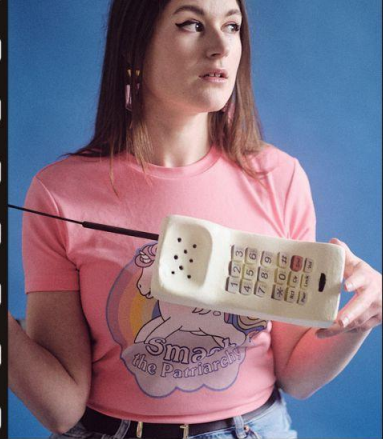


**A Mixed Methods, Interpretative
Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) of Music
Performance Anxiety (MPA):
Three accounts from singers in popular music**

BMPF7010: Work-based learning project
Emma O'Reilly | 2116236



Hello! I'm Emma

I'm a singing teacher, creative mentor,
performer, songwriter arranger, and voice
nerd.

MA, CET

Artist centered, evidence-based

We will look at...

1. Project Rationale

Background, justification, aims, objectives

2. Study Design & Ethics

Methodology, methods, and ethics

3. Findings and Analysis

The Analytic process and a snapshot of the findings

4. Discussion

The relationship to existing literature

5. Reflection and conclusion

Revisiting project aims, and drawing conclusions

6. Questions

Whatever you'd like to ask!



01

Project rationale

Background, Justification, aims, objectives

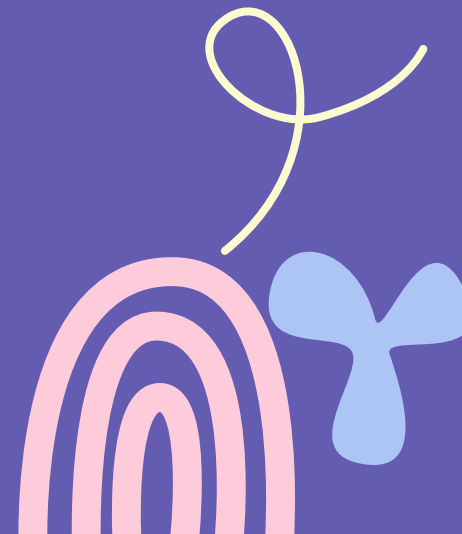
“

Music Performance Anxiety is the experience of marked and persistent anxious apprehension related to musical performance that has arisen through underlying biological and/or psychological vulnerabilities and/or specific anxiety-conditioning experiences. It is manifested through combinations of affective, cognitive, somatic, and behavioural symptoms. It may occur in a range of performance settings, but is usually more severe in settings involving high ego investment, evaluative threat (audience), and fear of failure. It may be focal (i.e. focused only music performance), or occur comorbidly with other anxiety disorders, in particular social phobia. It affects musicians across the lifespan and is at least partially independent of years of training, practice, and level of musical accomplishment. It may or may not impair the quality of the musical performance.”

Kenny, 2009 p.443



Why This topic?

- I have worked with many students with problematic Music Performance Anxiety (MPA) singing in popular genres - I wanted to support them more effectively
 - Engaging Literature about MPA intervention, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy/Coaching, courses and study
 - The singer's experience is underexpressed in the literature; teachers need to be careful with professional boundaries
 - Student language, student concepts of support
- 
- 
- 

Scoping review

Intended as a snapshot of the literature to identify qualitative studies, and to assess the presence of reporting on MPA in adolescent singers, in popular genres. The scoping review revealed a gap in the literature that reinforced and shaped the aims of the present study.

Further literature about MPA was investigated after the analysis of the study's data.

- **Keyword:** Music
Performance Anxiety
- **Database:** UWTSD library
- **Results returned:** 1097
- **Results assessed:** 100
- **Qualitative studies found:** 8
- Interviewees were teachers (5), undergraduate students (2), and choral singers (1)
- Genres were classical (3), Jazz (1), Not observed (2), and not applicable (1).



Aims

To add qualitative data to the literature on MPA - the perspectives of singers in popular styles

To better understand how singers conceptualise, understand, and experience MPA, and seek out support

To situate my findings alongside quantitative literature

To offer a supportive workshop beyond the study



Objectives



To gather quantitative data through interviews, and analyse findings within the framework of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

To develop as a qualitative researcher

To contribute to the literature

To incorporate participant language in practice



02

Study design and Ethics

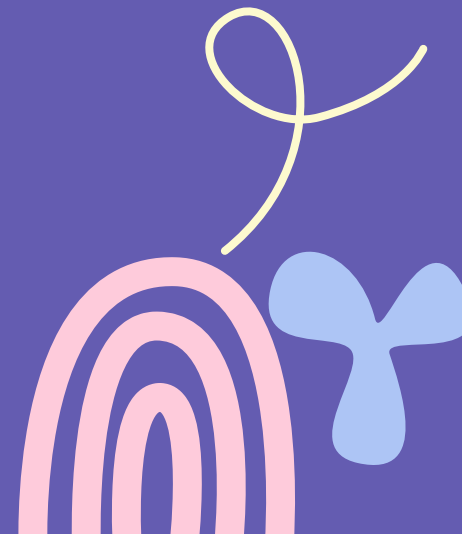
How methodology, methods and ethics combined to inform the structure of this project



Methodology: **Mixed Methods**

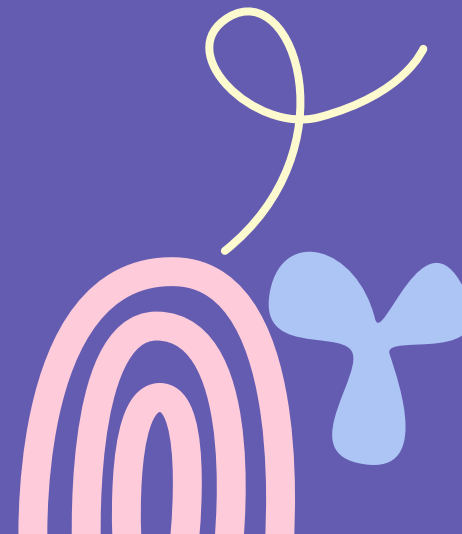
This study contains both positivist aims (to link to existing literature, to use quantitative measures), and constructionist ones (to accept multiple truths, meanings, and the subjectivity of individual interpretation).

A mixed methods embedded design was created to support this, utilising **Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis** (IPA) at its core.





Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

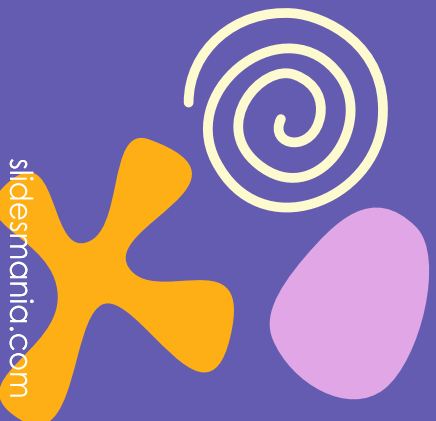
- **Phenomenology:** The essence of a phenomenon through the lens of the individual - language and linguistic structure, tone of voice (Eatough and Smith, 2017; Hefferon and Gil-Rodriguez, 2011)
 - **Idiography:** A focus on the humanity and world of the individual, as they experience it (Smith et al., 2022)
 - **Hermeneutic:** the study of texts to derive meaning, by moving between the parts of a text and the whole iteratively. IPA uses a **double hermeneutic**, as the researcher interprets the participant's interpretation (Smith, 2011)
 - **Semi-structured interviews** are a primary method of investigation (Delve and Limpaecher, 2023)
 - IPA has **specific language** around the stages of analysis (discussed in Findings and Analysis section).
- 



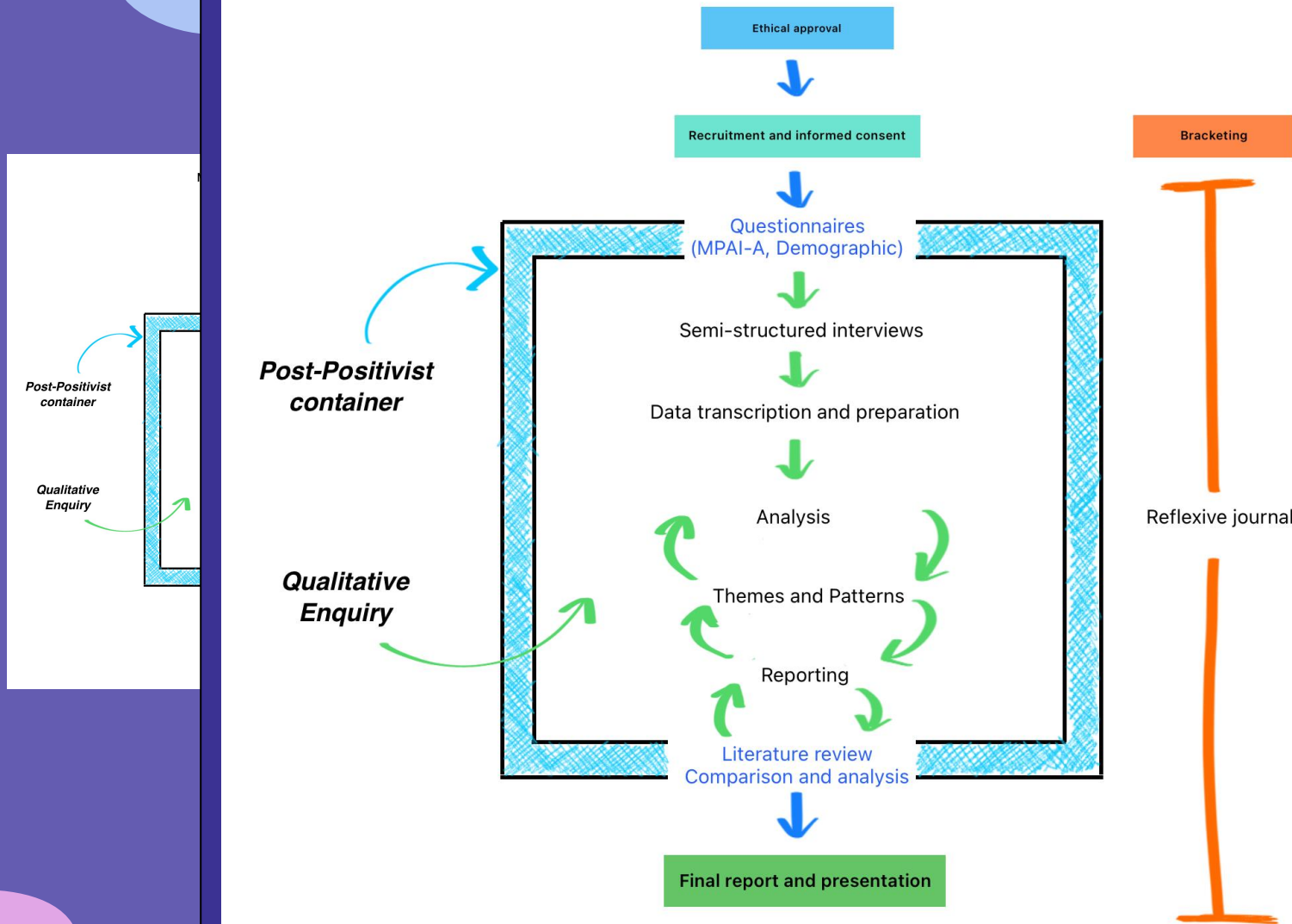
Methods:

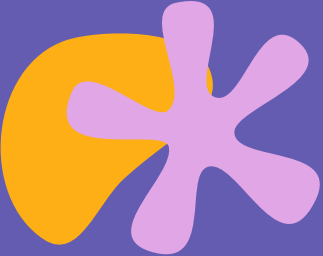
Quantitative and Qualitative

- **The Kenny Music Performance Anxiety Inventory, Revised** (KMPAI-R) (Kenny, 2021)
- **Demographic Questionnaire** (Office for National Statistics, no date; Government Analysis function, 2011, 2023; Gov.uk, 2023)
- **Research Journal**
- **Semi-structured interview** (Smith et al., 2022)



Mixed Methods Embedded Design





Insider AND Outsider (Breen, 2007)

Informed consent

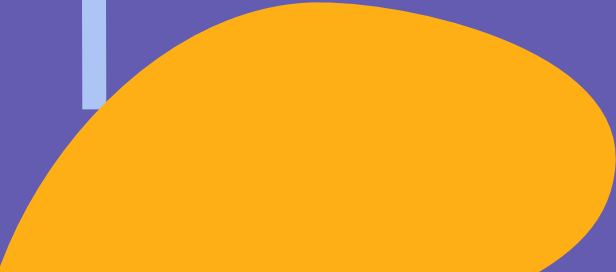
Participant wellbeing, safety

Participant data protection (Data
Protection Act, 2018)

~~DBS Check, Safeguarding training~~



Ethics



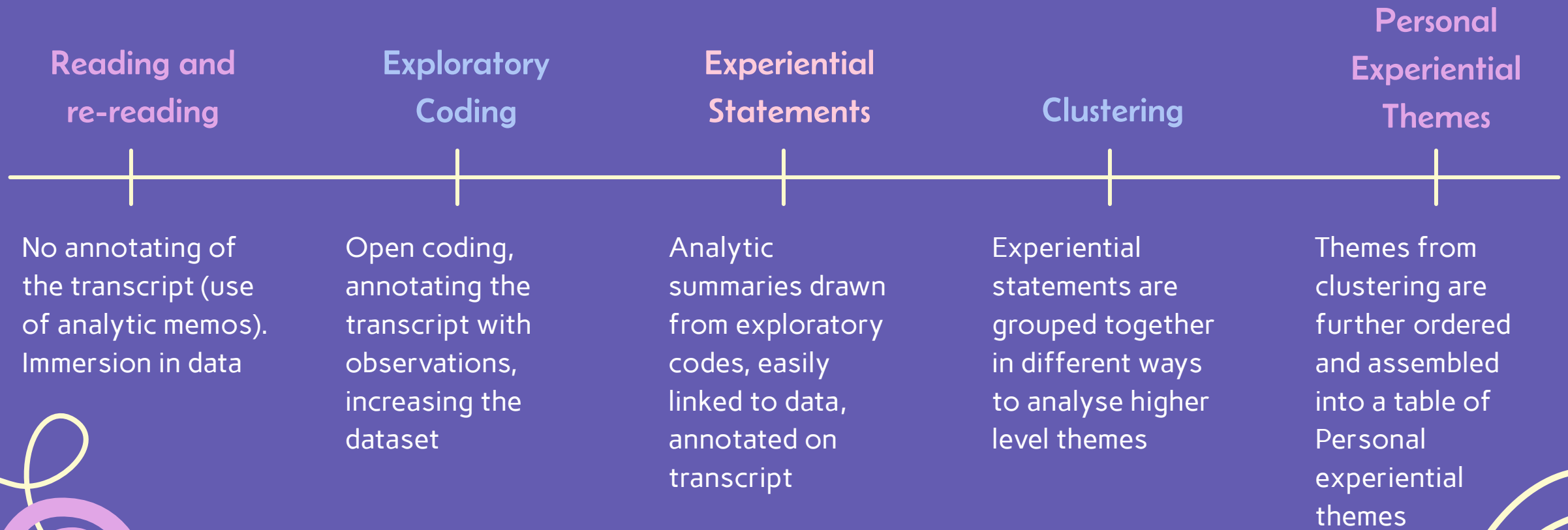


03

Findings and Analysis



The process of Analysis



Smith et al., 2022





Synthesise into Group Experiential Themes



Table of Personal Experiential Themes for Alicia

A. THE NATURE OF SINGING ITSELF

Singing is an enjoyable activity that enhances wellbeing

Singing leads to positive mind states and moods
"It's also kind of freeing, and...it also can definitely elevate moods". p.2
The experience of singing is likened to exercise: a natural high
"You kind of get that endorphin? Or whatever, kind of rush afterwards...because of what you're doing." p.3

Singing is a source of positive experiences of self: novelty, growth and development

Singing is a space where she is motivated to depart her habitual styles and explore
"It's also interesting to like, learn new ways of doing it, or like learning new songs, or being able to shift or move yourself into different directions." p.4
"I really need to get back into more like, Jazzy, um, like folk more, because I feel like I don't really do enough of that." p.5

Singing is of deep personal significance and represents a connection to the self

This is a source of deep connection for her
"It's kind of really like a deep thing." p.3
It is a longstanding part of her
"I guess I've been singing for such a long time. And it's just like a second nature kind of thing." p.4

Singers are perceived as people who don't play an instrument; those who do not play are lesser.

Being unable to play an instrument has emerged as catastrophic flaw
"People shouldn't feel less than just because they don't play an instrument. That was always my downfall in life." p.37
She has tried to ameliorate her "instrumentlessness" and this has led to a rigid mindset about ability.

A. ANXIETY IS A SOURCE OF INTERNAL CONFLICT THAT MANIFESTS PHYSICALLY AND PSYCHOLOGICALLY; ITS EARLY ROOTS AND CAUSES HAVE BEEN ADDRESSED, AND ITS IMPACT ON AUDIENCE RECEPTION IS SUBJECT TO MULTIPLE FACTORS

Early experiences of anxiety have resonances and divergences from her present experience

Recalling her first public performance in the supportive environment of her Church at 12 years old, she indicates that early experiences of performing were loaded with anxiety and self doubt. This included overpowering physical symptoms and intense existential worry
"It was intense when I first started singing. Yeah, there were days that, I always tell my friends and students like, I used to pray to God like, "am I ever going to get through this? Am I ever going to feel comfortable on stage? ever? you know. And um yeah, it was pretty intense." p.22
"[Singing in Church] just felt different for me, and so I was very, very nervous! [laughs] and...the.. at that time I was, I was very shaky. Voice was shaky, hands were shaky, sweating, dry mouth again. Um. And yeah, just all the, all the, the reactions from my body." p.26
This first public outing had been conceptualised by her as a rite of passage, a opportunity to share an independent identity with her community, her anxiety led to a misrepresentation of her ability and flouted her intention to share her authentic self
"I feel like my true voice didn't really even come out. So, I was definitely a little disappointed and sad about that. Umm. And yeah, I just, I always think about that moment." p.27
Sometimes the experience remained hidden
"I'm a calm, natured person. So everyone can't always tell what I'm feeling or thinking. But inward, inwardly, in those moments. Yeah, it was. It was pretty intense." pp.22-23
While she does not experience some of these symptoms anymore (like shaking), anxiety is still an internal war.
"Internally [anxiety] is, is..is a battle. It is, it is a battle..." p.13
"I've thankfully been able to learn a few tools to help me combat that." p.5
She often uses euphemisms in her descriptions of the experience
"I was a little disappointed..." p.42
"I did not do as well as I would like to have done..." p.27

A. SINGING IS A SIGNIFICANTLY DRIVEN BY VALUES, PURPOSE, TEMPERED BY THE EVALUATION OF OTHERS

A deep connection to music and singing outcomes that reach beyond music making her wellbeing.

Singing provides access to positive states like excitement, fun, and pleasure
Grace: "...it can be communal and it's fun? (Laughs) I don't know.
Researcher: Fun is good! (Laughs)
Grace: and it's exciting to like do new stuff, and then find out you can do new things.
Music can anchor her even in stressful performance situations.
"I just watch everyone else perform for a while, because then I can, like, settle into the environment and enjoy music before it's my turn." p.4
Singing lessons facilitated a connection to both singing and speech during a three-year health crisis, compounded by autism and selective mutism.
"Apart from in those singing lessons, I didn't speak to anyone for about..." [pause] three years p.34
Singing is a source of positive self-discovery.
Singing helps her to stretch the boundaries of what she can achieve
"I don't spontaneously say yes to doing things, um, at that point, but that wasn't always the case." p.27
During her mental health crisis, when she surprised herself when she did
"...it was almost like, when she did
When she did

Meet the singers



Alicia

40, USA, singing for 30 years, Pop, rock, folk, not professional.

KMPAI-R: 148/240

Anxiety



Grace

19, UK, singing for 13 years, Pop and folk, not professional

KMPAI -R: 197/240

Autism/ADHD



Joanna

33, USA, singing for 10+ years, R'n'B, Soul, Jazz, Professional

KMPAI-R: 174/240

Group Experiential Themes (Abbreviated)

A. TO PERFORM IS TO HAVE AN ACTIVE WORKING RELATIONSHIP TO EXTREME ANXIETY

They all feel its effects and experience its impact on their performances.

Anxiety also colours their interactions with performance environment or conditions

Others do not understand their experience - some don't even consider it

Their experience of anxiety is not static; all of them are developing and have developed over time

B. THEY HAVE DEEP, ESTABLISHED RELATIONSHIPS WITH SINGING AND THEIR IDENTITY IS INTERMINGLED WITH IT

Singing is a part of the self, and provides opportunity for positive interactions with themselves

This connecting of singing to the self can have ramifications for their experiences of performance with extreme anxiety

Self-image as a singer functions as a value, to which they orient themselves despite challenges and difficulties

Participants see a universality to their experiences, and advocate for others

C. THEY ARE ALL PRO-ACTIVE IN SUPPORTING THEMSELVES

Skill development is seen as an important facet of developing towards performance

Preparation is an important, practical manifestation of self-support, but may also be layered with the ulterior motive of experiential avoidance

Positive interactions with others - like encouragement and peer support - can enable performance

No participant has found a way to guarantee anxiety will not return

A. TO PERFORM IS TO HAVE AN ACTIVE WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH EXTREME ANXIETY



Others do not understand their experience
- some don't even consider it.

"Well, some people think that my experiences and their experiences of pre- performance nerves are the same, and they are absolutely not. I know this, because the people who've said that are middle aged men, who are not coming out of a vanishment from life, and who have grown up jobs, and do grown up things, and have been going to open mics and playing in some capacity for years, um and who know people, and who don't have to be intimidated by the environment they are entering. ehm. So our experiences of nerves are absolutely not the same. But those kinds of people will say things like, "Oh, we all get nervous "or "think positive thoughts" or um [pause] other equally useful things." (Grace, p.45)

B. THEY HAVE DEEP, ESTABLISHED
RELATIONSHIPS WITH SINGING AND THEIR
IDENTITY IS INTERMINGLED WITH IT

Singing is a part of the self, and
provides opportunity for positive
interactions with themselves

"What I love about singing is it's an internal instrument. It's an instrument that we carry around 24/7, 365 or 66. [laughs] And yeah, it's, it's, it's very unique in that way. Umm and you know, of course, there's there's pros and cons to everything, But what I love is just that fact. It's inside of me, and I can use it at any time. Uh, I also love...as I have grown into an appreciation for my own singing, I love the freedom that comes with singing. Umm there's just an...emotional connection with it, and it it has a way of balancing the other emotions that may not be as...positive, uh at that moment. So I love. I love that about singing."





"I think the voice lessons were really helpful, too, and to just...and positive and encouraging. So I don't feel like it's always a negative? Whenever I'm doing things like that [Singing in front of someone]? And not focusing on having to be perfect or having to be a certain way all the time, and more focusing on learning it in general. And I think that's probably been the most helpful, because then I don't feel so terrified anymore that I'm doing something wrong, or that it has to be perfect. And that's kind of decreased the self judgment for myself."

C. THEY ARE ALL PROACTIVE IN SUPPORTING THEMSELVES.

Skill development is seen as an important facet of developing toward performance.

"the process of developing skills as a singer and performer is probably one of the most positively valenced experiential aspects of being a singer."



04

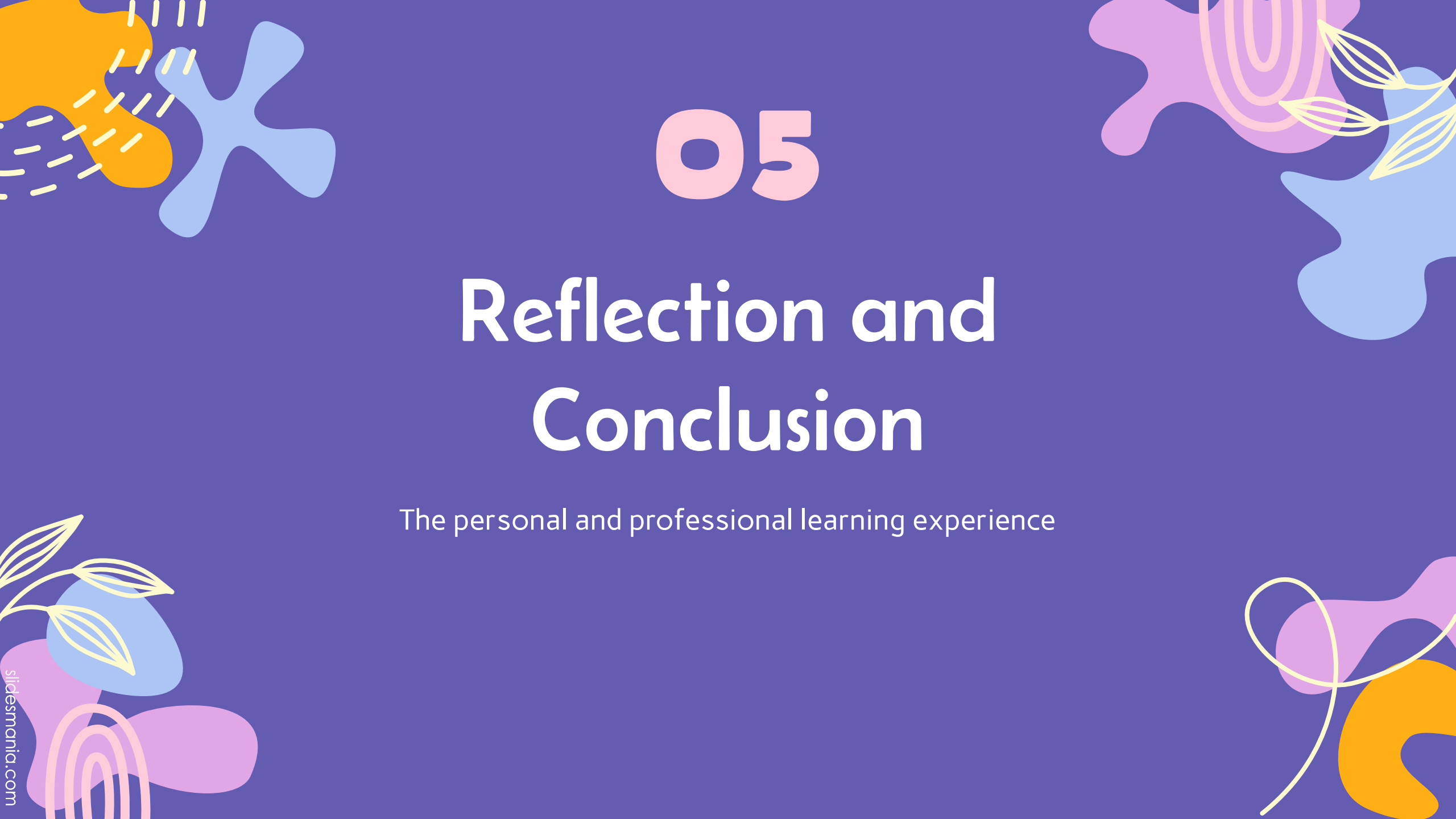
Discussion

Alignment with Qualitative Literature, relationship to Quantitative literature

Discussion and Literature

- Similarities with Physical symptoms (Barros et al., 2024, Irie et al., 2024)
 - Concern with Making mistakes (Irie et al., 2024)
- Opposite ideas about the origin of anxiety - within, and without (Barros et al, 2024, Paese and Egermann, 2024)
 - The role of teachers in supporting students (even if it's not always enough)(Clements-Cortéz, 2024)
 - Supports understanding without crossing boundaries
- Complimentarity of Qualitative data for studies like Mahony et al, (2022), or Shaw et al, (2020).
 - Differences in performing condition as popular musicians

-



05

Reflection and Conclusion

The personal and professional learning experience



Limitations Future directions

- Timeframe of study
 - Questionnaire structure
 - Subjectivity, small numbers of participants
-
- More qualitative research!
 - Martinez-Conde (2019) - getting research out.
 - Deeply affecting.
 - Interest in carrying on work

References

Delve, Ho, L., & Limpaecher, A. (2023) What is Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)?, /Available at: <https://delvetool.com/blog/interpretive-phenomenological-analysis> (Accessed: 30th July 2024)

Eatough, V. and Smith, J. A. (2017) 'Interpretative phenomenological analysis'. In Willig, C. and Stainton-Rogers, W. (eds.) Handbook of Qualitative Psychology (2nd Edn). London, UK: Sage, pp. 193-211.

Hefferon, K., and Gil-Rodriguez, E., (2011) 'Methods: Interpretative phenomenological analysis', Available at: <https://www.bps.org.uk/psychologist/methods-interpretative-phenomenological-analysis> (Accessed: 16th July 2024).

Kenny, D.T., (2016b) Music performance anxiety: Theory, assessment and treatment. Germany: LAP Lambert Academic Publishing\

Mahony, S.E., Juncos, D.G. and Winter, D., (2022) 'Acceptance and Commitment Coaching for Music Performance Anxiety: Piloting a 6-Week Group Course With Undergraduate Dance and Musical Theatre Students', Frontiers in Psychology. 13 (830230).

Martinez-Conde, S., Alexander, R.G., Blum, D., Britton, N., Lipska, B.K., Quirk, G.J., Swiss, J.I., Willems, R.M., and Macknik, S.L. (2019) 'The Storytelling Brain: How Neuroscience Stories Help Bridge the Gap between Research and Society; The Journal of Neuroscience. 39(42), pp. 8285-8290

Office for National Statistics [ONS] (no date) 'Ethnic group, national identity and religion Measuring equality: A guide for the collection and classification of ethnic group, national identity and religion data in the UK.' Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/classificationsandstandards/measuringequality/ethnicgroupnationalidentityandreligion> (Accessed: 10th September 2024)

Paese, S., and Egermann, H., (2024) 'Meditation as a tool to counteract music performance anxiety from the experts' perspective', Psychology of Music. 52(1), pp.59-74

Smith, 2011

Smith et al., 2022 Ch 5

References

Shaw, T.A., Juncos, D.G., and Winter, D. (2020) 'Piloting a New Model for Treating Music Performance Anxiety: Training a Singing Teacher to Use Acceptance and Commitment Coaching With a Student'. *Frontiers in Psychology*. 11(882), pp.1-14.

Smith, J.A., (2011) 'Evaluating the contribution of interpretative phenomenological analysis', *Health Psychology Review*. 5(1) pp.9-27

Smith, J.A., Larkin, P., and Flowers, M., (2022) *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis Theory, Method and Research* (2nd Edn). London: Sage

Barros, S., Marinho, H., and Pereira, A. (2024) 'Music performance anxiety in Portuguese higher education: Contextual factors, perceptions, and strategies', *Musicae Scientiae*. 28(2) pp.287-307

Clarke, L.K., Osborne, M.S. and Baranoff, J.A. (2020) 'Examining a Group Acceptance and Commitment Therapy Intervention for Music Performance Anxiety in Student Vocalists'. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11(1127), pp. 1-11. DOI: 10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01127

Clements-Cortéz, A., Pascoe, H., Pranjić, M., and Nan, F (2024), 'An explanatory sequential pilot inquiry on music therapy and performance anxiety in university music education majors', *The Arts in Psychotherapy*. 87, pp. 1-9

Higgins, J.P.T., Thomas, J., Chandler, J., Cumpston, M., Li, T., Page, M.J., and Welch, V.A. (eds.) (2022) *Cochrane Handbook for Systematic Reviews of Interventions*. (version 6.3) Cochrane, 2022. Available from www.training.cochrane.org/handbook.

Irie, N., Morijiri, Y. And Yoshie, M. (2023) 'Symptoms of and coping strategies for music performance anxiety through different time periods' *Frontiers in Psychology*. 14, pp.1-17