode of getting people to engage in the Online survey and from this 36 participants were recruited, who all answered the questions fully with a lot of detailed information for me to digest and aggregate multiple results from.

Coding Process and reflection (Open, Axial and selective)

The initial process that I undertook was open coding, whereby I analysed the qualitative survey responses to identify recurring names, ideas, and concepts that emerged throughout the text. This enabled me to begin developing initial categories that would later inform axial and selective coding (Saldana, 2021). The process was detailed and time-consuming, requiring me to engage deeply and critically with the data. In doing so, I was consciously applying Schön's (1983) model of reflective practice, engaging in 'reflection-in-action' as I considered how my interpretations were shaped by both the participants' words and my own positionality as an insider researcher. The process of 'reflection-in-action' allowed me to refine emerging codes in real time, contributing to a more grounded and authentic understanding of the data.

Open Codes for surveys

Routine, mood stabilization

Emotional uplift, social connection

Social bonding, laughter, meeting new people

Improved confidence, public speaking

Anxiety reduction, positive feedback

Belonging, feel-good effect, social group

Mental engagement, comparison with other activities

Sense of achievement, performance-related satisfaction

This process of open coding was very enlightening and also helped me to digest the information fully as it meant I went over the results multiple times. It also brought up a lot more data and findings than I had previously thought, which was really advantageous in what I was trying to achieve. Even the initial process of open coding had shed some light on the impacts of ensemble singing and mental health on non-professional singers. It was nice to see that the majority of feedback from the responses I had received were very positive.

Many of the responses given in the survey echoed the above and for me it was important to understand that the engagement of ensemble singing was not just in the act itself but was also in the social bonding and togetherness that comes from engaging in an ensemble that also factors into lifting the mood of individuals.

Now that I had established some initial themes and categories to explore in the initial open coding process, it was time to take a more in-depth approach to the data in order to link categories together to decode patterns and relationships in the data. This is where I undertook the process of Axial coding. Axial coding is the middle stage of the coding process when looking at a grounded theory approach to a research project. It seeks to find links between categories and then reassembles data in a new format and creates new codes. This process of axial coding then creates a thematic framework of which to work from. The axial codes that I established from the process were as follows:

Axial codes for surveys

mood regulation

emotional well being

social bonding

personal growth and self confidence

stress and anxiety relief

sense of belonging

cognitive stimulation

achievement and self esteem

This process really helped me to make sense of the relationships between the categories I had identified after partaking in the open coding process. In engaging in the axial coding process I was starting to draw a bigger picture from my data findings. It was clear that even this early on in the coding process that ensemble singing encompassed many different emotional, psychological and physiological benefits to many individuals from differing backgrounds.

One participant acknowledged this in one of their responses:

“ Social inclusion, better breathing having had prostate cancer and covid(x2), opportunities for laughter(therapeutic), always feel a lift/ sense of achievement esp. after a concert, a chance to stimulate the brain when learning new pieces, fends off old age!”

This response alone acknowledges most of the codes above in just a few sentences and is supported by many more participants who feel the same, as these participants suggest:

“It allows for a creative outlet that’s shared with others and feels joyful. We’re able to laugh at our mistakes, and often find time for a quick chat about life in general, and how people are feeling, which is sometimes easier to do with friends than with family. It lifts my spirits and helps me to feel that I’ve had an opportunity to express myself but without negatively affecting others. It boosts confidence and helps me to mentally prepare to tackle problems”

“ Good distraction technique.. gives my mind a break as I do deal with anxiety. And thyroid condition/menopause symptoms which impact mood so singing takes me away from myself for a while.. sang off and on since I was a child .. helps considerably when my medical issues play up...”

Even this early on in the process it is great to observe the positive effects ensemble singing has had on many individuals.

The final step in establishing more robust and focused data analysis was to conduct the selective coding phase, which is the concluding stage of the grounded theory coding process. By engaging in selective coding, we aim to identify a central theory that is firmly grounded in the qualitative data we have gathered. This involves taking the results from axial coding and integrating the emerging categories in order to construct a core narrative or theoretical framework. This process was also time consuming but really set about condensing the data and finding well established themes and patterns. Below are the selected codes I had found:

Selective Codes (core themes)

Mental health benefits

Social connectedness

Personal development

Self-fulfilment

Now I had established the core themes it was time to re-evaluate the text again to see what results and findings I could decipher from the text. I set about colour coding the survey results and interviews to get a better understanding of what the participants found was most affected when participating in ensemble singing. The colour codes were as follows:

Mental Health Benefits



Social Connectedness



Personal Development



Self-Fulfilment



These were the findings from the surveys using the codes above:

Core Themes findings and results

Key Findings

To enhance the validity and depth of the findings, this study employed methodological triangulation as the final process in order to integrate data from the literature review,

online surveys, and one-to-one interviews. This approach allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the data in correspondence to the survey question “What are the Impacts of Ensemble Singing on the Mental Health of Non-Professional Singers?” This process confirmed a strong convergence across all three data sources around the four core themes identified in the coding process which were: mental health benefits, social connectedness, personal development, and self-fulfilment. Mental health emerged consistently as a central benefit of ensemble singing, with quantitative data indicating reduced stress and anxiety, and interviewees elaborating on its emotionally restorative effects. Similarly, both surveys and interviews strongly aligned with existing literature (Pearce *et al.*, 2015; Dingle *et al.*, 2013) in showing ensemble singing as a powerful source of social cohesion and inclusion. Personal development, especially in terms of confidence and emotional resilience, was also reinforced, with participants attributing growth to both musical achievement and interpersonal support. While self-fulfilment was discussed less frequently, its presence in both qualitative and survey data affirmed its relevance, particularly in relation to identity, purpose, and creative expression. Ultimately, the triangulation process strengthened the study’s credibility by demonstrating consistency across multiple data sources and enhancing the richness and depth of interpretation.

Mental Health benefits

Mental health benefits was the first selective code to dissect and was observed in discussion with a lot of the online survey participants. They frequently observed and described that their mood felt better after participating in ensemble singing. Through the coding process I observed that mental health benefits were mentioned 47 times throughout the process here are a few examples in support of this:

“My mood is always lifted after a rehearsal... if I feel low, it is always when the choir isn't meeting.”

“It has had a very positive impact on my mental health. I can lose myself in music.”

“Emotional [benefits] lift a low mood and make me feel connected to a group... reduces the sense of isolation even just temporarily.”

They also documented that reduction in stress was a key element too:

“Yes, it helps my mental health, reduces my anxiety and depression, and makes me happy.”

From the data in the online surveys, I observed that ensemble singing acts as a buffer against stress and contributes positively to mental well-being which is in support of findings from Grape *et al.*, (2003) and Clift & Hancox (2001).

Statistical findings from this were in support of the positive association between ensemble singing and mental health, with 71.4% of participants reporting a significant positive impact and an additional 25.7% reporting a small positive effect on their overall well-being. These results suggest that ensemble singing is regarded by the vast majority of participants as a beneficial and emotionally supportive activity. These statistical findings align closely with a growing body of literature that links group singing to improved emotional and psychological health. These findings are supported by Clift and Hancox (2001) found that choral singing promoted mental well-being by encouraging positive emotions, reducing anxiety, and building interpersonal relationships. In their large-scale cross-national survey, they reported widespread mental health benefits among non-professional singers, echoing the strong majority response in this study.

Similarly, Livesey *et al.*, (2012) emphasised that choral singing contributes to both social support and emotional regulation, making it a powerful community-based intervention for mental health. Their findings revealed that participants often described their participation in choirs as “therapeutic,” citing increased happiness, decreased isolation,

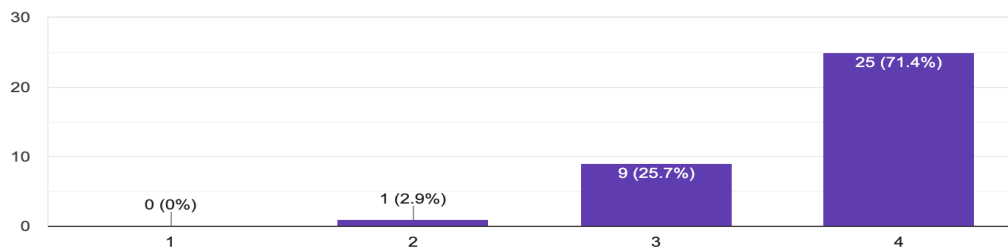
and improved coping strategies. Additionally, Perkins *et al.*, (2018) gave prominence to the progressive psychological effects of regular group music-making, suggesting that emotional gains are strengthened over time as individuals develop deeper social bonds and musical confidence.

The convergence between these studies and the quantitative data from this research provides strong evidence that ensemble singing functions as a meaningful contributor to emotional and psychological well-being. Given its accessibility and communal nature, it may serve as a valuable non-clinical intervention for promoting mental health across diverse populations.

On a scale from 1 to 4, how would you rate the impact of ensemble singing on your overall mental well-being? (1 = No Impact, 2 = Small Positive Impact, 3 = Moderate Positive Impact, 4 = Significant Positive Impact)

 [Copy chart](#)

35 responses



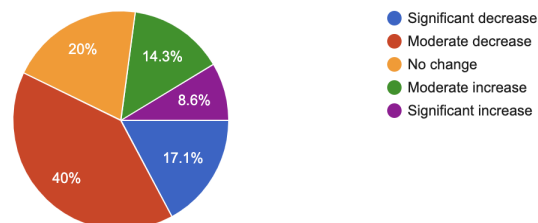
Regular engagement in ensemble singing was also reported in my research findings to contribute to the reduction of stress and anxiety, with 57.1% of participants recounting either a moderate or significant decrease in their levels of stress (Clift, 2010; Fancourt *et al.*, 2016; Clift, Manship & Stephens, 2017; Williams *et al.*, 2018; Lu & Li, 2023; Balega, 2024). These responses support the findings of Clift and Hancox (2001), who identified stress relief as a major benefit of choral singing. The engagement in choral singing was observed to offer these feelings of calm due to its relaxing nature, catharsis, and social bonding elements. In support of this notion, Livesey *et al.*, (2012) emphasised that the communal and creative aspects of singing could improve emotional regulation and relieve anxiety, especially when engaged with on a regular basis and over a longer period of time

However, in opposition to the above findings it was also noted that 22.9% of participants reported an increased level of stress or anxiety, which was associated with ensemble singing. While this was ultimately only the minority of participants, it is a significant point to address and echoes a more refined point made by Clift and Hancox (2001), who observed that performance pressure, fear of scrutiny, or the intensity of rehearsals can actually heighten anxiety for some singers. Livesey *et al.*, (2012) also observed that group dynamics, inclusivity and a sense of belonging, or logistical barriers may also negatively impact participants' psychological well-being.

Additionally, 20% of respondents reported no change in their stress or anxiety levels. This may suggest a neutral or stabilising experience, or it may point to the possibility that other external factors play a stronger role in their emotional state than musical participation alone. As Perkins *et al.*, (2018) highlights, the impact of group music-making is influenced not only by the act itself but also by the individual's personal context, support networks, and emotional readiness to participate.

Have you experienced changes in your stress or anxiety levels since participating in ensemble singing?

35 responses



Mental health benefits also emerged as one of the strongest and most frequently mentioned themes in the interview transcripts, with 108 references across the three participants. Interviewees often described singing as a key support in managing their emotional well-being (Clift & Hancox, 2001; Livesey *et al.*, 2012), reducing stress (Perkins *et al.*, 2018), and improving their overall mood (Thomas *et al.*, 2016; Stewart & Lonsdale 2016; Ørjasæter *et al.*, 2018; Smith, Kleinerman & Cohen, 2022). Below are

some examples of how participants highly regarded ensemble singing as a therapeutic intervention in helping to uplift mood:

JT: “It really helps me reset, like emotionally... I go into rehearsal feeling one way and leave feeling completely different—in a good way.”

GP: “There’s something about the act of singing that takes the weight off, especially when I’ve had an anxious day.”

JD: “I’ve found that even when my mental health isn’t great, turning up to sing changes everything.”

These above accounts from both the interviews and the surveys strongly reinforce existing literature (Camlin, 2020; Daffern *et al.*, 2019; Grape *et al.*, 2003; Clift & Hancox, 2001; Kreutz *et al.*, 2004; Fancourt *et al.*, 2016) reinforcing that ensemble singing serves as a safeguard against stress, promotes emotional regulation, and plays a significant role in mental health maintenance (Macaffrey, Edwards & Fannon, 2011; Perkins, Kang, Schlop & Jiang, 2018; Yorke & Fancourt, 2018; Smith, Klinermann & Cohen, 2022; Dunbar, 2023).

Social Connectedness

Social connectedness was the second selective code identified and was discussed by far the most by participants in the surveys and in the interviews. Participants described how ensemble singing helped to highlight a sense of community, inclusion and belonging:

“My choir feels like a family.”

“Singing works really well in a group.”

“I have made lifelong friends through choir/conducting.”

Participants frequently emphasised that ensemble singing had been paramount in building friendships and feeling a sense of belonging (Williams, Dingle & Clift 2018; Bailey 2023). Through getting involved in ensemble singing they had felt less alone and more a part of something pivotal. Social connectedness was mentioned 69 times throughout the survey responses and emerged as the most dominant theme in the one-to-one interviews, with 121 total mentions. Participants commonly referred to feelings of belonging, being part of a group, and forming meaningful relationships through ensemble singing. Generalisable topics included the choir being described as a “family,” with participants stated feeling “seen and heard,”

Interview quotes that support this theme include:

GP: “It’s the people, really. I feel seen and heard when I’m there.”

JT: “You get to be part of something that matters, where everyone contributes, and no one’s left behind.”

JD: “I think for me, the group connection is just as powerful as the singing itself.”

Survey responses also echoed these reflections with responses below:

“My choir feels like a family.”

“I have made lifelong friends through choir/conducting.”

“Singing in a group gives me a sense of belonging that I don’t get anywhere else.”

These reflections illustrate the choir’s role not just as a musical outlet, but as a vital social space that supports emotional connection, inclusion, and a sense of community.

From these findings it is observed that Singing not only improves individual well-being but also enhances social inclusion and interpersonal connection, which echoes the research Pearce *et al.*, (2015) and Dingle *et al.*, (2013) conducted.

Below are just a few of the quotes from the interviews that supports this concept:

GP: “It’s the people, really. I feel seen and heard when I’m there.”

JD: “I think for me, the group connection is just as powerful as the singing itself.”

JT: “You get to be part of something that matters, where everyone contributes, and no one’s left behind.”

This theme clearly reflects the sense of belonging and the interpersonal bonds formed through ensemble singing, a finding that strongly aligns with existing research. Pearce *et al.*, (2015) found that participating in group music-making fosters a strong sense of social identity and connectedness, particularly when looking at shared goals and synchronised activity. Comparably, Dingle *et al.*, (2013) noted that group singing can create deep social unity and emotional support, especially among individuals managing mental health conditions. Their study demonstrated that the act of singing together promotes mutual trust, empathy, and a shared emotional experience, all of which contribute to increased psychological well-being. These findings directly reinforce the present study's data, in which participants regularly recounted that their singing group created a source of belonging and inclusivity, emotional safety, and social identity.

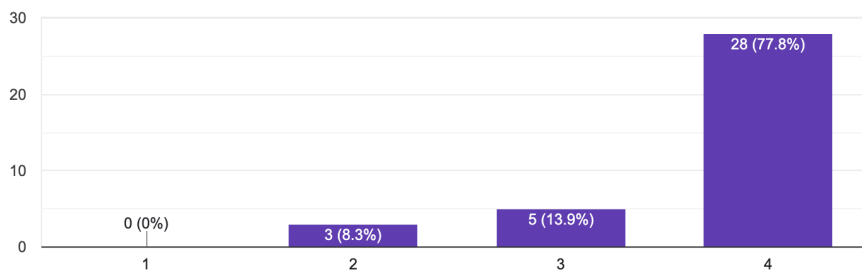
JT: “The positive mental wellbeing aspect of being social and being fun and having people you can rely on... going back to the beginning when I first was turning up... I was kind of sitting there on my own and anxious and I was at a pretty low place in my life. But then the piano starts playing... and you can’t help but either tap your foot... or smile. It’s infectious... It’s just a fantastic thing.”

In support of this statistically, participants also felt a strong sense of belonging to something and of being part of a wider community. This community spirit was documented massively with 77.8% of participants documenting these feelings. These statistics support the notion that the sense of belonging helps alleviate feeling of isolation and promotes a sense of unity (Hargen & Bryant, 2003 ;Weinstein *et al.*, 2016; McCaffrey & Edwards,2016; Joseph & Southcott, 2014;Jang, 2020; McQuade & O’Sullivan 2024)

On a scale from 1 to 4, how would you rate the sense of social connection or inclusion you experience during group singing?

(1 = No Connection, 2 = Small Connection 3= Moderate Connection 4 = Strong Connection)

36 responses



Personal Development

Personal development was the third selective code to be analysed and although wasn’t discussed as much as the other areas of interest it was still extremely documented among the participants. Personal development when engaging in ensemble singing was mentioned 40 times in the surveys and was recounted, by participants, as showing growth in confidence, skills, and musical abilities, as is seen by some sample quotes below:

“It boosted my confidence and encouraged me to take singing lessons.”

“Eventually trained to Grade 8 singing... and qualified as an adult education tutor.”

“It has improved my confidence in performance and putting myself forward, celebrating my strong points if you like.”

It was acknowledged in the 1:1 interviews with 59 mentions and in a similar ratio to the surveys, with participants talking about building confidence, learning new skills, and overcoming fears related to performance or social interactions.

JD: “Before joining, I would never have performed in front of anyone. Now I look forward to it.”

GP: “It’s helped me grow in ways I didn’t expect—both musically and personally.”

JT: “Being part of it made me feel like I was capable of more than I thought I was.”

The data revealed that regular participation in ensemble singing supported long-term personal growth, particularly in areas of self-esteem, confidence, and skill development. These findings align with previous research by Livesey et al. (2012) and Clift & Hancox (2001), who highlighted the role of choral singing in enhancing self-esteem and fostering a sense of personal value. Similarly, Durrant (2005) and Perkins et al. (2018) have discussed how musical engagement within a group setting contributes to the development of musical and interpersonal skills over time.

Beyond these standalone outcomes, this theme was often closely interlinked with broader mental health benefits. Participants commonly described how their increasing confidence and vocal competence were deeply connected to improved emotional well-being. Many explained that the sense of progress and achievement they experienced in ensemble contexts helped elevate their mood, strengthen their

self-worth, and build emotional resilience. This relationship is supported by Dweck (2006) who highlights how adopting a growth mindset can reinforce emotional stability and motivation. The ensemble environment, with its collaborative and for the most part non-judgmental ethos, provides a space ideal for the growth mindset to flourish. In addition to this, the collective support of the participants found in singing groups can foster self-acceptance which reinforces emotional resilience (Bailey & Jesudason, 2022). Together, these findings suggest that the personal growth cultivated through ensemble singing is not only artistic but also deeply therapeutic, contributing meaningfully to participants' mental health and quality of life.

JD: "I think my confidence improving definitely helped how I cope with stress. It's like I have tools I didn't have before."

GP: "Feeling good about what I've achieved with singing, that carries over into how I feel mentally. It lifts you up."

Self-Fulfilment

Self fulfilment was the fourth and final code to be examined and this was the code that was discussed the least with only 6 mentions, which was actually really surprising to me, as it meant that ensemble singing had far more relative benefits than ones fuelled by ego or individual personal gain. In this study, self-fulfilment is understood as the realisation of personal potential and the experience of purpose or meaning, often emerging through creative expression and social contribution aligning with Maslow's (1943) concept of self-actualisation, whereby individuals seek fulfilment through growth, autonomy, and deeper connection with their values. Self-fulfillment was only mentioned 6 times throughout the surveys whereby participants conveyed deep satisfaction and meaning derived from participating in ensemble singing and it was usually as a collective experience when creating something together, rather than fuelled by ego. Below are some quotes in support of this notion:

“It is better than anything else I have encountered.”

“Singing leaves me on a high.”

“The joy of singing with friends, sharing experiences and the challenge of learning and performing.”

As was seen in the surveys, self-fulfilment was the least mentioned theme and appeared 19 times in the interview data. Participants often expressed feelings of deep joy, purpose, and creative satisfaction when reflecting on their experience with ensemble singing, but it was not the topic that was most expanded upon or looked at in depth, as you can see from the quotes below:.

JT: “There’s a joy in it that I can’t get anywhere else.”

GP: “It gives me a reason to get up and get out, and that feels important.”

JD: “When I sing, I feel most like myself.”

The above comments suggest ensemble singing is a form of self-actualisation, offering a creative outlet and a sense of life purpose supporting research done by Perkins *et al.*, (2018).

In completing the selective coding process on the online surveys and interviews, it became increasingly clear that the emerging core themes (mental health benefits, social connectedness, personal development, and self-fulfilment), align strongly with Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943). Maslow’s (1943) framework suggests that human motivation is structured in tiers, beginning with basic physiological needs and progressing through safety, love and belonging, esteem, and ultimately self-actualisation. Through this research, I have explored how ensemble singing contributes to several of these layers. The theme of mental health benefits supports psychological well-being (safety and security), while social connectedness aligns with the need for love and belonging. Personal development and self-fulfilment directly connect to the higher-level needs of esteem and self-actualisation, where individuals

seek personal growth, confidence, and creative expression. In interpreting my qualitative data through this lens, I was able to see how ensemble singing addresses multiple dimensions of human need, offering both individual and collective benefits.



Figure 2. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

These reflections suggest that, although subtle, ensemble singing fosters meaningful engagement, personal identity, and a sense of self-actualisation.

Quantitative Data analysis

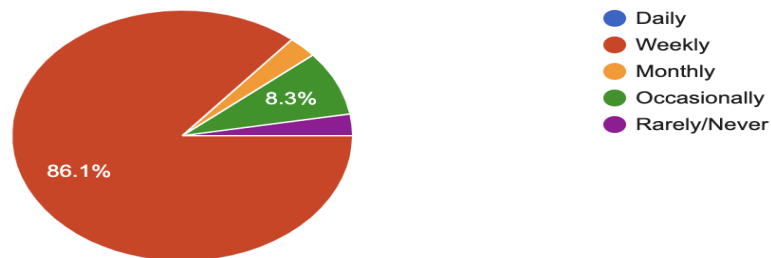
Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics was used in my research to summarise and interpret the quantitative data collected through my online survey and I did this after analysing the qualitative data so that I could link the findings to the core themes addressed in the selective coding process, these findings are included above. In addition to the core themes it was relevant to identify other trends, frequencies, and patterns in participants' experiences of ensemble singing to get a rounded overview. The results of these are shown below:

Participation

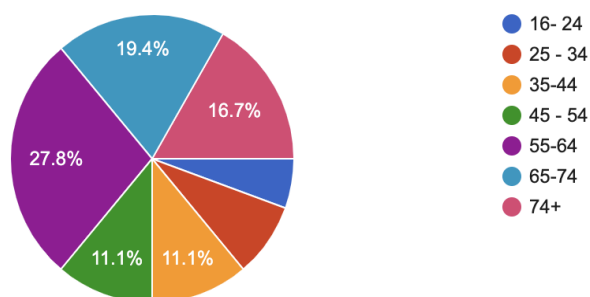
How often do you participate in ensemble singing (e.g., choir, group singing, Amateur shows)?

36 responses



The majority of participants that took part in the online survey reported weekly attendance in ensemble singing. This indicated that ensemble singing was a regular part of their weekly routine. This supported research done by Hendry, Lynam and Lafarge (2022) & Stewart & Lonsdale (2016) among others.

Age demographics



It was observed that participants mainly fell into the **55–64** and **65–74** age groups, which reflects a higher engagement from older adults. Could this be why there is not as much research surrounding a younger demographic? lack of participation in younger adults may be why there is less evidence in this area as my research only stipulated that participants needed to be 16+ to engage in the research. I chose this age due to the sensitive nature of the research and the

topics that would be addressed. As you can see from the graph above the lower age ranges were massively under-represented.

Descriptive statistics has played a key role in summarising and interpreting the overall trends in the survey data, offering a foundational understanding of participants' experiences with ensemble singing. Overall, the descriptive statistics provided strong quantitative support for the core themes identified through qualitative analysis, while also helping to identify gaps in the data which would later be explored in the interview phase (Appendix 8).

In combining results from both the qualitative and quantitative data collected through the surveys, I identified several areas that would benefit from further exploration. These gaps informed the design of my follow-up interviews, which aimed to deepen the findings and address topics that were either underrepresented or unclear in the survey responses. Recognising gaps as you move through the research process is important for maintaining reflexivity, reducing bias, and enhancing the validity and reliability of the overall findings. Some of the key gaps identified, both through the literature review and the survey data, include:

- **Inclusivity and Access**

Few participants explicitly mentioned barriers to participation, such as cultural, physical, or financial challenges. Further research is needed to explore how accessible ensemble singing is for marginalised or underrepresented groups.

- **Comparison with Other Activities**

While some respondents mentioned alternatives like yoga, meditation, or dancing, these comparisons were not explored in depth. A more structured examination of how ensemble singing compares to other well-being practices could provide valuable insights.

- **Longitudinal Effects**

The survey data focused largely on current experiences. There is a need for

future research that investigates the long-term impact of ensemble singing on mental health and personal development.

Online Interviews - addressing research gaps

To help address these gaps, I wanted to include specific questions in the interview process that encouraged participants to reflect on these areas as well as incorporating a more indepth questioning system in response to the codes identified in the surveys (Mental health benefits, social connectedness, personal development and self fulfilment). The questions I have included are as follows (Appendix 8)

The questions that were included in the interview process were there to help gain a more indepth understanding of the codes identified in the surveys. Below is a table of how the questioning process linked to the selective slides identified in the survey results:

Selective Code	Linked Questions
Mental Health Benefits	Q1, Q3, Q5, Q6, Q10
Social Connectedness	Q2, Q7
Personal Development	Q4, Q5, Q8
Self-Fulfilment	Q5, Q6, Q10

and below are the questions I added in order to try and fill gaps in my research.

Inclusivity and Access

As previously stated I observed that a few participants mentioned barriers to participation, such as physical, cultural, or economic challenges and due to this it was intended to add questions that would address this issue, so the following questions were added to the interview process in order to gain a better understanding of this area.

“Q8. What barriers or challenges have you faced in maintaining regular participation in ensemble singing? How have these challenges affected your mental well-being?”

This question I designed specifically to explore access issues, such as affordability, transportation, scheduling, or health. These topics weren't deeply explored in the survey and I wanted to look at it in more detail. This question will hopefully allow participants to reflect on obstacles and how these may influence their ability to participate fully.

Comparison with Other Activities

It was also observed from the online surveys that while some participants referenced other activities (e.g., yoga or meditation) in correlation to ensemble singing, these comparisons lacked the depth I needed to make robust and valid comparisons. In addressing this issue I incorporated this question:

“Q9. How would you compare the mental health benefits of ensemble singing to other activities that you engage in for well-being, such as exercise, meditation, or hobbies? Do you feel that group singing offers something unique?”

This question gives space for detailed reflection on how singing compares with other wellness activities. It helps uncover whether singing provides a unique emotional, cognitive, or social benefit, which could support future comparative research.

Longitudinal Effects

The survey reflected participants' current experiences, not how benefits develop or change over time and I wanted to have more of an insight into the long term effects of ensemble singing. to address this issue i included the below questions:

“Q1. Do you feel ensemble singing has affected your emotional or psychological state? Can you share specific examples?”

“ Q10. What would you say is the most significant mental health benefit you’ve personally gained from ensemble singing?”

While not explicitly longitudinal, these questions often lead participants to share before-and-after stories or reflect on their journey over time. In doing this it helps to offer insight into the sustained impacts and developmental change ensemble singing has on individuals. In adding these questions to the interview process It was hoped I'd find answers to some of the gaps I had in my research that became evident during the coding process.

Research Gaps results from 1:1 Interviews

With the addition of the questions we had added corresponding to the research gaps, the interview data provided some insights into underexplored areas. These included inclusivity and access, comparisons with other activities, long-term effects of participation, and digital or remote engagement. Here are the findings below:

Inclusivity and Access

While ensemble singing was described as welcoming and accessible for many and created an inclusive and safe environment to express oneself,

JT: “So even from the very first session, it was very accessible.”

barriers still existed, particularly for those with mental health difficulties or inconsistent attendance.

JT: “...if you don’t go for a while, you're missing out on the learning of the songs... these people only meet once a week so it’s quite fast-moving.”

One participant also noted how fast-paced rehearsals or long gaps between sessions can cause disruption or exclusion.

JD: “The choir rehearsal went to once a fortnight... it meant if we missed one, it could be a month before we were back. That became quite disruptive.”

While many participants described ensemble singing as accessible and welcoming, the structure and pace of sessions may unintentionally marginalise individuals facing mental health challenges or logistical constraints (Daffern *et al.*, 2021; Baxter, Burton & Fancourt, 2022). These accessibility issues warrant further exploration, as they may in fact diminish the positive psychological outcomes of participation and, for some, introduce additional stress. Investigating how widespread these challenges are could provide important insight into whether the format meets the needs of a broader demographic.

Comparison with Other Activities

During the surveys the topic of how ensemble singing compared to other group activities was touched upon such meditation, exercise, and other wellbeing practices. There was not much evidence to support or negate this notion of one being better than the other, but due to the inclusion of some additional questions it came to light that singing provided a more accessible form of escapism and was more emotionally satisfying. Many preferred it due to its instant gratification and social dimension, which set it apart from solitary or physically intense activities. The interviewees expressed this as seen in their quotes below:

JT: “It’s almost like a meditation because you’re solely focused on that one thing.”

JT: “Exercise has benefits... but for someone with anxiety or depression, singing is more manageable.”

JT: “With singing, you get that instant satisfaction... you don’t hurt afterwards like you do with exercise.”

GP: “It’s about feeling connected—like meditation but with others.”

JD: “Music has more of an intellectual challenge... exercise is for the body, but music is for the brain.”

In response to the answers gained on this topic I found that singing was perceived as more sustainable and impactful for mental health, particularly for those who may struggle with traditional wellness routines.

Longitudinal Effects

Participants in the interview process all reported long-term personal and emotional development through years of participation. They described changes in confidence, identity, and stability that evolved over time, not just during isolated sessions. Below are some of the quotes to support this:

JT: “Four years on... I was part of the management team of the choir.”

JT: “My confidence over the last two years working with the police has grown.”

GP: “I’ve been with choirs that have lasted 15–30 years... they’ve ridden the ups and downs like other long-term activities.”

JD: “I started learning piano two years ago... ensemble singing brought me back to myself.”

In essence this supports the need for longitudinal studies, but I feel that it needs to be explored in more detail with larger sample sizes to gain more validity and generalisability of these findings.

Conclusion

This study has provided an overarching insight into the multifaceted benefits of ensemble singing in connection to emotional well-being, and social integration. By exercising a mixed-methods approach, this research has identified four central themes, which are as follows: mental health benefits, social connectedness, personal development, and self-fulfilment. These findings were not only supported by findings in the Literature review but reinforced further through the responses given in the surveys and 1:1 interviews.

The Online survey findings illustrated that the majority of participants reported reduced levels of stress and anxiety, enhanced mood, and a strong sense of belonging. These results echo the findings of Grape *et al.*, (2003) and Clift & Hancox (2001), who documented the therapeutic and psychosocial benefits of singing in group settings. In addition, themes such as emotional regulation and self-esteem were evident in open-ended survey responses and mapped directly onto theoretical frameworks such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943).

The qualitative data collected helped to delve deeper and provide deeper layers of understanding to the themes identified in the literature review. Interviewees described ensemble singing as a congruous and powerful activity that helped support their emotional health, cultivate social bonds, and contribute to personal growth. The 1:1 interviews also allowed for exploration of research gaps that were not fully addressed in the surveys. These were observed as inclusivity, accessibility, and comparisons with other group centred activities. Participants also reflected upon the long-term benefits of singing and discussed how both in-person and digital formats served as platforms for connection and expressiveness, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Online engagement was a topic that I failed to address during my research project and could actually be a topic that I look at in more detail in the future. Future research could look at how online and in person participation differs in its effects on individuals and their mental health and well-being.

Overall, this study accentuates that ensemble singing is and can be used as a holistic and accessible intervention to support well-being across varying domains. The calibration of data between survey findings, interview data, and existing academic research strengthens the reliability and relevance of these conclusions.

Despite these encouraging results, several areas warrant further exploration. Notably, the interviews identified key gaps in the accessibility of ensemble singing for marginalised groups, its comparison to other well-being activities, and the potential for long-term and digital engagement.

Future Recommendations

- Expand participant diversity to include broader age ranges, cultural backgrounds, and individuals with varied access needs, in order to gain a more inclusive understanding of ensemble singing's impact.
- Conduct longitudinal research to better assess the sustained mental health and developmental effects of participation over time.
- Compare ensemble singing with other well-being interventions (e.g., exercise, meditation, creative therapies) to position its relative efficacy.
- Explore digital and remote formats of ensemble singing to assess their accessibility and effectiveness, especially in post-pandemic or geographically isolated contexts.

Personal and Professional development

Through the course of the research process it has been clearly defined that the role of ensemble singing in public health and well-being can be more clearly defined, supported, and expanded in order to be used therapeutically. Engaging in this research has significantly widened both my personal and professional knowledge of ensemble singing and the importance of its integration in society. As a vocal coach, it has led me to also become more acquainted to the emotional and psychological needs of those I work with, recognising that the benefits of singing extends well beyond the realms of

vocal technique and embodies a huge amount of emotional connection and release. This project has fortified my commitment to creating an inclusive, emotionally safe space where individuals can express themselves without prejudice or performance pressure. The process of exploring singing as a therapeutic intervention has been immensely affirming. It has allowed me to partially reframe my own relationship with music, away from perfectionism and ego, and driving more towards the importance of personal connection, healing, and shared experiences. Conducting this research has not only expanded my academic skill set but has also shaped the values and approach I will carry forward in my teaching and artistic practice.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 poster

Becci Morrell invites you to:

Sing your heart out



Research Needs You! Your voice is powerful, and we want to hear it!

I am on a quest to seek non-professional singers to participate in an exciting online survey that explores the emotional benefits of singing in ensembles. By sharing your experiences, you can help me to possibly uncover the profound impact that group singing has on mental well-being. Whether you sing in a choir or just love to belt it out with friends, your insights are invaluable. Join me in this important research and be a part of something that celebrates the joy of music and its positive effects on our lives.

Together, let's harmonize our voices for a healthier, happier world!

For more information please contact info@beccimorrell.com or scan QR code below



Appendix 2 survey

4/9/25, 4:26 PM

What are the Impacts of Ensemble Singing on the Mental Health of Non-Professional Singers

What are the Impacts of Ensemble Singing on the Mental Health of Non-Professional Singers

Introduction:

My name is Becci Morrell and I am a professional singer and vocal coach who is currently undertaking a Masters in Vocal Pedagogy at the University of Wales Trinity St David in conjunction with Voice Study Centre in the UK.

The research I am conducting explores the impacts of ensemble singing on the mental health of non-professional singers. Your responses will help me understand general trends before conducting in-depth interviews/focus groups and then writing my research paper to be presented to my faculty.

First of all I want to say a huge **Thank You** for agreeing to take the time to participate in this survey. Your input and participation is very much appreciated and goes towards further research into this topic.

The survey should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. ALL answers are valid and relevant so please be as honest as you can and ALL information provided throughout the process of this research will be handled with the greatest of care and confidential.

Once again I thank you for your participation and look forward to observing all of your responses.

1. Email *

4/9/25, 4:26 PM

What are the Impacts of Ensemble Singing on the Mental Health of Non-Professional Singers

CONSENT FORM

First of all it is massively important to gain all participants consent so please read the following before participating in the survey.

Consent to take part in research

- I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time
- I understand that I can refuse to answer any question involved during the research process without any consequences of any kind.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that participation involves responding to an online survey and having my responses analysed and reported anonymously in a research paper.
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I agree to any interviews or focus groups being audio-recorded.
- I understand that in partaking in the surveys and interviews/focus groups I will be anonymised in all of the reports and this will be done by changing my name and disguising any details that may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.
- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in published papers, dissertation, academic presentation and conference presentation.
- I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm they may have to report this to the relevant authorities - they will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.
- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in Microsoft one drive and local computer hard-drive until exam board of university confirms results of research assignment the latest date being April 30 , 2026.
- I understand that a transcript of my interview/ focus group in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for two years following the date of researcher's exam board date.
- I understand that under freedom of information legalisation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.
- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

4/9/25, 4:26 PM

What are the Impacts of Ensemble Singing on the Mental Health of Non-Professional Singers

2.

Mark only one oval.☐ I Agree *Skip to question 3***Survey Questions**

Welcome to Sing your Heart Out, the research that requires YOUR input. Please answer the following questions honestly and fully. Your feedback and participation is very much appreciated. I look forward to looking at your feedback and analysing the data, which will help my future research.

Thank you

3. What age range are you?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ 16- 24
☐ 25 - 34
☐ 35-44
☐ 45 - 54
☐ 55-64
☐ 65-74
☐ 74+

4. How often do you participate in ensemble singing (e.g., choir, group singing, Amateur shows)?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Daily
☐ Weekly
☐ Monthly
☐ Occasionally
☐ Rarely/Never

4/9/25, 4:26 PM

What are the Impacts of Ensemble Singing on the Mental Health of Non-Professional Singers

5. Does the frequency in which you attend or participate have an effect in a positive or negative way on your mental well being? please give details.

6. What Ensemble singing do you participate in?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Choir
- ☐ Church
- ☐ With my children at home
- ☐ Amateur shows
- ☐ Carols at christmas

7. How long have you been participating in ensemble singing?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Less than 4 weeks
- ☐ 4-8 weeks
- ☐ 8-12 weeks
- ☐ 3-6 months
- ☐ 6 months to 1 year
- ☐ 1 year +

4/9/25, 4:26 PM

What are the Impacts of Ensemble Singing on the Mental Health of Non-Professional Singers

8. What emotional, musical, or social benefits have you experienced through your participation in ensemble singing? Please discuss

9. On a scale from 1 to 4, how would you rate the impact of ensemble singing on your overall mental well-being? (1 = No Impact, 2 = Small Positive Impact, 3 = Moderate Positive Impact, 4 = Significant Positive Impact)

Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4
☐	☐	☐	☐

10. Have you experienced changes in your stress or anxiety levels since participating in ensemble singing?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Significant decrease
- ☐ Moderate decrease
- ☐ No change
- ☐ Moderate increase
- ☐ Significant increase

4/9/25, 4:26 PM

What are the Impacts of Ensemble Singing on the Mental Health of Non-Professional Singers

11. **In your opinion, how does participating in ensemble singing contribute to managing your emotions or coping with stressful situations?**
(Open-ended question)

12. **If you have noticed changes, either positive or negative, in your stress and anxiety levels as a result of ensemble singing could you please describe these changes below.**

13. **Have you faced any barriers, when trying to participate in ensemble singing (e.g., time, social anxiety, transportation, self-confidence, performance anxiety)? If so how have you dealt with this?**
(Open-ended question)

4/9/25, 4:26 PM

What are the Impacts of Ensemble Singing on the Mental Health of Non-Professional Singers

14. **On a scale from 1 to 4, how would you rate the sense of social connection or inclusion you experience during group singing?**

(1 = No Connection, 2 = Small Connection 3= Moderate Connection 4 = Strong Connection)

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	
No c	☐	☐	☐	☐	Strong Connection

15. **How do you feel ensemble singing compared to other activities (e.g., exercise, meditation, hobbies) in promoting mental well-being?**

(Open-ended question)

16. **What other group activities do you personally partake in and how do they compare to ensemble singing with regard mental well being?**

4/9/25, 4:26 PM

What are the Impacts of Ensemble Singing on the Mental Health of Non-Professional Singers

17. **Do you believe ensemble singing has helped you form new friendships and/or strengthen existing relationships?**

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes, Significantly
- ☐ Yes, Somewhat
- ☐ No change
- ☐ No, it has weakened relationships

18. **Have you noticed any improvements in your confidence or self-esteem as a result of participating in ensemble singing?**

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ yes, significant improvement
- ☐ Yes, Moderate improvement
- ☐ No change
- ☐ Confidence or self esteem has decreased

19. **Could you provide more details on how it has impacted your self-confidence and self esteem (these can be positive or negative)?**

4/9/25, 4:26 PM

What are the Impacts of Ensemble Singing on the Mental Health of Non-Professional Singers

20. **In your own words, what do you think are the most significant mental health benefits of participating in ensemble singing?**
(Open-ended question)

21. **On a scale from 1 to 5, How likely are you to recommend ensemble singing to others as a way to improve mental well-being?**

(1= Very unlikely, 2 = Unlikely, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Likely, 5 =Very likely)

Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

22. **On a scale from 1 to 5, How likely are you to engage in another form of ensemble singing in addition to the one you already participate in, if it were local?**

(1= Very unlikely, 2 = Unlikely, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Likely, 5 =Very likely)

Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

4/9/25, 4:26 PM

What are the Impacts of Ensemble Singing on the Mental Health of Non-Professional Singers

23. **If you did what do you think the advantages and disadvantages of participating would be?**

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Appendix 3 ethics form -**APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL****RESEARCH STUDENTS**

This form is to be completed by the student within **SIX** months for full-time students and **TWELVE** months for part time students, after the commencement of the research degree or following progression to Part Two of your course.

Once complete, submit this form via the ***MyTSD Doctoral College Portal*** at (<https://mytsd.uwtsd.ac.uk>).

This document is also available in Welsh.

RESEARCH STAFF ONLY

All communications relating to this application during its processing must be in writing and emailed to pgresearch@uwtsd.ac.uk , with the title 'Ethical Approval' followed by your name.

STUDENTS ON UNDERGRADUATE OR TAUGHT MASTERS PROGRAMMES should submit this form (and receive the outcome) via systems explained to you by the supervisor/module leader.

In order for research to result in benefit and minimise risk of harm, it must be conducted ethically. A researcher may not be covered by the University's insurance if ethical approval has not been obtained prior to commencement.

The University follows the OECD Frascati manual definition of **research activity**: "creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of man, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications". As such this covers activities undertaken by members of staff, postgraduate research students, and both taught postgraduate and undergraduate students working on dissertations/projects.

The individual undertaking the research activity is known as the "principal researcher".

Ethical approval is not required for routine audits, performance reviews, quality assurance studies, testing within normal educational requirements, and literary or artistic criticism.

Please read the notes for guidance before completing ALL sections of the form.

This form must be completed and approved prior to undertaking any research activity. Please see Checklist for details of process for different categories of application.

SECTION A: About You (Principal Researcher)

1	Full Name:	Rebecca Morrell			
2	Tick all boxes that apply:	Member of staff:	☐	Honorary research fellow:	☐
	Undergraduate Student	☐	Taught Postgraduate Student	☒	Postgraduate Research Student
3	Institute/Academic Discipline/Centre:	Institute of Management and Health			
4	Campus:	Carmarthen			
5	E-mail address:	info@beccimorrell.com			
6	Contact Telephone Number:	07816950143			
For students:					
7	Student Number:	2243154			
8	Programme of Study:	MA in Professional Practice (Voice Pedagogy)			
9	Director of Studies/Supervisor:	Julie Crossman/ Debbie Winter			

SECTION B: Approval for Research Activity

1	Has the research activity received approval in principle? (please check the Guidance Notes as to the appropriate approval process for different levels of research by different categories of individual)	YES	☒	NO	☐
					Date
2	If Yes, please indicate source of approval (and date where known): Approval in principle must be obtained from the relevant source prior to seeking ethical approval	Research Degrees Committee	☐		
Institute Research Committee		☐			
Other (write in)		☒			

SECTION C: Internal and External Ethical Guidance Materials

	Please list the core ethical guidance documents that have been referred to during the completion of this form (including any discipline-specific codes of research ethics, location-specific codes of research ethics, and also any specific ethical guidance relating to the proposed methodology). Please tick to confirm that your research proposal adheres to these codes and guidelines. You may add rows to this table if needed.
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1	UWTSD Research Ethics & Integrity Code of Practice	☒
2	UWTSD Research Data Management Policy	☒
3	[List any other relevant documents here]	☐

SECTION D: External Collaborative Research Activity

If there are external collaborators then you should gain consent from the contact persons to share their personal data with the university. If there are no external collaborators then leave this section blank and continue to section E.

1	Institution					
2	Contact person name					
3	Contact person e-mail address					
4	Is your research externally funded?	YES	☐	NO	☐	
5	Are you in receipt of a KESS scholarship?	YES	☐	NO	☐	
6	Are you specifically employed to undertake this research in either a paid or voluntary capacity?	Voluntary	YES	☐	NO	☐
7		Employed	YES	☐	NO	☐
8	Is the research being undertaken within an existing UWTSD Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership (APLP)?	If YES then the permission question below does not need to be answered.	YES	☐	NO	☐
9	Has permission to undertake the research been provided by the partner organisation?	(If YES attach copy) If NO the application cannot continue	YES	☐	NO	☐

Where research activity is carried out in collaboration with an external organisation

10	Does this organisation have its own ethics approval system?	YES	☐	NO	☐
If Yes, please attach a copy of any final approval (or interim approval) from the organisation (this may be a copy of an email if appropriate).					

SECTION E: Details of Research Activity

1	Indicative title:	What are the impacts of ensemble singing on the mental health of non-professional singers?			
2	Proposed start date:	26 th August 2024	Proposed end date:	14 th April 2024	

	Introduction to the Research (maximum 300 words per section) Ensure that you write for a <u>Non-Specialist Audience</u> when outlining your response to the points below: <i>Purpose of Research Activity</i> <i>Proposed Research Question</i> <i>Aims of Research Activity</i> <i>Objectives of Research Activity</i> Demonstrate, briefly, how Existing Research has informed the proposed activity and explain <i>What the research activity will add to the body of knowledge</i> <i>How it addresses an area of importance.</i>
3	Purpose of Research Activity The purpose of this research activity is to explore and analyse the impact of ensemble singing on the mental health of non-professional singing adults. This study aims to investigate how participating in group singing activities influences various aspects of mental well-being, including emotional stability, stress reduction, social connectivity, and overall psychological health. By examining these effects, the research seeks to provide empirical evidence on the potential benefits of ensemble singing as a therapeutic and recreational activity, contributing to the broader understanding of its role in mental health promotion and intervention strategies for adults. (this box should expand as you type)
4	Research Question My research will investigate 'What are the impacts of ensemble singing on the mental health of non-professional singers?' exploring whether it has positive or negative effects and seeking to understand the reasons for these. This topic intrigues me because singing has personally contributed positively to my mental well-being, and I am keen to delve deeper into this experience by studying participants who sing for enjoyment rather than professionally. Through this research, I aim to gather diverse perspectives and gain a broader understanding of how singing influences mental well-being. Specifically, I want to determine if participants view singing, in any form, as an emotional outlet. (this box should expand as you type)
5	Aims of Research Activity The aim of this research question is to determine the specific impacts of ensemble singing on the mental health of adults who are non-professional singers. The study seeks to identify and measure how participating in group singing activities affects emotional well-being, reduces stress, fosters social connections, and enhances overall mental health. By achieving this aim, the research intends to uncover the potential therapeutic benefits of ensemble singing, thereby informing practices and interventions that leverage group singing as a means to improve mental health outcomes in adult populations. (this box should expand as you type)
6	Objectives of Research Activity

	- Assess how regular participation in ensemble singing affects the emotional well-being of adults, including feelings of happiness, contentment, and emotional balance. - Investigate the extent to which ensemble singing contributes to reducing stress levels in adults, using subjective self-reports through focus groups and interviews. - Gather qualitative data on participants' perceptions and experiences of ensemble singing, including perceived changes in mental health and well-being. (this box should expand as you type)
	Proposed methods (maximum 600 words) Provide a brief summary of all the methods that may be used in the research activity, making it clear what specific techniques may be used. If methods other than those listed in this section are deemed appropriate later, additional ethical approval for those methods will be needed. You do not need to justify the methods here, but should instead describe how you intend to collect the data necessary for you to complete your project.
7	Methods: This research Method will follow a Mixed methods approach 1: Surveys - will be conducted at the very beginning of the research project to inform the interviews and focus groups that will take place at the end of the research. This will be done on a larger scale to further inform the questioning for the research that proceeds it. I am hoping to then interview a minimum of 3 participants, each from a different ensemble singing group. 2: Questionnaires - these will be done electronically and will be conducted before and during the research using the Likert scale for experiential data and descriptive statistics based on. The questionnaires will be used for participants to self assess their own health and well being before and after sessions. This questionnaire will be based on the WHOQOL-BREF (The World Health Organisations Quality Of Life (1997), to help determine if there are any anomalies or patterns pertaining to ensemble singing and the mental health and well being of each participant. 3: Interviews – will be conducted on a 1:1 basis with 3-4 participants who engage in ensemble singing on a regular basis. This will be conducted in a semi structured way and they will be recorded and transcribed to observe any patterns. There will be open and closed questioning used when questioning my participants. 4: Literature reviews - this will be ongoing and I will be undertaking this throughout. 5: Focus group: This will be small and conducted online at the very end of the research with those from the interviews willing to take part. This is so that experiences, ideas can be shared and documented.

	(this box should expand as you type)
	Location of research activity Identify all locations where research activity will take place.
8	The research will be conducted online over zoom or via email. (this box should expand as you type)
	Research activity outside of the UK If research activity will take place overseas, you are responsible for ensuring that local ethical considerations are complied with and that the relevant permissions are sought. Specify any local guidelines (e.g. from local professional associations/learned societies/universities) that exist and whether these involve any ethical stipulations beyond those usual in the UK (provide details of any licenses or permissions required). Also specify whether there are any specific ethical issues raised by the local context in which the research activity is taking place, for example, particular cultural and/or legal sensitivities or vulnerabilities of participants. If you live in the country where you will do the research then please state this.
9	(this box should expand as you type)

10	Use of documentation not in the public domain: Are any documents NOT publicly available?	NO	☒
		YES	☐
11	If Yes, please provide details here of how you will gain access to specific documentation that is not in the public domain and that this is in accordance with the current data protection law of the country in question and that of England and Wales. (this box should expand as you type)		

	Does your research relate to one or more of the seven aims of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015?	YES	NO
12	A prosperous Wales	☐	☒
13	A resilient Wales	☐	☒
14	A healthier Wales	☐	☒
15	A more equal Wales	☐	☒
16	A Wales of cohesive communities	☐	☒
17	A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language	☐	☒
18	A globally responsible Wales	☐	☒

19	If YES to any of the above, please give details:
	(this box should expand as you type)

SECTION F: Scope of Research Activity

	Will the research activity include:	YES	NO
1	Use of a questionnaire or similar research instrument?	☒	☐
2	Use of interviews?	☒	☐
3	Use of focus groups?	☒	☐
4	Use of participant diaries?	☐	☒
5	Use of video or audio recording?	☒	☐
6	Use of computer-generated log files?	☒	☐
7	Participant observation with their knowledge?	☐	☒
8	Participant observation without their knowledge?	☐	☒
9	Access to personal or confidential information without the participants' specific consent?	☐	☒
10	Administration of any questions, test stimuli, presentation that may be experienced as physically, mentally or emotionally harmful / offensive?	☐	☒
11	Performance of any acts which may cause embarrassment or affect self-esteem?	☐	☒
12	Investigation of participants involved in illegal activities?	☐	☒
13	Use of procedures that involve deception?	☐	☒
14	Administration of any substance, agent or placebo?	☐	☒
15	Working with live vertebrate animals?	☐	☒
16	Procedures that may have a negative impact on the environment?	☐	☒
17	Other primary data collection methods. Please indicate the type of data collection method(s) below.	☐	☒
	Details of any other primary data collection method: (this box should expand as you type)		

If NO to every question, then the research activity is (ethically) low risk and **may** be exempt from **some** of the following sections (please refer to Guidance Notes).

If YES to any question, then no research activity should be undertaken until full ethical approval has been obtained.

SECTION G: Intended Participants

If there are no participants then do not complete this section, but go directly to section H.

	Who are the intended participants:	YES	NO
1	Students or staff at the University?	☒	☐
2	Adults (over the age of 18 and competent to give consent)?	☒	☐
3	Vulnerable adults?	☐	☒
4	Children and Young People under the age of 18? (Consent from Parent, Carer or Guardian will be required)	☐	☒
5	Prisoners?	☐	☒
6	Young offenders?	☐	☒
7	Those who could be considered to have a particularly dependent relationship with the investigator or a gatekeeper?	☐	☒
8	People engaged in illegal activities?	☐	☒
9	Others. Please indicate the participants below, and specifically any group who may be unable to give consent.		
	Details of any other participant groups: (this box should expand as you type)	☐	☒

Participant numbers and source	
Provide an estimate of the expected number of participants. How will you identify participants and how will they be recruited?	
10	How many participants are expected? The surveys will be conducted as a preliminary to the interviews and focus group on a larger scale with hopefully 10-30 participants. This is to enable me to decide how to formulate the questions in the interviews and focus groups to gain as much valuable information as possible when looking at some participants in more depth. I am hoping to use 3-4 participants who partake in ensemble singing regularly when conducting the Interviews, questionnaires and Focus group for my research project. In using a smaller

		number I am hoping to gain a more in depth overview of my research question so that findings and data can be more detailed. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
11	Who will the participants be?	All participants will be adults over the age of 18 chosen as being involved in ensemble singing in some capacity or another in a non-professional setting such as choirs or amateur operatic shows. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
12	How will you identify the participants?	I will send out recruitment materials through social media and emailing businesses who deliver ensemble singing regularly. This will explain the study's purpose, requirements, and what's involved and from that I will hope to gain some interest from people who wish to partake. When I have had interest from prospective participants, I will then send out a letter, to the participants who have expressed interest, with the research criteria on so that participants can voluntarily participate in the research if they fit the correct criteria. Participants will be adults over the age of 18 and will be part of an ensemble group that regularly meets to practise/perform. I am hoping to have more than one group involved in the research to gain more data and findings and these groups will not be run by me and will have no involvement from me. Participants will be chosen at random. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>

	Information for participants:	YES	NO	N/A
13	Will you describe the main research procedures to participants in advance, so that they are informed about what to expect?	☒	☐	☐
14	Will you tell participants that their participation is voluntary?	☒	☐	☐
15	Will you obtain written consent for participation?	☒	☐	☐
16	Will you explain to participants that refusal to participate in the research will not affect their treatment or education (if relevant)?	☒	☐	☐
17	If the research is observational, will you ask participants for their consent to being observed?	☐	☐	☒
18	Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason?	☒	☐	☐
19	With questionnaires, will you give participants the option of omitting questions they do not want to answer?	☒	☐	☐

20	Will you tell participants that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it will not be identifiable as theirs?	☒	☐	☐
21	Will you debrief participants at the end of their participation, in a way appropriate to the type of research undertaken?	☒	☐	☐
22	If NO to any of above questions, please give an explanation			
	(this box should expand as you type)			

	Information for participants:	YES	NO	N/A
24	Will participants be paid?	☐	☒	☐
25	Is specialist electrical or other equipment to be used with participants?	☒	☐	☐
26	Are there any financial or other interests to the investigator or University arising from this study?	☐	☒	☐
27	Will the research activity involve deliberately misleading participants in any way, or the partial or full concealment of the specific study aims?	☐	☒	☐
28	If YES to any question, please provide full details			
	I will be using my Computer for zoom Interviews and Focus Groups and also an external microphone to record interviews and focus groups. I will also use my laptop to engage in online surveys. (this box should expand as you type)			

SECTION H: Anticipated Risks

	Outline any anticipated risks that may adversely affect any of the participants, the researchers and/or the University, and the steps that will be taken to address them.		
	If you have completed a full risk assessment (for example as required by a laboratory, or external research collaborator) you may append that to this form.		
1	Full risk assessment completed and appended?	Yes	☐
		No	☒
2	Risks to participants For example: sector-specific health & safety, emotional distress, financial disclosure, physical harm, transfer of personal data, sensitive organisational information		
	Risk to participants:	How you will mitigate the risk to participants: I will mitigate this risk by having participants' information stored in a password protected	

	Because I will be recording interviews and focus groups there could be a data protection breach encountered. People may also feel intimidated in expressing their feelings and emotions with regard to the topic when presented with other unknown participants. Discussing mental health can be sensitive. Participants might become distressed when talking about their experiences, which requires careful handling and ethical consideration. I need to maintain the privacy of participants' personal information when conducting my research project. Breaches can lead to loss of trust.	way on my computer and on google drive, with no other people having access to it. I will try to enable everyone to have their say in the focus group instead of confident and vocal individuals possibly taking over the meeting. I will reiterate that EVERY piece of information is valid and that ALL experiences and findings should be voiced. I will also reiterate that if they no longer feel like they want to participate or that they feel uncomfortable in addressing issues they are completely within their right to withdraw from participation at any time. I will also provide support resources for health and well-being should they wish to engage in them. I will mitigate this risk by anonymising participants, so that names are not disclosed. When participants have disclosed information and answered questions all information will be stored in a password protected computer and on google drive, with no other people having access to it other than myself.
3	If research activity may include sensitive, embarrassing or upsetting topics (e.g. sexual activity, drug use) or issues likely to disclose information requiring further action (e.g. criminal activity), give details of the procedures to deal with these issues, including any support/advice (e.g. helpline numbers) to be offered to participants. Note that where applicable, consent procedures should make it clear that if something potentially or actually illegal is discovered in the course of a project, it may need to be disclosed to the proper authorities	
	N/A <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	
4	Risks to the investigator For example: personal health & safety, physical harm, emotional distress, risk of accusation of harm/impropriety, conflict of interest	
	Risk to the investigator:	<i>How you will mitigate the risk to the investigator:</i>

	I need to ensure all participants fully understand the study, including potential risks and benefits. Failing to obtain proper consent can lead to ethical violations and so i need to make participants fully aware what is expected of them when partaking in the research project When undertaking a research project there is always a risk of personal biases that can influence the research design, data collection, and analysis. This can undermine the validity of your findings.	I will make sure all participants have a project overview prior to consenting to take part in the project so they know what is expected of them. They will then get given consent forms to sign to acknowledge their involvement in the project. They will also be advised that they can withdraw from the project at any time with no personal or professional ramifications. When choosing my participants I need to not have a preconceived idea of the demographic of the participants I seek to use and keep an open mind when collating information and when designing the research questions so that my findings are valid and as accurate as can be. I will try to employ methods to recognise and minimise personal biases, using triangulation to support rigour.
5	University/institutional risks For example: adverse publicity, financial loss, data protection	
	Risk to the University: There could be a risk of a data protection breach <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	<i>How you will mitigate the risk to the University:</i> This will be mitigated with data being coded so that research information is fully anonymous. It will also be stored on my password protected computer which can only solely be accessed by myself and also on password protected Google Drive. The data extracted from the research will then be deleted once the project has been completed. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
6	Environmental risks For example: accidental spillage of pollutants, damage to local ecosystems	
	Risk to the environment:	<i>How you will mitigate the risk to environment:</i>

	(this box should expand as you type)	(this box should expand as you type)
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Disclosure and Barring Service				
	If the research activity involves children or vulnerable adults, a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate must be obtained before any contact with such participants.	YES	NO	N/A
7	Does your research require you to hold a current DBS Certificate?	☐	☒	☒
8	If YES, please give the certificate number. If the certificate number is not available please write "Pending"; in this case any ethical approval will be subject to providing the appropriate certificate number.			

SECTION I: Feedback, Consent and Confidentiality

1	Feedback What de-briefing and feedback will be provided to participants, how will this be done and when?
	I will provide a contact email address to all of my participants for any contact they may need to have with me and also in order for them to contact me to have access to the final report for their perusal. (this box should expand as you type)
2	Informed consent Describe the arrangements to inform potential participants, before providing consent, of what is involved in participating. Describe the arrangements for participants to provide full consent before data collection begins. If gaining consent in this way is inappropriate, explain how consent will be obtained and recorded in accordance with prevailing data protection legislation.
	I will be sending out email consent forms to my participants for their inclusion in my focus groups and interviews. The consent will be sent to interested participants along with the project overview. The consent form will need to be completed prior to participation. (this box should expand as you type)
3	Confidentiality / Anonymity Set out how anonymity of participants and confidentiality will be ensured in any outputs. If anonymity is not being offered, explain why this is the case.
	All participants will be allocated a number so that names are not used within research. The names allocated to these numbers will be stored in my password protected computer only to be observed by me.

	(this box should expand as you type)
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SECTION J: Data Protection and Storage

	Does the research activity involve personal data (as defined by the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 "GDPR" and the Data Protection Act 2018 "DPA")?	YES	NO
1	"Personal data" means any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person ('data subject'). An identifiable natural person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that natural person. Any video or audio recordings of participants is considered to be personal data.	☒	☐
	If YES, provide a description of the data and explain why this data needs to be collected:		
2	The Personal data that will be collected includes the names of the participants and their email addresses along with consent forms. There will also be audio/visual recordings with these participants in focus groups and interviews and the transcriptions of these too. (this box should expand as you type)		
	Does it involve special category data (as defined by the GDPR)?	YES	NO
3	"Special category data" means sensitive personal data consisting of information as to the data subjects' – (a) racial or ethnic origin, (b) political opinions, (c) religious beliefs or other beliefs of a similar nature, (d) membership of a trade union (within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992), (e) physical or mental health or condition, (f) sexual life, (g) genetics, (h) biometric data (as used for ID purposes),	☐	☒
	If YES, provide a description of the special category data and explain why this data needs to be collected:		
4	N/A (this box should expand as you type)		
	Will data from the research activity (collected data, drafts of the thesis, or materials for publication) be stored in any of the following ways?	YES	NO
5	Manual files (i.e. in paper form)?	☐	☒

6	University computers?	☐	☒
7	Private company computers?	☐	☒
8	Home or other personal computers?	☒	☐
9	Laptop computers/ CDs/ Portable disk-drives/ memory sticks?	☒	☐
10	"Cloud" storage or websites?	☒	☐
11	Other – specify:	☐	☒
12	For all stored data, explain the measures in place to ensure the security of the data collected, data confidentiality, including details of backup procedures, password protection, encryption, anonymisation and pseudonymisation:		
	All data will be stored in a password protected storage plan on my Google drive and also on my personal password protected computer. All of this information will not be shared and will be for my own personal use after consent from participants. Any audio/visual data will be transcribed and would be shown to participants so they can approve accuracy of the reporting. Any USB sticks used to store information or transfer it will also be password protected. As previously stated all participants will be given a unique identifier number to ensure all information is confidential. This list will also be kept securely in a password protected folder. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		

Data Protection			
	Will the research activity involve any of the following activities:	YES	NO
13	Electronic transfer of data in any form?	☒	☐
14	Sharing of data with others at the University outside of the immediate research team?	☒	☐
15	Sharing of data with other organisations?	☐	☒
16	Export of data outside the UK or importing of data from outside the UK?	☒	☐
17	Use of personal addresses, postcodes, faxes, emails or telephone numbers?	☒	☐
18	Publication of data that might allow identification of individuals?	☐	☒
19	Use of data management system?	☐	☒
20	Data archiving?	☐	☒
21	If YES to any question, please provide full details, explaining how this will be conducted in accordance with the GDPR and Data Protection Act (2018) (and any international equivalents, where appropriate):		

	All data will be encrypted and kept in password protected cloud storage on my own personal google drive as well as on my password protected personal computer and none of the data will be shared. Any USB sticks used to store or transfer data will be password protected and all data transfers will be encrypted and password protected. All participants will be given a unique identifier to ensure confidentiality and this list will be kept securely in the password protected folder. The data will be stored until the completion of the project and then deleted. In accordance with the DPA2018, participants will have the right to ask to see what data is held relating to them, and this data will be deleted immediately if the participant requests this, in which case the data will not be used in the project. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
22	List all who will have access to the data generated by the research activity:		
	Only myself, the Principal Researcher and my Tutor Sophie Scott. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
23	List who will have control of, and act as custodian(s) for, data generated by the research activity:		
	Only myself, the Principal Researcher. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
24	Give details of data storage arrangements, including security measures in place to protect the data, where data will be stored, how long for, and in what form. Will data be archived – if so how and if not why not.		
	All data will be encrypted and kept in password protected cloud storage on my personal google drive and also on my password protected personal computer, no data will be shared. Any USB sticks used to store or transfer data will be password protected, and will be reformatted at the end of the project in order to destroy the data. The data will be stored until the completion of the project and then deleted. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
25	Please indicate if your data will be stored in the UWTSD Research Data Repository (see https://researchdata.uwtsd.ac.uk/). If so please explain. <i>(Most relevant to academic staff)</i>		
	N/A <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
26	Confirm that you have read the UWTSD guidance on data management (see https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/library/research-data-management/)	YES	☒

27	Confirm that you are aware that you need to keep all data until after your research has completed or the end of your funding	YES	☒
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SECTION K: Declaration

The information which I have provided is correct and complete to the best of my knowledge. I have attempted to identify any risks and issues related to the research activity and acknowledge my obligations and the rights of the participants. In submitting this application I hereby confirm that I undertake to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice which is published on the website: https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/research/research-ethics/			
1	Signature of applicant:		Date: 17/07/2024

For STUDENT Submissions:

2	Director of Studies/Supervisor:		Date:
3	Signature:		

For STAFF Submissions:

4	Academic Director/ Assistant Dean:		Date:
5	Signature:		

Checklist: Please complete the checklist below to ensure that you have completed the form according to the guidelines and attached any required documentation:

☒	I have read the guidance notes supplied before completing the form.
☒	I have completed ALL RELEVANT sections of the form in full.
☒	I confirm that the research activity has received approval in principle
☐	I have attached a copy of final/interim approval from external organisation (where appropriate)
☐	I have attached a full risk assessment (where appropriate) ONLY TICK IF YOU HAVE ATTACHED A FULL RISK ASSESSMENT
☒	I understand that it is my responsibility to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice.

☒	I understand that before commencing data collection all documents aimed at respondents (including information sheets, consent forms, questionnaires, interview schedules etc.) must be confirmed by the DoS/Supervisor, module tutor or Academic Director.
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RESEARCH STUDENTS ONLY Once complete, submit this form via the MyTSD Doctoral College Portal at (https://mytsd.uwtsd.ac.uk).
RESEARCH STAFF ONLY All communications relating to this application during its processing must be in writing and emailed to pgresearch@uwtsd.ac.uk , with the title 'Ethical Approval' followed by your name.
STUDENTS ON UNDERGRADUATE OR TAUGHT MASTERS PROGRAMMES should submit this form (and receive the outcome) via systems explained to you by the supervisor/module leader.

Appendix 4 consent form

t of all it is massively important to gain all participators consent so please read the following before participating in the survey.

Consent to take part in research

- I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time
- I understand that I can refuse to answer any question involved during the research process without any consequences of any kind.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that participation involves responding to an online survey and having my responses analysed and reported anonymously in a research paper.
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I agree to any interviews or focus groups being audio-recorded.
- I understand that in partaking in the surveys and interviews/focus groups i will be anonymised in all of the reports and this will be done by changing my name and disguising any details that may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.
- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in published papers, dissertation, academic presentation and conference presentation.

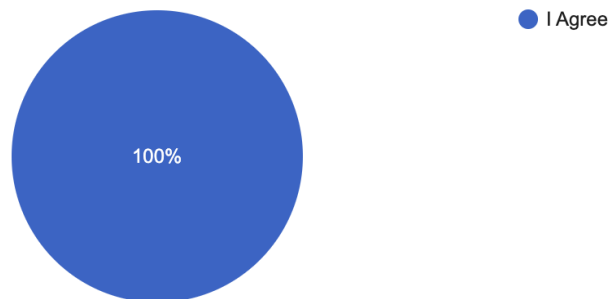
- I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm they may have to report this to the relevant authorities - they will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.
- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in Microsoft one drive and local computer hard-drive until the exam board of university confirms results of research assignment, the latest date being April 30 ,2026.
- I understand that a transcript of my interview/ focus group in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for two years following the date of the researcher's exam board date.
- I understand that under freedom of information legalisation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.
- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

All of the above was inserted into the online questionnaire of which no one could proceed unless they had agreed to these terms and conditions.

CONSENT FORM

36 responses

 [Copy chart](#)



Appendix 5 Project guidelines

Introduction:

My name is Becci Morrell and I am a professional singer and vocal coach who is currently undertaking a Masters in Vocal Pedagogy at the University of Wales Trinity St David in conjunction with Voice Study Centre in the UK.

The research I am conducting explores the impacts of ensemble singing on the mental health of non-professional singers. Your responses will help me understand general trends before conducting in-depth interviews/focus groups and then writing my research paper to be presented to my faculty.

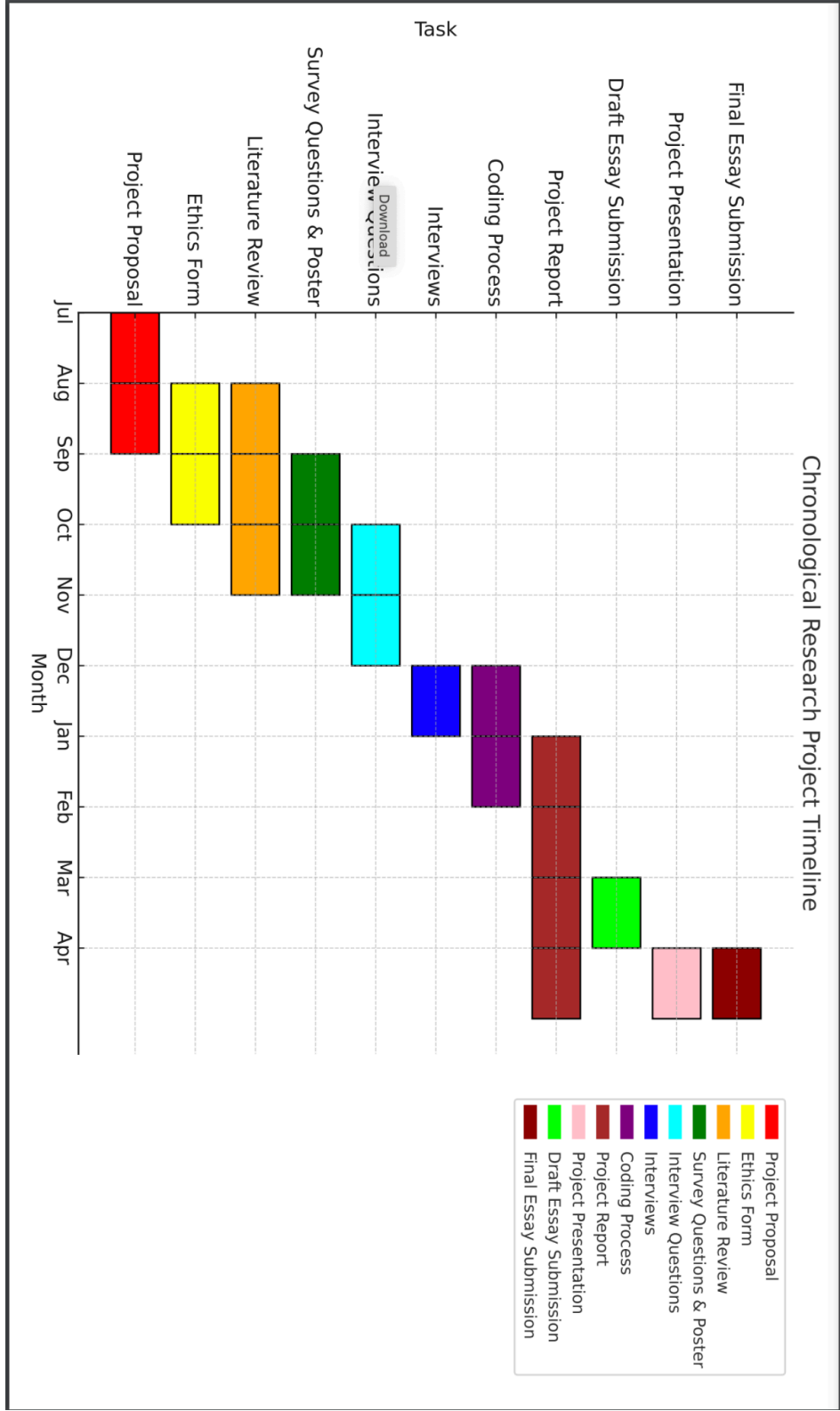
First of all I want to say a huge **Thank You** for agreeing to take the time to participate in this survey. Your input and participation is very much appreciated and goes towards further research into this topic.

The survey should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. ALL answers are valid and relevant so please be as honest as you can and ALL information provided throughout the process of this research will be handled with the greatest of care and confidentiality.

Once again I thank you for your participation and look forward to observing all of your responses.

This was also included in the online survey prior to participation

Appendix 6 Timeline



Appendix 7 Transcripts (coded)

JD interview 3 - December 06

Topics

Post-COVID Recovery and Mental Health

Social Aspects of Ensemble Singing

Stress Reduction and Mood Improvement

Confidence and Skill Development

Unique Benefits Compared to Other Activities

Challenges in Participation

Overall Impact on Well-being

Coding system

Mental Health Benefits **Light green**

Social Connectedness **Light Blue**

Personal Development **Light Yellow**

Self-Fulfilment **Light Purple**

Becci Morrell

There isn't a test well, we've been using it a while now, but it blows my mind to all these things that are out there now to know to take care and everything else.

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

It's incredible.

Becci Morrell

I'm a bit like, can we go back to all fashion pen and paper? Well, thank you, Jeanette, for agreeing to participate in the research.

I've just got 10 questions that I'd like to ask you.

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

That's fine, yeah.

Becci Morrell

So, obviously, when gauging on samples, singing on a regular basis, is it a choir that you're part of, or is it a?

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

Yes, it's so my, you know, Chris is quiet, yeah, yeah, it's something else.

Becci Morrell

Amazing. Okay, so the first question, when I've done, when I did the survey, obviously, I related questions from some of the answers that I got, got given.

And the first question was, so many participants in the survey indicated changes in their mental being through ensemble singing, do you feel the supplies to you?

And if so, could you share if you want to any specific examples of how singing in a group has affected your emotional or psychological state?

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

Yeah, I mean, I've always sang in a group, you know, often on, I would say when I was working, of course, it was a bit more difficult.

But often on, I've been either a member of a church choir or a member of a community choir and we lived in Keel, it was the Keel choir.

And then I didn't sing for quite a few years. And then of course, during lockdown, caught COVID and I was really quite poorly for, you know, a while.

And I had that long COVID as well. And when things started to kind of open up a little bit more, it was Chris who started the singing groups before the choir actually came back into

And I started going to that and I really did find it helped a lot with my mental state because obviously after having Covid and being quite poorly with long Covid for a while you know I was quite depressed really and it really did I find it was one of the things that really helped you know sort of get me get me back to normal I suppose is one way I would describe it that was thinking with a small group then you know we were all socially distanced what have you and some of us were still singing in masks and so it was quite an odd situation really but yeah but I did find that it really did it really did help you know it gave me a sense of purpose as well I think everyone obviously it was a terrible time during Covid and just having that connection with other people especially yes I

Becci Morrell

I was alone at me and me and the dog and luckily I'd obviously, it wasn't too bad immediately because everything's quite spaced out.

yeah, did it suddenly when it all started opening up again, you were a bit like, oh, I don't know how to react to it, I don't know how to cope.

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

So it was probably a nice amount like that as well, isn't it? Oh, people. Yeah, yeah, it was, it was, and it's it's one of the things that's helped me keep up with with old friends as well, you know, because we used to be a member of the, well, not at the moment, but we used to be a member of the doggy map choir, the hospice choir, and you know, I used to go to that with an old, you know, with an old friend sort of thing, and it was a good way of keeping up with her.

So yeah, I found that, you know, going singing choirs of various sorts of, have been a, you know, been a great social thing and my husband is disabled so there's a lot of things that he can't do but he does come to choir with me now so you know it's something we can do together.

Becci Morrell

Oh that's amazing that's brilliant yeah I love I love them all about ensemble singing since what I'm really passionate about so this is why I'm doing the research so question number two I'm sorry I have to keep looking away I've just got a lot of fun and how do you think the social aspect of ensemble singing contributes to its impact on your mental health do you believe the social connections formed during singing are as important as the act of singing itself?

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

Yes definitely definitely you know I mean there's always going to be people you don't get on with that's life you know but it is nice because you do you're seeing the same relatively alone you people join and people leave you do seem the same face is kind of over and over

again, you know. So yes, I quite like enjoyed the social aspect of it and I think as well that Chris is very careful to make sure that we do make those kind of social connections with one another.

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I've had one of my other participants who I've interviewed and they said that it's so nice as well because some people don't even get the chance to go out each week and if they're part of a choir, it's sort of there.

Yeah, it's going to have a cup of tea and you know it's it's their only chance of getting out and seeing people.

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Yeah, if people are there, you do kind of wonder where they are and you know you might make quizzes too, know, so you weren't a choir on such and such a day, you know, okay.

Becci Morrell

That's nice, like a community.

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

Yeah, yeah, yeah, exactly.

Becci Morrell

So question number three, some participants mention reductions in stress and anxiety through singing. If this applies to you, can you describe how ensemble singing has helped you cope with stress situations or reduced anxiety in your life, if it has?

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Yeah, I mean, it probably doesn't apply quite the same many more, because I'm not working, do you know what I mean?

The biggest stressor in my life was always work, because I was a secondary school teacher, so...

Becci Morrell

It's a gold medal.

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

Yeah, it's in the past, apparently. Yeah, it probably doesn't apply in quite the same way now. But even so, I think that, you know, when you go to choir and you start singing, I mean, past the meetings where I think, oh, particularly now, when it's cold and dark, excuse me, I'm going to have to just get the door.

While it's cold and dark, you think, oh God, I don't want to go out in the cold sort of thing, do you what I mean?

But actually, when you do go and you do kind of make the effort, and what have you, It does.

The thing is about singing is that while you concentrate on the singing, you're not worrying about other things.

Becci Morrell

Yeah.

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

Thanks very much. Cheers. Bye. So I think, you know, that's the truth about it really is that it allows you to, you know, concentrate on other things, which reduces other stresses.

And also I think there's a joy in singing too. Take your way to get it right. Take you when it sounds good, you know.

There is a joy in it. And I think that, you know, helps to promote. I'm sure that's for a good mental health.

Becci Morrell

It's quite hard to measure that unless you're getting personal experiences because, yes, you can understand science and you can talk about the anatomy and you can talk about what's going on in the voice and you can talk about this on a science level, but an emotional connection level that people work in different ways.

We're all very, very different. And we all think very differently, but that it across the board with the people that I've chatted to and the people that I've had surveys from, they all say, you know, it's a certain song or it's a certain memory, it brings back it evokes if you're doing a certain song and that connection with the music because you're doing it yourself, you're embodying it.

It's something that really, really does go like very cathartic and you go, it's a release of something or whatever.

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

Yeah, yeah, yeah. I find that particularly with when we do the church choir. Oh, the acoustic and the church beautiful.

Yes, they, partly it's the acoustics, partly it's the type of music which is very spiritual. Yeah, it's often quite dramatic in nature as well.

And you do, yeah, you get, you have some beautiful music and it really, it really is very moving.

Becci Morrell

Yeah, totally.

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

Yeah, it does, it does mean you on an emotional level, is it? you know, definitely takes you away from those day to day stresses.

Becci Morrell

It really does, it really does. So question number four, in the survey, a number of participants highlighted increased confidence or self-esteem.

Can you discuss whether this is something you, this confidence extends beyond singing and effects or the areas of your life, if it does.

So, how does singing help you to be more confident or?

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

I don't think I'm an under confident person anyway, because I was, like I said, was a second school teacher for many years.

you know, you've got to have a bit of confidence to stand in front of teenagers, you know. Haven't you just seen this for the best part of the day?

But I do think that, yeah, I do think that it does, it does help with self-confidence when you get things might, you know, when your voice becomes part of that beautiful sound, you know, I think it does help with confidence.

Becci Morrell

Yeah, I was one of my other participants said is suddenly you've never done Latin or Italian before, if you thought that and you do it line by line and then suddenly six weeks down the line, you've sung a whole song in Latin and not only that, created all these beautiful harmonies and it's like, oh my god, this is us.

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

Yeah, yeah. Well, for me, for me also, it also lent me into wanting to play a musical instrument.

Becci Morrell

That's brilliant.

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

I started out singing and then because I couldn't make head and tail of the music, you know, it was just like a foreign language, I thought I'd really like to be able to read music for the easiest way to read music, of course, is to actually, you know, play an instrument as well.

Oh, yeah, so I started to learn to play the piano and that was about two years ago. still go for lessons every week.

Yeah, no, yeah.

Becci Morrell

Oh, that's incredible. So it's like a bit of filtering to something else, another hobby.

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

so yeah, that's filtered into, I'd say that's filtered into my confidence with music, you know, and that of course, because I can now read music, that helps with the singing too.

Becci Morrell

So yeah. That's brilliant, really good. I love music all around.

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

Like if someone could take my television away, that will be absolutely fine, but don't take my music. I can't listen to it all the time.

Becci Morrell

Okay, so question number five, what specific aspects of ensemble singing, e.g. for example, the music, the group dynamic performance opportunities, do you think are most responsible for the mental health benefits you

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

experience from ensemble singing? Definitely the social side but also the performance aspects because that helps with confidence and you know when you those two aspects are quite important.

Becci Morrell

Yeah, that's great. So, question number six, how do you feel after a singing session? Do you notice an immediate change in mood or emotional state and if so, how would you describe that feeling?

And if so, it extend, does it just at that moment in time or is it something that extends throughout the week?

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

Yeah, I think Some, you know, some weeks, you know, some weeks, I think to myself, I do look at me watch and think the town's going to be at, you know, me.

so I wouldn't necessarily think that it's absolutely every week. But there are some rehearsals that you have, you know, or even the performances where things just come together, you know, and that really does lift you.

Yeah. And yeah, that will last, it will last at least the evening, probably into the next morning.

Becci Morrell

Yeah. It's nice to say something. I don't know, isn't it?

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

What's happened?

Becci Morrell

Yeah. can do often, isn't it?

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

Especially if you perform that.

Becci Morrell

Exactly.

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

Yeah. I remember a particular concert. It was actually not last year's Carol concert, but the one before that. So two years ago now, we had some absolutely.

beautiful music and there was one particular song which I'd really struggled to learn because it was it was quite difficult um but it really came together on the night you know I remember feeling quite euphoric after that because it just it just sounded so divine you know um and everybody commented on it afterwards how how you know how good the choir it sounded so yeah yeah things like that I really do kind of I was quite euphoric days really after that yeah it's so lovely when all the voices come together and there's very little else like it's not bad and you just use your voices as instruments to be a bit this incorrect especially if it's in a church and the acoustics are great massive big sound it it is it's lovely I love harmonies and things like that that's my passion so question number seven some people mentioned

Becci Morrell

and forming new friendships through ensemble singing? Could you talk more about how these social connections have developed with regard to yourself and whether they differ from other types of relationships in your life or other friendships you've formed?

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

Um, I think some of the friendships that I've made, some of the friendships that I have acquired are with people that I know already I do because of course I live in a relatively small community and of course quite a few of the people that I know well at church also come to choir.

it's a bit difficult for me to settle up for two. Do you know what I mean? Yeah, because that's interwoven with um with church and knowing people in other settings around the village, do you know what I mean?

I understand that, I understand. yeah, yeah. thing is when you live in a small community, it's you sort of I live in a small village, I only live I don't know far from you actually made like everybody knows everybody don't they and it's it's yeah it's a big body but you know quite a lot you know quite a few people yes you know quite a lot yeah yeah between church and choir you know that's quite it is quite a few people so um yeah I'm trying to think is to somebody who because I said I sit next to Katie but she's it she's she goes to church so yeah so yeah that's okay um question number eight what barriers or challenges have you faced in maintaining regular participation in ensemble seat at singing and how have these challenges affected your mental well-being I think when we were part of the doggy map choir um we lost our musical director

and which was the reason why we left in the end because not because it wasn't good because it is absolutely excellent but because they could only get in once the fortnight the choir rehearsal went to once the fortnight and of course it meant that if we were a one week then you missed a huge job it

could be a month or more before we got to attend the next choir rehearsal and that became quite disruptive yeah yeah yeah it did become quite disruptive in the sense that you were getting close to concerts and you didn't feel confident with the music tour which was a real you know it's a bit a downer really and also the venue changed so we had quite a bit further to travel so in the end we decided to you know just

to stop going to that choir and just concentrate on the choir immediately. Well, and of course, I belong to the church choir, which is a pop-up choir at certain times of the year.

But at this time of the year, when you're learning two sets of music, it's enough, really.

Becci Morrell

Yeah, I want to say that for you now. Regularity sort of helps with the sort of confidence within the setting instead of having it.

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

Yeah, it does. Yeah. Yeah. It really does.

Becci Morrell

I'm not quite sure if that answers your question or not. No, it does. It actually does, because you've seen the sense of regularity not only helps with your confidence, because you know, the material better, having that sort of ad hoc, it doesn't help with confidence and self-esteem, not just within yourself, within the music itself.

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

So yeah, it does answer my question.

Becci Morrell

Okay. And question number nine, how would you compare the mental health benefits of ensemble singing? to possibly other activities that you engage in for well-being, exercise, meditation or the hobbies, and do you feel that group singing offers something unique?

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

Yes, I think, you see, I think group singing, particularly if you counted in the music aspects of, you know, of reading and understanding music, I think it has more of an intellectual actual challenge to it.

So I think it's, whereas exercise is good for your physical body, I think music is good for your brain.

Becci Morrell

Yeah, yeah, I get that, I get that. Quite a lot of people have said that they find as well, I had one participant say that they suffered with mental health and anxiety that they found that there wasn't

as many obstacles to overcome to be able to get to a singing class, where I was getting up and doing the, putting the,

use on getting the things together just even just and then you go into a run or a physical activity then you come back and then you come in a wash change do all of that whereas in the singing you could just go right all I need to do is just get up and go if I can do that that's two obstacles and then I just use voice which which really and I hadn't even thought of it like that because it is quite a lot of engagement that goes into exercise even people you just go for I've got to get changed put my good gym stuff on get my shoes do this you don't think do you just do it so yeah yeah yeah um and finally just my last question thank you so much for taking the time out and thinking about your experiences overall what would you say the that's a difficult one really

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

I think initially, when I first started doing it, it brought me back to myself, now I think it's that, it's that aspect of being a part of something bigger.

Becci Morrell

Yeah.

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

Really.

Becci Morrell

love that.

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

Yeah.

Becci Morrell

It's nice. I'm always engaged in singing, whether it be ensemble, I love ensemble singing more than solo. I'm a teacher as well, but I stopped all of the singing all together and became a full-time teacher, of which I is overwhelming in itself being a teacher.

But I was like, I don't understand, just don't be on myself, I don't know what's wrong. And I just sit in my family about it, my mum said, well, why don't you try and just get a few more days of singing, if you can.

take Friday off from teaching and just do on a Friday and I was like yeah I'll see if that makes a difference and it actually made a massive difference because I felt like I'd lost a bit of what I'd always done.

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

Does that make sense? Yeah so I'm so interested in talking to people about who engage in ensemble singing because I really don't think that there's enough creative arts in schools for kids to engage in to have a look and in fact quite a few when I was I mean I'm not totally sure what the light now but you know five years ago when I was tired there was there was an outright attack on the creative arts there would be marginalized completely yeah you know in favor of academia in particular English maths and sciences.

Becci Morrell

It's exactly the same and I'm not discounting the English in the maths but I think there's so many targets that I had to be able to.

hit, especially for young kids, that they're, I might be making a blanket statement, but they don't have a chance to just be creative or to have an outlet and just eat, you know what, I'm just going to go, there's a choir on every lunchtime at school, I'm going to go there, going to sing them out, I'm just going to have a good old time, and then write okay back to science.

There's no, it's all about targets and it's becoming very inaccessible, especially.

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

Especially in my experience of working with teenagers, it's often quite hard to get them to participate in, you know, things like choirs.

They're fine when they're in year 7 and 8, but once they start sort of getting into proper teenagers, know, it's part of embarrassing to, you know, to stand up and sing basically, because I was in a phase school, you'd never get the case to sing during maths or things like that.

that. But at the end of the year we used to do these days where they used to get some youth workers in and they do like you know music workshops with them and they absolutely you'd hear the noise coming from the hall and you'd think that can't possibly be a nine singing like that you know but they really got them sort of involved in it and it is possible but unless you give them the opportunities it's not something that they get to really.

Becci Morrell

No I totally agree I totally agree but yeah I just want to say thank you so so much for taking the time to answer my questions my report isn't until April of next year but if you would like copy you're more than welcome to sit and read 7,000 words but yeah it's been lovely to speak to you.

I might go down lately at some point just to see Chrissy and some of people you've spoken to, she's doing amazing stuff and it's quite a bit of an emotional roller coaster, I'll be honest.

Okay, no worries. thank you very much Jeanette and I'll speak to you soon. Take care.

JD interview 3 - December 06

Topics

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It's a gold medal.

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

Yeah, it's in the past, apparently. Yeah, it probably doesn't apply in quite the same way now. But even so, I think that, you know, when you go to choir and you start singing, I mean, past the meetings where I think, oh, particularly now, when it's cold and dark, excuse me, I'm going to have to just get the door.

While it's cold and dark, you think, oh God, I don't want to go out in the cold sort of thing, do you what I mean?

But actually, when you do go and you do kind of make the effort, and what have you, It does.

The thing is about singing is that while you concentrate on the singing, you're not worrying about other things.

Becci Morrell

Yeah.

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

Thanks very much. Cheers. Bye. So I think, you know, that's the truth about it really is that it allows you to, you know, concentrate on other things, which reduces other stresses.

And also I think there's a joy in singing too. Take your way to get it right. Take you when it sounds good, you know.

There is a joy in it. And I think that, you know, helps to promote. I'm sure that's for a good mental health.

Becci Morrell

It's quite hard to measure that unless you're getting personal experiences because, yes, you can understand science and you can talk about the anatomy and you can talk about what's going on in the voice and you can talk about this on a science level, but an emotional connection level that people work in different ways.

We're all very, very different. And we all think very differently, but that it across the board with the people that I've chatted to and the people that I've had surveys from, they all say, you know, it's a certain song or it's a certain memory, it brings back it evokes if you're doing a certain song and that connection with the music because you're doing it yourself, you're embodying it.

It's something that really, really does go like very cathartic and you go, it's a release of something or whatever.

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

Yeah, yeah, yeah. I find that particularly with when we do the church choir. Oh, the acoustic and the church beautiful.

Yes, they, partly it's the acoustics, partly it's the type of music which is very spiritual. Yeah, it's often quite dramatic in nature as well.

And you do, yeah, you get, you have some beautiful music and it really, it really is very moving.

Becci Morrell

Yeah, totally.

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

Yeah, it does, it does mean you on an emotional level, is it? you know, definitely takes you away from those day to day stresses.

Becci Morrell

It really does, it really does. So question number four, in the survey, a number of participants highlighted increased confidence or self-esteem.

Can you discuss whether this is something you, this confidence extends beyond singing and effects or the areas of your life, if it does.

So, how does singing help you to be more confident or?

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

I don't think I'm an under confident person anyway, because I was, like I said, was a second school teacher for many years.

you know, you've got to have a bit of confidence to stand in front of teenagers, you know. Haven't you just seen this for the best part of the day?

But I do think that, yeah, I do think that it does, it does help with self-confidence when you get things might, you know, when your voice becomes part of that beautiful sound, you know, I think it does help with confidence.

Becci Morrell

Yeah, I was one of my other participants said is suddenly you've never done Latin or Italian before, if you thought that and you do it line by line and then suddenly six weeks down the line, you've sung a whole song in Latin and not only that, created all these beautiful harmonies and it's like, oh my god, this is us.

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

Yeah, yeah. Well, for me, for me also, it also lent me into wanting to play a musical instrument.

Becci Morrell

That's brilliant.

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

I started out singing and then because I couldn't make head and tail of the music, you know, it was just like a foreign language, I thought I'd really like to be able to read music for the easiest way to read music, of course, is to actually, you know, play an instrument as well.

Oh, yeah, so I started to learn to play the piano and that was about two years ago. still go for lessons every week.

Yeah, no, yeah.

Becci Morrell

Oh, that's incredible. So it's like a bit of filtering to something else, another hobby.

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

so yeah, that's filtered into, I'd say that's filtered into my confidence with music, you know, and that of course, because I can now read music, that helps with the singing too.

Becci Morrell

So yeah. That's brilliant, really good. I love music all around.

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

Like if someone could take my television away, that will be absolutely fine, but don't take my music. I can't listen to it all the time.

Becci Morrell

Okay, so question number five, what specific aspects of ensemble singing, e.g. for example, the music, the group dynamic performance opportunities, do you think are most responsible for the mental health benefits you

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

experience from ensemble singing? Definitely the social side but also the performance aspects because that helps with confidence and you know when you those two aspects are quite important.

Becci Morrell

Yeah, that's great. So, question number six, how do you feel after a singing session? Do you notice an immediate change in mood or emotional state and if so, how would you describe that feeling?

And if so, it extend, does it just at that moment in time or is it something that extends throughout the week?

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

Yeah, I think Some, you know, some weeks, you know, some weeks, I think to myself, I do look at me watch and think the town's going to be at, you know, me.

so I wouldn't necessarily think that it's absolutely every week. But there are some rehearsals that you have, you know, or even the performances where things just come together, you know, and that really does lift you.

Yeah. And yeah, that will last, it will last at least the evening, probably into the next morning.

Becci Morrell

Yeah. It's nice to say something. I don't know, isn't it?

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

What's happened?

Becci Morrell

Yeah. can do often, isn't it?

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

Especially if you perform that.

Becci Morrell

Exactly.

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

Yeah. I remember a particular concert. It was actually not last year's Carol concert, but the one before that. So two years ago now, we had some absolutely.

beautiful music and there was one particular song which I'd really struggled to learn because it was quite difficult um but it really came together on the night you know I remember feeling quite euphoric after that because it just it just sounded so divine you know um and everybody commented on it afterwards how how how you know how good the choir it sounded so yeah yeah things like that I really do kind of I was quite euphoric days really after that yeah it's so lovely when all the voices come together and there's very little else like it's not bad and you just use your voices as instruments to be a bit this incorrect especially if it's in a church and the acoustics are great massive big sound it it is it's lovely I love harmonies and things like that that's my passion so question number seven some people mentioned

Becci Morrell

and forming new friendships through ensemble singing? Could you talk more about how these social connections have developed with regard to yourself and whether they differ from other types of relationships in your life or other friendships you've formed?

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

Um, I think some of the friendships that I've made, some of the friendships that I have acquired are with people that I know already I do because of course I live in a relatively small community and of course quite a few of the people that I know well at church also come to choir.

it's a bit difficult for me to settle up for two. Do you know what I mean? Yeah, because that's interwoven with um with church and knowing people in other settings around the village, do you know what I mean?

I understand that, I understand. yeah, yeah. thing is when you live in a small community, it's you sort of I live in a small village, I only live I don't know far from you actually made like everybody knows everybody don't they and it's it's yeah it's a big body but you know quite a lot you know quite a few people yes you know quite a lot yeah yeah between church and choir you know that's quite it is quite a few people so um yeah I'm trying to think is to somebody who because I said I sit next to Katie but she's it she's she goes to church so yeah so yeah that's okay um question number eight what barriers or challenges have you faced in maintaining regular participation in ensemble seat at singing and how have these challenges affected your mental well-being I think when we were part of the doggy map choir um we lost our musical director

and which was the reason why we left in the end because not because it wasn't good because it is absolutely excellent but because they could only get in once the fortnight the choir rehearsal went to once the fortnight and of course it meant that if we were a one week then you missed a huge job it could be a month or more before we got to attend the next choir rehearsal and that became quite disruptive yeah yeah yeah it did become quite disruptive in the sense that you were getting close to concerts and you didn't feel confident with the music tour which was a real you know it's a bit a downer really and also the venue changed so we had quite a bit further to travel so in the end we decided to you know just

to stop going to that choir and just concentrate on the choir immediately. Well, and of course, I belong to the church choir, which is a pop-up choir at certain times of the year.

But at this time of the year, when you're learning two sets of music, it's enough, really.

Becci Morrell

Yeah. I want to say that for you now. Regularity sort of helps with the sort of confidence within the setting instead of having it.

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

Yeah, it does. Yeah. Yeah. It really does.

Becci Morrell

I'm not quite sure if that answers your question or not. No, it does. It actually does, because you've seen the sense of regularity not only helps with your confidence, because you know, the material better, having that sort of ad hoc, it doesn't help with confidence and self-esteem, not just within yourself, within the music itself.

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

So yeah, it does answer my question.

Becci Morrell

Okay. And question number nine, how would you compare the mental health benefits of ensemble singing? to possibly other activities that you engage in for well-being, exercise, meditation or the hobbies, and do you feel that group singing offers something unique?

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

Yes, I think, you see, I think group singing, particularly if you counted in the music aspects of, you know, of reading and understanding music, I think it has more of an intellectual actual challenge to it.

So I think it's, whereas exercise is good for your physical body, I think music is good for your brain.

Becci Morrell

Yeah, yeah, I get that, I get that. Quite a lot of people have said that they find as well, I had one participant say that they suffered with mental health and anxiety that they found that there wasn't as many obstacles to overcome to be able to get to a singing class, where I was getting up and doing the, putting the,

use on getting the things together just even just and then you go into a run or a physical activity then you come back and then you come in a wash change do all of that whereas in the singing you could just go right all I need to do is just get up and go if I can do that that's two obstacles and then I just use voice which which really and I hadn't even thought of it like that because it is quite a lot

of engagement that goes into exercise even people you just go for I've got to get changed put my good gym stuff on get my shoes do this you don't think do you just do it so yeah yeah yeah um and finally just my last question thank you so much for taking the time out and thinking about your experiences overall what would you say the that's a difficult one really

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

I think initially, when I first started doing it, it brought me back to myself, now I think it's that, it's that aspect of being a part of something bigger.

Becci Morrell

Yeah.

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

Really.

Becci Morrell

love that.

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

Yeah.

Becci Morrell

It's nice. I'm always engaged in singing, whether it be ensemble, I love ensemble singing more than solo. I'm a teacher as well, but I stopped all of the singing all together and became a full-time teacher, of which I is overwhelming in itself being a teacher.

But I was like, I don't understand, just don't be on myself, I don't know what's wrong. And I just sit in my family about it, my mum said, well, why don't you try and just get a few more days of singing, if you can.

take Friday off from teaching and just do on a Friday and I was like yeah I'll see if that makes a difference and it actually made a massive difference because I felt like I'd lost a bit of what I'd always done.

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

Does that make sense? Yeah so I'm so interested in talking to people about who engage in ensemble singing because I really don't think that there's enough creative arts in schools for kids to engage in to have a look and in fact quite a few when I was I mean I'm not totally sure what the light now but you know five years ago when I was tired there was there was an outright attack on the creative arts there would be marginalized completely yeah you know in favor of academia in particular English maths and sciences.

Becci Morrell

It's exactly the same and I'm not discounting the English in the maths but I think there's so many targets that I had to be able to.

hit, especially for young kids, that they're, I might be making a blanket statement, but they don't have a chance to just be creative or to have an outlet and just eat, you know what, I'm just going to go, there's a choir on every lunchtime at school, I'm going to go there, going to sing them out, I'm just going to have a good old time, and then write okay back to science.

There's no, it's all about targets and it's becoming very inaccessible, especially.

Jeanette's Galaxy S20 FE

Especially in my experience of working with teenagers, it's often quite hard to get them to participate in, you know, things like choirs.

They're fine when they're in year 7 and 8, but once they start sort of getting into proper teenagers, know, it's part of embarrassing to, you know, to stand up and sing basically, because I was in a phase school, you'd never get the case to sing during maths or things like that.

that. But at the end of the year we used to do these days where they used to get some youth workers in and they do like you know music workshops with them and they absolutely you'd hear the noise coming from the hall and you'd think that can't possibly be a nine singing like that you know but they really got them sort of involved in it and it is possible but unless you give them the opportunities it's not something that they get to really.

Becci Morrell

No I totally agree I totally agree but yeah I just want to say thank you so so much for taking the time to answer my questions my report isn't until April of next year but if you would like copy you're more than welcome to sit and read 7,000 words but yeah it's been lovely to speak to you.

I might go down lately at some point just to see Chrissy and some of people you've spoken to, she's doing amazing stuff and it's quite a bit of an emotional roller coaster, I'll be honest.

Okay, no worries. thank you very much Jeanette and I'll speak to you soon. Take care.

JT interview 2 Part 1 - December 06

Key Takeaways

Topics

Personal Experience with Ensemble Singing

Social Aspects and Community Building

Mental Health and Well-being Impact

Confidence and Personal Growth

Unique Benefits of Ensemble Singing

Challenges in Participation

Self-Belief and Collective Achievement

Mental Health Benefits of Singing vs. Exercise

Long-term Commitment and Satisfaction

Research Context

Coding colours – selective coding

Mental Health Benefits **Light green**

Social Connectedness **Light Blue**

Personal Development **Light Yellow**

Self-Fulfilment **Light Purple**

Becci Morrell

Perfect. Okay. Thank you so, so much, Jody, for first of all doing this survey. I had a great response and also for getting back to me to say that you would do the interview questions.

Basically, what I'm doing my research into is, as you well know, the mental well-being health and well-being of individuals when they partake in ensemble singing.

And I just want a more new depth interview, just one to one, so that I can get a better understanding of how people feel that ensemble singing has affected their mental health and well-being.

So my first question is, many participants when they have done the survey indicated changes in their mental well-being through ensemble singing.

Do you feel the supplies to you? And if so, could you share specific examples of how singing in a group has affected your emotional or psychological state?

Jodie Totman

So yes, it definitely applies to me. I've been part of two choirs in my life and the choir that I'm part of at the moment was because I had moved to a new area of leadership so I didn't know anybody and I saw an advert for the choir and because I sung in a choir previously, I was like I might be a way to meet people or at the very minimum, even if I don't meet any of the people, I know I like singing so I thought I can just try it.

It's one of those very relaxed atmospheres that you don't have to sign up like a club and do a certain amount so it was it was very welcoming in that way for somebody that had

struggled with anxiety and panic attacks to be like, I can just drop in and leave if I want to.

So even from the very first session, it was very accessible. then being there, what I found almost immediately was that I recognised some of the songs and they were songs that I had listened to personally and had helped me with my confidence anyway.

So then to be in a room with 50 of the people, all doing the same thing. was like, I'm so glad that I turned up.

Yeah.

Becci Morrell

felt a connection. Did you feel a connection? Yeah. felt like you felt, oh, I belong here.

Jodie Totman

This is where I need to be. Yeah, exactly. it's the singing. I think being part of a quiet, Or, you know, for me, it's a quite, I know, there's all the types of ensemble singing.

It's, again, it's not scary in rehearsals, because you're all sat facing the same way. Nobody's got their eyes on you, so it's not like you're under the spotlight.

Because you're part of a group, it's almost, if you don't want to sing loud, you don't have to, you can just let yourself be drowned out, there's no spotlight on you, and then you're creating something together.

That's what I really enjoy about it, and yeah, there's other parts, but I'm sure you'll ask questions.

Becci Morrell

No, that's all right, I'm glad you're so passionate about it, as I am. So question two is, how do you think the social aspect of ensemble singing contributes to its impact on your mental health?

Do you believe the social connections formed during singing are as important as the act of singing?

Jodie Totman

self. 100% agree because if it wasn't for the connections the different members of the choir would probably not turn up every week or you know we have lot of older people in our choir and on rainy nights or icy nights you don't get as many people turn up to the choir or even in summer when it's really sunny and people want in their gardens but let's take a frosty icy night people will make the extra effort and say oh you know oh if you're going to bother to go then our bother to go I'll give you a lift so you don't have to walk and we also have like a 10-15 minute break in the middle of the rehearsals and each week different people have signed up to bring like cakes or homemade cheese straws or something something. So it's another way of getting you up out of your seat, going over to the like snack table and going, Oh, made these?

And so even if you think, like, I've got nothing to say, people just talk and there's always something to talk about.

Or if you like the songs or if you've ever heard of the songs, people joke because I'm one of the younger ones in the choir, that I might have not have heard of some of the songs.

But then, you know, we turn around and a Disney song is on the list that they've never heard of.

So it's a sense of community. Yeah, it's the thing of almost like, I guess almost like being at a music festival, you're all there for the same reason.

It doesn't matter who you are away from, you've all turned up on that day, no matter on your age, religion, race, , anything like that, because

music just does that to people and everybody you know as we're leaving people are talking about the songs or still singing the last song that we were doing and I really like that it makes me smile as I leave and people go into their cars in all different places you can hear the chatter that they're still and it like lives on as they leave and I go home and I'm singing and I live on my own and I've got a cat and I go home and I'm singing to the cat still like what's in my mind so yeah it's it's not just an hour and a half you know it's it spreads beyond that's amazing talking of cat I'm sorry I've just got to open the door for my dog now she's going in bit of a moment when I'm at home she thinks that I'm just her attention wholly and she wants me to just just gonna let her on, go on let's go

Becci Morrell

Okay, so question number three is some participants, when they did the survey mentions reductions in stress and anxiety through singing.

If this applies to you, can you describe how ensemble singing has helped you cope with stressful situations or reduce anxiety in your life?

Jodie Totman

Yeah, I think this is one of the reasons that I'm passionate about and put myself forward to say that I don't mind talking about it.

The reason that I joined the choir that I'm in now during COVID was there was a time of domestic violence going on in my life and I needed to move and obviously it was during the pandemic and it was all difficult moved to a place.

just because it was somewhere that I could get during the pandemic, didn't know anybody at all. And then when I saw in the local paper this choir thought maybe that's a way of getting out there in this new community where I don't know anybody, it's a friendly way to introduce yourself or, and that is exactly what happened to people.

So, oh, not seeing you here before, what's your name, what's like, how long have you lived in this area?

And now, four years on, what it's gone to, is for two years in that, I was actually voluntarily part of the management team of the choir to help run.

And that was kind of to build up my confidence again in my own skills, like, personal things that I'd been through.

I've taken part in performances without anxiety or panic attacks because I feel so confident with the people that I'm surrounded with is a really good group of people.

And you don't have to tell everybody your life story, you know, and some people I only see at choir.

Some people, you know, we swap numbers and we just had a performance two weekends ago. And after the performance, we all went out to a restaurant to celebrate.

So again, it's another one of those things that carries on as that. The positive mental wellbeing aspect of being social and being fun and having people you can rely on.

And I guess going back on myself, like going back to the beginning when I first was turning up the first few sessions and I was kind of sitting there on my own and anxious and I was at a pretty low place in my life.

But then the piano starts playing or they play the backing track and you can't help. I don't know what it is chemically but you can't help but either tap your foot to something or if the music makes somebody else smile it is infectious and if you've heard a song before you get the education or you learn what a new word is.

I've had that before where I'm like what does this word actually mean? So you can have a different type of education and for me with panic attacks and anxiety it would very much be like a feeling of tension in my legs.

know some people get hot or some people feel sick. For me it would just be like my legs felt sick.

hence and I was like short of breath and then the magic of singing is it basically immediately sorts out your breathing because you have to breathe to be able to sing or breathe in a more regulated way and so within the first verse of something if it if it hadn't come I was like sing I need to take a bigger breath and yeah it's just it's just a fantastic thing you know amazing yeah I'm so sorry I'm so sorry you went

through a horrible time I'm so sorry but thank you I am very glad that you found Ensemble Singing and I am I've just interviewed somebody previously and said exactly the same I'm a massive advocate for the arts just arts in general and I think especially with within schools I think it's it's lacking and you know it's it's hard because

Becci Morrell

you want to You need you need the time to express yourself you need the time to be Creative and I think there's a lot that's gone now, which which is such a shame.

Jodie Totman

Yeah, but yeah I think that's part of it of maybe as a woman or as Maybe just be it.

I don't know young woman, but you kind of told to be quiet or to not be angry And so when you come across difficult times and you can't express yourself and you know, you're not at school So you're not like I wasn't really sporty anyway, but you know, you're not doing the physical stuff maybe or maybe It's gone into more of a depression and so you don't have the motivation to get up and exercise Yeah, but you can but you can walk into a room and use your voice and then when they when the choir

says, we need more volume telling you to be loud. So you're not shouting what all your problems are, but you're getting out some of that tension by going, no, I can't be loud, I can express myself.

So even though it's in a different way, it helps greatly.

Becci Morrell

Yeah, I can well imagine. It is, I find it very, yeah, you got to them.

Jodie Totman

Yeah, yeah.

Becci Morrell

So question number four, in the survey, a number of participants highlighted increased confidence or self-esteem. Can you discuss whether this confidence extends beyond singing and affects other areas of your life?

Jodie Totman

Yes, when I first started with the group that I'm with at the moment. Like I said, it was during the pandemic, through a difficult time period, I'd actually stopped working as well because I was then looking after my grandma and my dad, I was there, not care about, know, and the mental health side of things.

was like, I was done with the last job, which was a toxic job, kind of in a new beginning, but then it was the pandemic, so wrong time periods.

And that's why I volunteered, at first it was just, I'll help pack away the electric piano and put the chairs away, and then it was like, oh, the person that runs the choir is not going to be here, so I'll sit at the front desk and take all the names for the register that week.

then as I started to know more people, and start seeing what it takes. to run something like that, I was like oh maybe I do see some of these in myself and I'm in a room already where I'm accepted.

So you're not you're not having to prove yourself because everybody's there kind of on the same level because the the choir that I'm part of you don't have to audition or anything you know you just end up um good yeah yes it's everyone everyone can sing everyone can sing whatever capacity yeah it might not be amazing you might be off but unless you try and unless you learn and unless you sort of mix with the like-minded people you're never ever going to get the chance to be able to to expose yourself to that nobody's singer I don't believe that yeah yeah and and I've learned things all the way like I said the way to breathe at a certain moment or you know you can't um he gets the the of course

must it gets mad at us and says we sound like snakes, if you hang on an S at the end of the word, you know essentially you can't do a noise or through an S sound or a T sound and you know even learning little bits and like that or odd harmonies or different tempos of things or making sure you're listening for when it comes in.

But anyway, back to the comments part of it. I volunteered and put myself out because I felt like I was in a safe space and that's what was really important and I then started actually running part of the we've got a children's choir and I was kind of responsible for the children's choir for a little while and it was only because I'd been built up by these people around me and

it wasn't, oh you're a fantastic singer, so do this job, it was you're a lovely person and we're all here for the same reason, we all love this music, do you want to join in?

That was what it felt like, the welcomeness of it.

Becci Morrell

That must have massively helped yourself a statement, you know, actually, these guys put in their trust in me and they see things in me that possibly you might not see yourself, it's lovely to have people to boost you, you know, to find those qualities, it's great, it's great.

Jodie Totman

And then making part in doing concerts and people coming up and asking you questions and I was like, oh I know the answer is to everything I've been asked.

And then there was an opportunity for like they needed a new first aid, so I said okay yeah, I built up my confidence enough that I

could go then to this random training days or where I've never been before just because it was linked through an opportunity through that.

So then now I'm the first aide up for the choir for performances and things and eventually I got to a point where I was like doing the work with the choir and being supported in that like non-judgmental way by so many people um you know it's hard because if your friend your family said you're doing a good job it's almost they have to say it but when 20 people at a choir performance thank you for what you've done I'm like oh you didn't have to say that so it kind of almost means more and helps to build your confidence and I thought maybe I can get back into like this line of work and I used to work in education before and I didn't want to do that and now I work for Leicestershire Police.

And my confidence over the last two years working with the police has grown and they've just got a promotion as well.

Becci Morrell

Well done, well done you.

Jodie Totman

Thank you, I only started last week with the new job within the force. And it goes back from that very dark time to how I built my confidence through that and the choir was and still is one of those major factors.

Becci Morrell

That's incredible.

Jodie Totman

Really, really hard.

Becci Morrell

I'm so glad you're doing so well.

Jodie Totman

Thank you.

Becci Morrell

That's all right. Well, you've done it yourself. You've done it yourself. Going to a choir in itself on your own is pretty daunting.

So, you know.

Jodie Totman

really good question. like, I wasn't in a hand do that. I was like, because if not, I'd just be sitting at home not doing anything.

Becci Morrell

Sometimes we have to take the leap of faith sometimes. We can make many excuses and sometimes.

Jodie Totman

to go come on let's do it yeah exactly yeah okay so question number five um what specific aspects I'm ensemble singing for example the music the group dynamic the performance opportunities do you think are most responsible for the mental health benefits your experience I think we've touched on this quite a bit because you've said it isn't just it is the group dynamic because it's yeah I think it's definitely the social aspect as well it's not just the actual singing for example we've just had our christmas party this week where we all got together we spoke about how our performance had gone it was a bit more of a relaxed evening we sang through the songs just like for the last time of the season um you could mingle around with people more than a normal rehearsal so the fact that they

even have slops like that booked in but it is really good and I always enjoy going but you don't have to and then choir doesn't rehearse during like half terms but they still have a few people that will meet at the local library because I think for a lot of people if you don't have the choir every week if it's not on then somebody older might not see anybody that day so they always have that social side where they meet at the library for a cup of tea and a chat for an hour you're not doing anything but you've been brought together because of the choir so that has got such an effect on people yeah that's incredible it's about a sense of nudity isn't it because sometimes it does get forgotten oh yeah yeah and it's like it's all good

Becci Morrell

is it sounds amazing. To be honest, everyone I've spoken to is so enlightening and things that I've thought about myself.

I've gone, oh actually I didn't think of that and I didn't, you know, because you just, I don't know, you can see, I'd like to think that I'm quite open-minded and I see lots of different points of view, but then there's others and you go, I didn't even think of that one or didn't think of that.

It's been lovely to chat to people like yourself. So how do you feel after a singing session? Do you notice an immediate change in your mood or emotional state and if so, how would you describe that feeling?

Jodie Totman

I think it almost starts before the rehearsals, because even if I've not been thinking I'm in a bad mood or I can't be bothered, even if I've not been thinking that, but it might be there in the background, when I am like walking to the

or I get home, I am always thinking I'm so glad I went.

Becci Morrell

Yeah, so glad I made the efforts.

Jodie Totman

Or sometimes if I know it's been a bad day, I think I just want to put my feet up.

I force myself to go out because I know that previously it's helped me and seeing the people hearing the music, even if it's songs that I'm not that interested in or it might not be my favourite song.

It's a very difficult one. It's one of those things almost kind of like a meditation because you are solely focused on that one thing.

So you've forgotten about work, you've forgotten about your friends and family and well you're sitting with your friends but it drowns everything

or your emotional state is mainly like led by the music and the people around or you get that sense of achievement when you go oh yeah we just learned that really difficult harmony and you go oh we sounded a lot better than we did last week and so you're proud of yourself which again in this modern world is hard for people to say and so the fact that we look at each of us that five of us that normally sit together and we're like oh yeah we we sound good don't we it's such a foreign concept for the rest of your week yeah you're asking go i just wrote a great email like don't i know what you mean yeah don't do that so sit there and go you know what we're just really nailed that and what's next you know bring on more um and like i said i'm normally singing

when I go home or in the morning I'm still thinking about the thumbs that we've done and I'm like humming it as I'm coming into work.

So it just totally flips the day around and even if I'm having a good day then it just adds to it because I get all of these things.

If the rehearsal has been a more difficult one I still feel positive about it like because you go oh you know that's what it's like at the moment but in a few weeks time you know it's going to be we'll have learned it.

Yeah in one of our previous seasons we were learning less and warmer in Italian and the choir must was really good that we're just going to do two lines every week until we know it.

Yeah and so once we've got to like okay now we know six lines. What? my god can you believe it we know

who sings songs of this in Italian. And it's kind of just eye opening and making you believe that you can do these things.

So yeah, I love it.

Becci Morrell

I just love it. And it's short, it's short. I absolutely love that you love it and you're passionate about it.

Okay, so question number seven, some people mentioned in this survey, forming new friendships through ensemble singing, and could you talk more about how the social connections have developed and whether they differ from any other types of relationships in your life?

Jodie Totman

I know we touched on it previously saying that you weren't saying that didn't know anybody.

Becci Morrell

Well, how do you feel that those forming new friendships has impacted your life? Well, you've just had a brand new job and a promotion.

Jodie Totman

Do you think that that might not have happened, had you not had the obviously not saying that you couldn't do it?

But do you think that's all? It certainly improved my confidence tremendously. Having those people there, which for a long time, you only see them once a week.

So it's almost, I've had a professional counseling, so I know what I mean when I kind of describe it like this, but it's almost like, it's good to speak to somebody that doesn't know your family and it doesn't know your friends.

You don't see on a regular basis, they're a totally outside objective opinion and so you turn up and you've not got that much time to chat before we start rehearsing and then we only have a 15 minute break.

So you give them the highlights or the lowlights of your week or I'm going to have a new job and people kind of point you in the right direction or say, oh, if you've written this down, this quality down on your form, and so you get these lovely friendships that form out of genuine support.

whole, because there's 50 people sat in that room and I don't have that with all 50 people. You kind of find the people that each week, somebody says, oh, how did that interview go?

how are the kids or something? that's how it kind of slowly works together. And then, as I said, then it's like, oh, we'll just have the performance instead of us all going home, shall we go out and have a meal?

And we do that, or we're all getting together at somebody's house for Christmas. But like a Christmas meal, or we've been to the local pub, or even this week, after the choir rehearsal, me and one person were still talking, so we went to the pub for the two hours, just so that we could carry on talking.

now we've got a WhatsApp group with five people. And, you know, even non-quire, it stuff. I guess throwing in there because, and I'm 31, these ladies, I think one of them's 50, one of them's 60, one's 65, it does not matter at all, and I don't judge them, they don't judge me, and they just congratulate me on the new job, and one of them is going on holiday to Nepal soon, and so we're talking to her about that, it just doesn't matter who you are, so it's like, if it wasn't for this choir, the five of us wouldn't have been brought together, because we other than that, we don't cross paths, and we've made really close special friendships.

Becci Morrell

That's incredible, really, really hard.

Jodie Totman

Yeah, it's great. I call them quiet, yeah.

Becci Morrell

That's lovely, it is nice, there's no boundaries with regard to demographic when you think about sometimes you think you get

into these these groups and suddenly you're like oh I'm put together with these people but actually I don't feel I have got as much of a connection as I said you've just found these connections organically it's not been forced yes and and that's really lovely that's something that's really lovely that sometimes you don't get do we yeah yeah okay so question number eight what barriers or challenges have you faced in maintaining regular participation in ensemble singing and how have these challenges affected your mental well-being so time constraints you know things obviously we all have busy lives but has there ever been meeting you've not been able to attend or yeah I had a time maybe started last year when I like twisted my ankle so I couldn't drive so I couldn't go and it's not that far away but it had mentally made me a bit like I can't I don't want to bother to get up and get

Jodie Totman

to work somehow, I just want to sit and rest and if you don't go for a while, you're missing out on the learning of the songs and so when you come back you've not got the notes like scribbled on your pages and stuff but you've missed out, you might see people again and ask them how time because these people only meet each other once a week so it's quite fast moving with things rather than like with your work colleagues that you see every day.

So you do feel certainly that you've missed out or this year I was on holiday for a week before the half-term and we don't meet over half-term and then when I went again, so really it'd been three whole weeks until...

saw the people again and it really makes difference um just just feeling what you look like when meet on a Wednesday night and sometimes if when it's oh no I don't know what to do with myself these yeah I prioritise that so when when it's not there I'm like oh it's like half a routine as well isn't it I know I know myself I'm a bit of a creature of habit and I like to mean a routine and suddenly that routine is taken away and I suddenly go oh and then it's hard to get back into and it can be a little bit overwhelming if you haven't been for a few weeks and you go oh I don't I don't know I feel a bit nervous again you know yeah I don't know where we are with the learning or even if you're just walking a bit late sometimes that still makes me feel bit funny because I'm like oh can I see see available yeah but yeah it's

Becci Morrell

but it's fine. Yeah and so you you pretend weekly and it's it it helps it helps keep you constantly.

I know another um participant who I've just interviewed said it's lovely because it's even though we're only just going for a week I feel like an annoying tap is dripping but the tap drips and drips and drips and drains and then suddenly it goes a bit faster when I get to the choir and and that's as if that's my mental well-being.

I've filled my cup up every week to be able to come up and then it's sort of and then you start looking forward to going again which was a lovely analogy.

was like that's cool because it just sort of keeps you ticking along doesn't it?

Jodie Totman

Yeah and it depends on your personal life but it's either comes around really quickly or you're like I'm waiting for my Wednesday nights because I've maybe I've not been doing anything else.

Yeah. the moment we've finished for the year now and we're not starting back again until the middle of February.

And I have already thought, what am I going to do with my Wednesday nights? And so the people that I am sociable with, we've said we're going to meet up in December and we're going to meet up in January, again, to keep it ticking over.

don't want to lose the connections.

Becci Morrell

Yeah. That's lovely. So how would you compare mental health benefits of ensemble singing to other activities that you may engage in for well-being such as exercise, meditation or hobbies, do you feel that group singing offers something unique?

Jodie Totman

It does. I think as I said earlier, it does because I, in the past, have suffered with depression and I know there comes times with that when getting out of bed is too much.

Yeah. so exercise, when people. and you don't need to feel body embarrassed or anything because nobody cares what you look like.

So even though exercise has got its benefits for mental health, it cannot be the first thing that somebody with anxiety or depression or mental health struggles turns to.

There's got to be some kind of stepping stone in between because it can be so hard to exercise because I always like with anxiety really break things down into very small parts and so if I was laying in bed struggling one day and the point to get it's not just get up and exercise it's get up put on a specific outfit put on your trainers make sure you've got a bottle of water with you.

Either somewhere like a gym which is too intimidating or go out on the street where you feel you're being looked at or you might be a bit agoraphobic and you don't want to be far away from your house.

Come back, shower, feel sore muscles so then you don't want to do it again. So that's already I've counted eight parts and each of those could make you panic or be a depression barrier to stop you from getting to that point but if you can just use your voice for something it gets it into about three steps you know get in the car walk in the room use your voice so that's that's it and that's so it's much more manageable for mental health.

Becci Morrell

Unaccessible, isn't it?

Jodie Totman

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Becci Morrell

Well, most people can use their voices. Yeah, I think it's one month. There's other ways of doing it, so many other ways.

Jodie Totman

Isn't there makaton, sign language?

Becci Morrell

There's a way to communicate.

Jodie Totman

Yeah. And I think even if you sing one song with somebody else, or you know, require whatever it may be, you kind of get that instant satisfaction, whereas you might have to do half an hour of exercise to build up a sweat.

Yeah.

Jodie Totman

confidence. This meeting is being recorded. Oh yeah, is that okay? Yeah, I think self-belief rather than just confidence because it's the, it's per, even though it is ensemble singing, it's still a personal thing and when I do, I go away with my word book or my music or listen to the guy tracks to rehearse or go to a performance or invite people to watch the performance.

It's because I believe we've created something worth watching and you know, you don't, I don't take my work home and go, oh look, family, in an acceptable way.

I go and here's this lovely thing that I do everywhere, or you hear me talk about these people, that's who they are.

To be able to stand there with people that have now become my friends and say, this is something we've created together because if it was just me standing there in a room, it wouldn't be happening, would it?

It takes all of us as individuals and that's what makes it so special to keep turning up like that and that's why even on a bad day I'm like oh well if I go to Kaya I'll see these people, I'll sing this nice song I might learn a new one or hopefully we won't do that one I don't like or you know it gives you something totally different to your day-to-day life to focus on and and to feel proud of, yeah, yeah to feel proud of and to walk away and I not once have I ever walked away

from a choir and thought, no, I'm glad, I didn't want to be there. Every single time for four years, I thought, I'm so glad I went.

Yeah, yeah.

Becci Morrell

That's incredible. Well, all I can say is Jodie, thank you so, so much for sharing your with me.

Jodie Totman

I've got one more thing, because when we got cut off, I just quickly wrote down on my notepad what I was saying because I didn't forget.

Becci Morrell

Yes, because we were talking about comparing singing with like exercise.

Jodie Totman

Yes, yes, yes. Because when you finish singing, you don't hurt afterwards, but if you do exercise for your mental health, you might hurt and it takes weeks and weeks to build it up.

Yeah, so singing, because you don't have, you only have positive side effects really, you're more likely to do it again.

that is really good, especially for depression and mental health things like that where it's a struggle to do things because it's that short, short term high from feeling very low and then you don't have any negative side effects from it.

like, oh, I could do that again. So it's very manageable to then go to build it up whereas exercise is a bit more difficult.

Becci Morrell

Yeah, and I totally understand that and also getting to a point as well, exercise-wise, where you can feel that you've sort of gone, oh, yeah, I mean, you're getting wrong, just getting out and doing something in itself.

But to see the physical, I don't know, changes or to feel the physical energy.

Jodie Totman

It takes like eight weeks to start building yourself, but it takes one quiet event to make you walk home with a smile.

Becci Morrell

So yeah, it really, really does. Well, thank you so, so much. My, my paper isn't due until April, so I've got to go through all the surveys and go through all of the

and then I'll be deciphering writing the findings and the data and if you want to copy your more welcome to talk.

All of the information that I will be sharing, I'll anonymise you. So that will all be done but I really really do appreciate you taking the time out to share your experiences with me.

taking your heart out.

Jodie Totman

Yes, thank you so much. It's actually Helen that I know in my choir that sent me your...

Becci Morrell

Oh, Helen, so lovely.

Jodie Totman

Yeah, she's awesome.

Becci Morrell

Well, give my love to Helen and tell them thank you so much and hopefully I'll come in contact with you again soon at some point.

Jodie Totman

lovely. Thank you. Really nice to meet you as well. Yeah, nice to meet you too. Take care, thank you.

Bye-bye. Bye-bye.

Appendix 8 1:1 interview questions

Interview Questions: Exploring the Impacts of Ensemble Singing on Mental Health

1. Many participants indicated changes in their mental well-being through ensemble singing. do you feel this applies to you and if so could you share specific examples of

how singing in a group has affected your emotional or psychological state?

2. How do you think the social aspect of ensemble singing contributes to its impact on your mental health? Do you believe the social connections formed during singing are as important as the act of singing itself?

3. Some participants mentioned reductions in stress and anxiety through singing. If this applies to you, can you describe how ensemble singing has helped you cope with stressful situations or reduce anxiety in your life?

4. In the survey, a number of participants highlighted increased confidence or self-esteem. Can you discuss whether this confidence extends beyond singing and affects other areas of your life?

5. What specific aspects of ensemble singing (e.g., the music, group dynamic, performance opportunities) do you think are most responsible for the mental health benefits you experience?

6. How do you feel after a singing session? Do you notice an immediate change in your mood or emotional state, and if so, how would you describe that feeling?

7. Some people mentioned forming new friendships through ensemble singing. Could you talk more about how these social connections have developed, and whether they differ from other types of relationships in your life?

8. What barriers or challenges have you faced in maintaining regular participation in ensemble singing? How have these challenges affected your mental well-being?

9. How would you compare the mental health benefits of ensemble singing to other activities that you engage in for well-being, such as exercise, meditation, or hobbies? Do you feel that group singing offers something unique?

10. Finally, thinking about your experiences overall, what would you say is the most significant mental health benefit you've personally gained from ensemble singing?

Appendix 9 - Permission letter



Dear UWTSD,

RE: "What are the impacts of ensemble singing on the mental health of non-professional singers?"

I confirm that I approve of the research proposed into 'ensemble singing on the mental health of non-professional singers' to be carried out by Rebecca Morrell from August 2024 to April 2025.

Kind Regards,

Rebecca Morrell