

Name: Syntyche Bishop

School: University of Wales Trinity St. David

Student ID: 2332535

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Supervisor: Louisa Morgan

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PROPOSAL

What is the impact of social media on music performance anxiety in adolescents?

Music performance anxiety (MPA) is characterized by intense fear or a noticeable decline in performance quality during public appearances, which exceeds what would be expected based on the musician's training, preparation, or level of skill (Salmon, 1990).

As a singer and actress, I have experienced MPA firsthand. As a vocal and performance coach, I have also seen many students struggle with it in class, on stage, and at competitions. With social media deeply embedded in young people's lives, I often wonder to what extent this contributes to their anxiety. O'Reilly et al. (2018) highlight the rise in serious mental health issues among youth worldwide. Given how frequently my students use social media, I take this concern seriously. O'Reilly et al. (2018) also note that while evidence linking social media to adolescent mental health is growing, there is still limited research on how young people interpret and engage with these platforms. Over the past decade, concerns about increasing mental health challenges have intensified, highlighting a notable lack of research on this issue within the Caribbean context (Liverpool et al., 2021), an important factor to consider since I am based in Trinidad and Tobago. This study will contribute to existing research in MPA by adding focus to social media's impact on MPA in adolescents. It can assist practitioners like myself to understand the interaction between students and social media, while helping to inform how we approach it in our teaching.

Taking those points into consideration, my aims for this project are:

- To explore adolescents' lived experiences of music performance anxiety
- To investigate adolescents' perceptions of how social media influences their music performance experiences.
- To examine the relationship between social media usage patterns and the severity of music performance anxiety in adolescent musicians.
- To identify specific aspects of social media engagement that may exacerbate or alleviate music performance anxiety.

The methodological approach adopted for this research will be phenomenology. Phenomenology originated as a philosophical movement centred on understanding the nature of experience from the perspective of the individual undergoing it, often referred to as the "lived experience" (Connelly, 2010 p. 127).

I will use a mixed-methods approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative research tools. Lall (2021) outline five common purposes for adopting mixed-methods designs: triangulation, complementarity, development, initiation, and expansion. Data will be gathered using two focus groups and a Likert-scale questionnaire. Quantitative data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics, and qualitative data will be examined through thematic analysis. By applying methodological triangulation specifically, I aim to enhance the credibility and depth of the findings (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012).

As I collect data for this research I will prioritize my participants' safety, confidentiality, and comfort. According to Lind and Oberle (2003), adolescents value interactions with adults that are grounded in respect and recognition of their dignity. I will therefore cultivate a safe and open environment that encourages honest dialogue. In line with ethical standards, I will obtain parental consent before any data collection begins, and I will regularly remind participants that they are free to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. As Lind and Oberle (2003) also point out, safeguarding young people must not mean limiting their ability to make decisions. This project aims to balance ethical protection with the promotion of participant agency and autonomy. Ethical approval for this research has been granted by the UWTSD Ethics Committee, following a thorough review process.

Personal Learning Outcomes:

- 1) I aim to better understand MPA and the impact of social media on the adolescents I work with.
- 2) Analyse and synthesize qualitative and quantitative data to draw meaningful conclusions about adolescent mental health and performance pressure.
- 3) Reflect on the implications of the findings for educational and performance practices in vocal pedagogy.

See Gantt chart 1:1 in Methodology section for a timeline of work.

REPORT:

What is the impact of social media on music performance anxiety in adolescents?

INTRODUCTION

Brugues (2011) notes that music performance anxiety (MPA) can affect individuals of all ages, genders, levels of experience, and amounts of practice. As a music educator, I have observed firsthand how MPA can undermine students' confidence. When this is coupled with the added pressures of social media, the impact appears even more pronounced—particularly among adolescents. In recent years, social media use (SMU) has become deeply integrated into adolescents' daily lives, raising concerns about its potential psychological impact (Primack and Escobar-Viera, 2017). Dumas et al., (2023) highlight the growing pressure adolescents face to gain attention online through views, comments, and likes. Additionally, constantly observing others' performances on social media may intensify self-comparisons and contribute to heightened MPA.

While performance anxiety can manifest across a range of contexts, MPA specifically refers to a persistent and intense sense of unease or a decline in performance quality during public performances, regardless of the performer's level of training, preparation, or ability (Salmon, 1990; Kenny, 2004).

This research project seeks to potentially raise awareness among young performers about the factors of social media use that can exacerbate performance anxiety.

The aims of this study are:

- To explore adolescents' lived experiences of music performance anxiety
- To investigate adolescents' perceptions of how social media influences their music performance experiences.
- To examine the relationship between social media usage patterns and the severity of music performance anxiety in adolescent musicians.
- To identify specific aspects of social media engagement that may exacerbate or alleviate music performance anxiety.

Importantly, this study aims to address a significant gap in Caribbean-based research. Its findings may contribute to a more globally inclusive understanding of MPA, prompting further investigation into how cultural context, digital behavior, and psychological well-being intersect in underrepresented regions. On a personal level, I also aim to reflect on how these findings can inform teaching and performance practices in vocal pedagogy, particularly with regard to supporting adolescent musicians in the digital age.

Personal Learning Outcomes:

- 4) I aim to better understand MPA and the impact of social media on the adolescents I work with.
- 5) Analyse and synthesize qualitative and quantitative data to draw meaningful conclusions about adolescent mental health and performance pressure.
- 6) Reflect on the implications of the findings for educational and performance practices in vocal pedagogy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

For this literature review, studies were selected based on specific inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure relevance and quality. Included studies focused on adolescent musicians and addressed topics related to MPA, mental health or the influence of social media on adolescent mental health. Particular emphasis was placed on research conducted within the Caribbean context to reflect regional specificity. Only peer-reviewed articles published from 2004 onward were considered, ensuring the inclusion of contemporary and credible sources.

Studies were excluded if they did not focus on the adolescent age group or musicians, or if they lacked emphasis on MPA, mental health, or social media's impact on adolescent mental health. Additionally, non-peer-reviewed materials and publications prior to 2004 were omitted to maintain academic rigor and relevance.

Search strategy

A systematic search was conducted across several academic databases, including PubMed, UWTSD Library and Google Scholar, to identify relevant peer-reviewed literature published between 2004 and 2025. Search terms combined keywords related to social media (e.g., social media, Instagram, TikTok), music performance anxiety (e.g., music performance anxiety, MPA), adolescents (e.g., adolescents, teenagers), mental health (e.g., mental health, well being), and the Caribbean region (e.g., Caribbean, West Indies) using Boolean operators (AND, OR).

Filters were applied to include only English-language articles focusing on adolescents. Titles and abstracts were screened for relevance, followed by a review to ensure alignment with inclusion and exclusion criteria.

This literature review explores the current understanding of adolescent mental health in the digital age, the psychological effects of social media use, and how these dynamics intersect with MPA. Attention is given to research gaps in the Caribbean context, since education, culture and technological factors may shape an

adolescents' experience here in comparison to other regions, so this study is an important addition to the research that already exist.

Adolescent Mental Health in the Digital Age

Adolescence is a transformative stage of life characterized by rapid hormonal and physical growth, evolving social relationships, and major development in brain structure (Blakemore, 2019). Hall and Liu (2022) share that there is an increase in mobile and social media usage and a decline in face-to-face communication. Social media permeates nearly every aspect of our daily life, and it is unsurprising that recent research points to a decline in face-to-face communication. In my own experience as an educator I have recognized this shift firsthand, with many students choosing digital interaction over in-person engagement.

Zheng and Lee (2016) highlight that although social networking sites (SNS) are celebrated for their ease of use and entertainment appeal, their pervasive presence often drives users toward obsessive engagement, ultimately resulting in a range of detrimental effects. Robinson and Smith (2020) identify multiple potential consequences, such as heightened risks of depression, anxiety, loneliness, self-harm, even suicidal behaviour. In 2023, urgent advisories from both the United States Surgeon General and the American Psychological Association sounded the alarm on mounting evidence that social media is inflicting harm on adolescents' mental health (Katella, 2024). By 2024, the concern had intensified, prompting U.S Surgeon General, Dr. Vivek Murthy to call for warning labels on social media platforms (Katella, 2024). Three consecutive advisories highlight the severity of the issues associated with SNS. Despite its drawbacks, social media has the potential to benefit mental health by encouraging global unity, encouraging viewer engagement, and offering an outlet for self-expression that supports joy and coping to name a few (Vaingankar et al., 2022; Katella, 2024).

A meta-analysis review (27) conducted by Valkenburg et al., (2022, p.1) for the period of 2019-2021 revealed the association between mental health and social media was "weak" or "inconsistent," and for some researchers "substantial" or "deleterious." Research indicates that social media's impact on mental health is complex with studies reporting both benefits and drawbacks. This variability was not expected and suggests that the impact of social media on mental health may be influenced by contextual factors such as environmental factors, individual experiences, and patterns of usage.

Good mental health, enables us to build strong relationships, adapt to change, manage our emotions effectively, and express our thoughts and behaviors in a positive way (Bhugra et al., 2013). A study by Hendrikse and Liminou (2024), found a meaningful association between time spent on TikTok and increased levels of depression, whereas no such link between Instagram use and any well-being outcomes.

Drawing from the research, even with some differences in findings, the overall weight of evidence points to social media's harms overshadowing its benefits. Current studies increasingly link social media and wider digital engagement to damaging effects on adolescent mental health.

Music Performance Anxiety in Adolescents

Musicians often struggle with anxiety driven by concerns about making errors, satisfying, satisfying audience expectations, and facing judgement during performances (Papageorgi, 2022; Spahn et al., 2023). Studies have found that children are seldom affected by MPA, whereas adolescents experience symptoms similar to adults, who are typically more severely impacted (Brugues, 2011). However, Twitchell et al., (2025) explain that MPA is widely recognized, well documented challenge for musicians of all skill level, meaning it has potential to affect anyone at any age. Adolescence is a critical stage of brain development, especially in areas responsible for managing emotion and regulating stress, making individuals more susceptible to anxiety and performance-related pressures (Luciana et al., 2023). Investigating MPA in adolescents is crucial, as it significantly affects their emotional well-being and musical performance (Tardif et al., 2023). Kenny (2023), however, states that although evidence indicate MPA is an issue for young musicians, there is still a gap in research targeting adolescents and music students specifically.

It is my view that MPA can influence their long-term attitudes toward performance and self expression. This is supported by a survey on temporal changes in mental and physical states around public performance, 33 of 38 participants reported experiencing mental symptoms most often (Irie et al., 2023), suggesting that the cognitive aspects of MPA may have a lasting influence on how musicians interpret and engage with performance. A separate study exploring the connection between social media and follower engagement and novice piano students' MPA and self esteem revealed potential advantages, highlighting social media interaction as a

meaningful and positive contributor to participants' performance readiness (Hejjawi, 2023). This suggests that positive interactions online can play a role in mitigating some of the harmful effects of MPA.

Research shows that the mental changes adolescents experience can make them susceptible to MPA. That said, there is a notable gap in research examining the specific effects of MPA on this age group, as well as how social media influences them.

The influence of Social Media on the Mental Health of Caribbean Adolescents

Over the past decade, the Western world has undertaken significant initiatives to raise public awareness of mental health, aiming to reduce its impact across the population (Foulkes and Andrews, 2023). From my lived experience as a Caribbean woman, mental health is overlooked and dismissed as individuals simply being overly emotional or "crazy." As a result, they may be ostracized and disregarded as genuinely needing help, ultimately being denied the support they require; unlike the Western world, where greater emphasis is placed on mental health.

More recently, psychology in the English-speaking Caribbean has begun to advance in many ways, due in part to the return of nationals who received training abroad (Ward and Hickling, 2004). However, I think there is still significant progress to be made. As a national of Trinidad and Tobago, I have observed a cultural tendency to laugh in the face of discomfort; while mental health is increasingly recognized, it is not yet given the seriousness it deserves. A survey examining the influence of social media on the mental health of Jamaicans found that higher social media use was linked to poorer mental health outcomes (Bourne, 2024). However, there is a gap in Caribbean research on the relationship between social media and mental health, making it difficult to find studies that specifically address its influence on adolescents mental health.

METHODOLOGY

A paradigm mirrors a worldview that shapes how an individual understands the world, their role within it, and the possible ways they can relate to its multiple perspectives (Aliyu et al., 2015). Ormston et al., (2014) explain that ontology explores whether social reality exists independently of human perception, and if it is universally shared or context-specific. Meanwhile, Cohen et al., (2007) describe epistemology as focusing on how individuals understand, acquire, and share knowledge. Based on this understanding, I adopted an epistemological stance aligned with a phenomenological approach to explore participants' lived experiences in depth.

Phenomenology

Since this research focuses on the impact of social media on music performance anxiety in adolescents, I decided to use a phenomenological approach as it is centred around the individual undergoing the phenomenon, usually referred to as the "lived experience" (Connelly, 2010 p. 127). Phenomenology, as both a philosophy and research method (Flood, 2010), emphasizes understanding lived experience. Since the participants have their personal experience with MPA, this approach allowed me to interpret their feelings and draw meaningful conclusions. In phenomenology there is a method called bracketing, and Carpenter (2007) describes bracketing as the setting aside of personal beliefs and prior knowledge about a subject during the research process. I chose not to use bracketing as I felt it was important for participants to know that I had personally experienced MPA. This helped create a sense of trust and encouraged them to share their own stories more openly.

Connelly (2010) explains that a phenomenological researcher explores the essence of an experience through interviews, personal stories, or observations of persons currently living through the experience being researched. Connelly (2010, p. 127) also mentions that in phenomenology, the "sample sizes often will be relatively small and purposeful." For this research project I worked with small numbers of participants since this was a small study with limited time. I also wanted to ensure as much as possible the effective coordination and accuracy of results which is easier to achieve with smaller numbers. To achieve this I used a mixed method approach.

Riipa et al., (2025) states that the quantitative component aims to uncover statistical relationships and possible cause-and-effect links, while the qualitative component examines the contextual factors and personal experiences that shape how data analytics are understood and applied. I believe both are important for this project to yield the most accurate results through data triangulation. With this knowledge it is evident why a mixed methods approach was beneficial for my research. Mayoh and Onwuegbuzie (2015) states that phenomenological approaches work extremely well when integrated into mixed methods research approaches, and a study by Meissner (2018) about teaching young musicians expressive performance also effectively used a mixed method approach.

Mixed Methods Research

Clark (2019) explains that quantitative research methods are particularly beneficial in measuring the extent and frequency of variables, evaluating relationships and differences between groups over time, and analyzing hypotheses and theories. Whereas, in qualitative research it suitably assesses and describes life as we know it (Clark, 2019). Burns (2009) states that effectively researching an issue requires flexibility, and discovering what works best involves integrating complementary research methods within a single research study. Although this research was primarily focused on individual perspectives, it also aimed to analyze quantitative data to help identify any recurring patterns and trends in the data collected, hence the decision to use a mixed method approach. I used the convergent parallel design where the quantitative and qualitative methods are collected simultaneously, given equal priority, analyzed separately, and then merged during interpretation as explained by Creswell and Plano Clark (2011).

Methods and Data Analysis

This research employed two focus groups as the qualitative method and a Likert-scale questionnaire as the quantitative method. A combination of purposive and convenience non-probability sampling was used, as all participants were musicians, with some being my students.

Focus Group

In order to acquire detailed information about individuals' attitude, perceptions, beliefs and opinions about a specific issue, researchers use focus groups (Then et al.,

2014). A focus group involves interviewing persons as a small group, of no more than ten persons, being selected based on defined demographic criteria (Wiki, 2025). While I considered various qualitative methods, including interviews, participant observation and narrative inquiry, I ultimately chose focus group as it encompasses elements of all these approaches. Another reason I chose focus groups was because I believed participants would feel more comfortable expressing themselves in a group setting, and it would also encourage more dialogue. According to Plummer-D'Amato (2008), focus groups are distinctive as they blend interviewing, participant observation, and interactive group dynamics. Plummer-D'Amato (2008) went further to state that it is very beneficial to researchers who want to investigate how people think, because the interplay between participants can evoke more data and ideas than a one-on-one interview would. I identified the themes I wanted to address and formulated questions that helped answer my research question, then used my Iphone's voice-memo transcription. The results from the transcription was not accurate, so I transcribed by listening and writing what was heard.

Likert Scale Questionnaire

Rensis Likert aptly described the Likert-scale as a "technique for the measurement of attitudes" (Batterton and Hale, 2017 p. 32). His description resonated with me as the scale does allow attitudes to be measured through carefully structured questions, each of which offer three to five responses that could vary based on the nature of the question. Other forms of quantitative data that can be useful to this project are Experimental research, which is a technique used to determine whether an activity or material affect participant outcomes; or Descriptive research which uses numerical data and categorical data, like gender or communication patterns in group settings (Ghanad, 2023).

I chose the Likert-scale questionnaire, as Likert-scales are possibly the most popular attitude scales for calculating public opinion on any subject (Robinson, 2024). The ease of distributing questionnaires and the opportunity to reach a wider audience than I would through in person methods also significantly influenced by decision. To create my Likert-scale I used pertinent statements from the K-MPAI and scoring form; I then added questions and statements that would further help answer my research question.

Participants in this research were males and females between the ages of 12-19. Below is a table that includes participants in the research, their school and years of experience.

Table 1.1

A table to show timeline of project

Date	Method	Participants	Location
12-05-25	Likert-Scale Questionnaire	Various Music and Secondary schools in Trinidad	Online
04-06-25	Focus Group	1 Male Birdsong Panyard 8 years Exp.	Online
		1 Female St. George's College 8 years Exp.	Online
		1 Female UWI Ensemble 8 years Exp.	Online
		1 Female St. George's College 9 years Exp.	Online
06-06-25	Focus Group	1 Male BSPA 8 years Exp.	Bishop's School of Performing Arts
		1 Female BSPA 3 years Exp.	BSPA
		1 Female BSPA 4 years	BSPA

Ethics and Insider Research

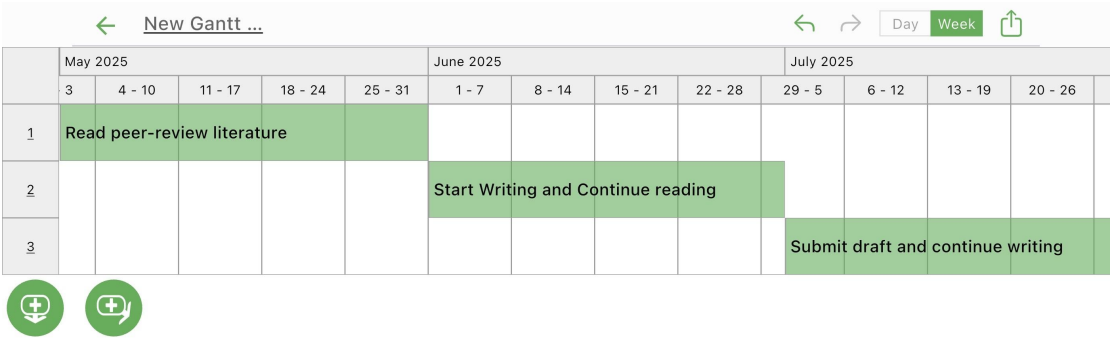
This research project adheres strictly to the guidelines outlined by the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD) and the code of conduct of the Bishop's School of Performing Arts (BSPA) Trinidad and Tobago. W.I. Ethical approval was sought and obtained through the UWTSD ethics review committee, and a certificate of good character was obtained from the Trinidad and Tobago police service, which proves I do not have a criminal record, and essentially makes it safe to work with minors. Consent forms were sent out to parents or guardians, and participants received information sheets outlining in detail the purpose of the research and what it will entail. As the researcher, who for many of the participants are a teacher and mentor, I am aware of the ethical implications of insider research that can arise, because according to Bukamal (2022), the researcher is understood to hold a particular standpoint, which influences both what they observe and how they interpret their findings. While this role presents contextual insight, it can introduce potential power imbalances which Cameron et al. (2025) mentions can significantly affect how participants engage in the research. To mitigate these concerns clear boundaries were established such as:

- Voluntary participation
- Anonymity and confidentiality
- Approval from parent/guardian and participant
- Option to view findings when completed

Mental health can be affected by multiple factors WHO (2024). With that knowledge, participants were made aware they can withdraw from the process at any time without repercussions; as depression, anxiety, and behavioral disorders are major contributors to illness and disability in adolescents WHO (2024)

Gantt Chart

Chart 1.1



Above is a Gantt chart illustrating the planned scope of work over the upcoming months.

Software and AI Usage

Chat GPT	To assist in clarification or comprehension of concepts arising from literature. This has not been used to generate text or to paraphrase on my behalf.
Jamovi	To statistically analyse data.
Iphone Voice-memo transcription	Used to transcribe focus group, which was then checked by me.

FINDINGS

Quantitative data suggest:

Chart 1:1

Which social media platforms do you use regularly?

28 responses

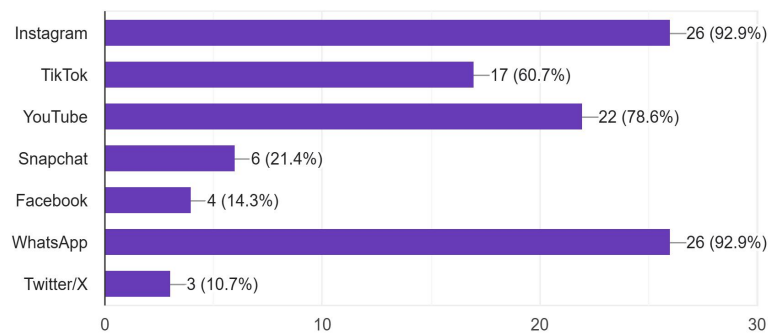
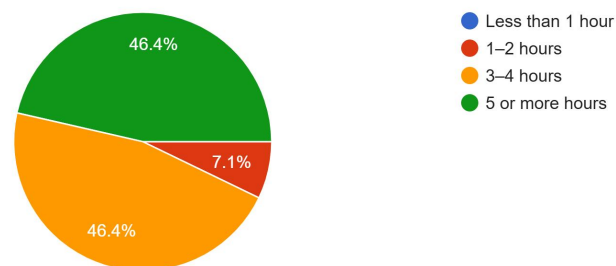


Chart 1:1 show the most frequently used social media sites among participants, with Instagram used by 26 of 28 participants and Youtube 22 out of 28 and TikTok 17 out of 28.

Pie chart 1:1

On average, how much time do you spend on social media per day?

28 responses

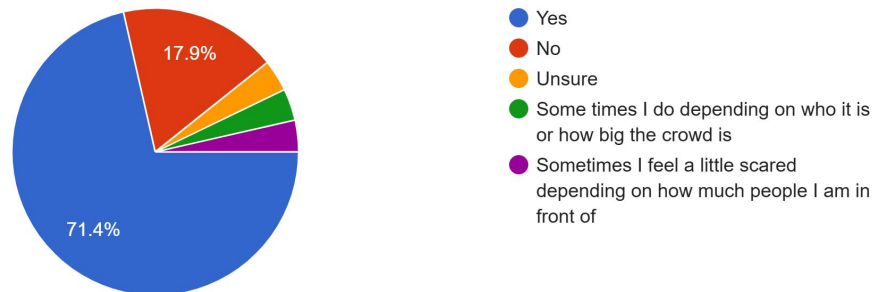


Pie chart 1:1 shows how many hours adolescents spend on social media each day, giving a clear picture of participants daily usage pattern.

Pie chart 1:2

Do you experience anxiety related to music performance?

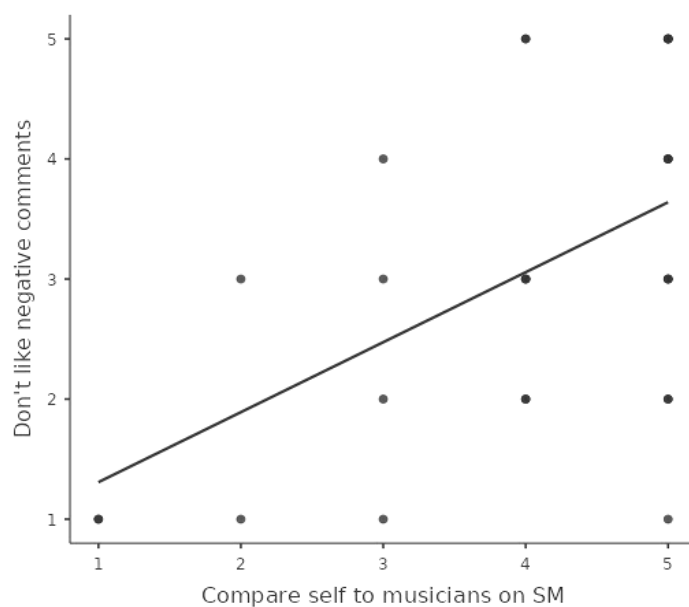
28 responses



Pie chart 1:2 reflects that a substantial proportion of participants report being affected by MPA (approximately 20 out of 28 persons), highlighting its prevalence within the sample.

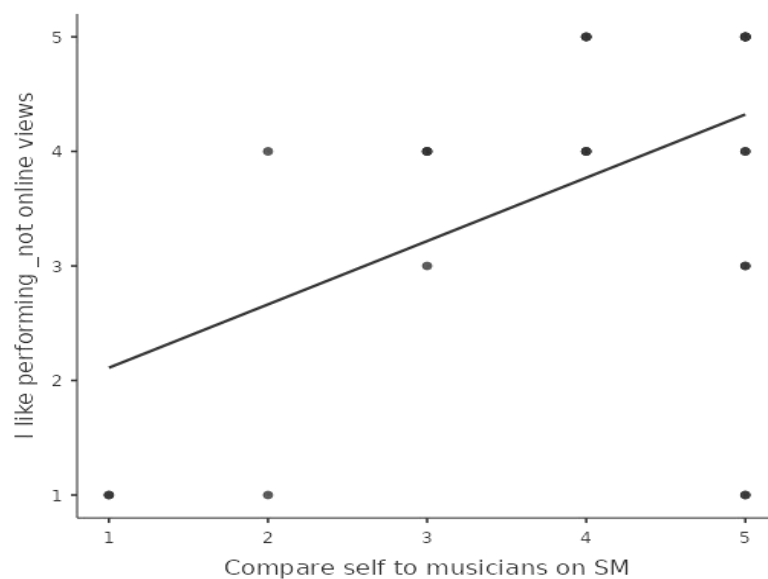
Scatterplot

Scatterplot 1



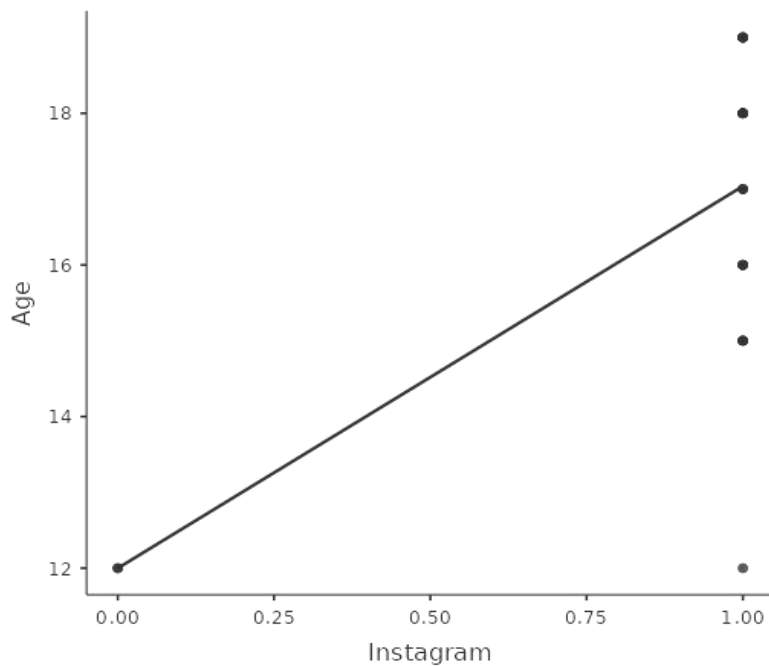
There was a statistically significant moderate positive correlation between I like performing but dislike seeing myself online and I often compare my performances to other musicians I see on social media ($r = 0.525$ $p = 0.004$). This highlights that individuals who engage more frequently in social comparisons on social media are also more likely to be negatively affected by critical feedback online.

Scatterplot 2



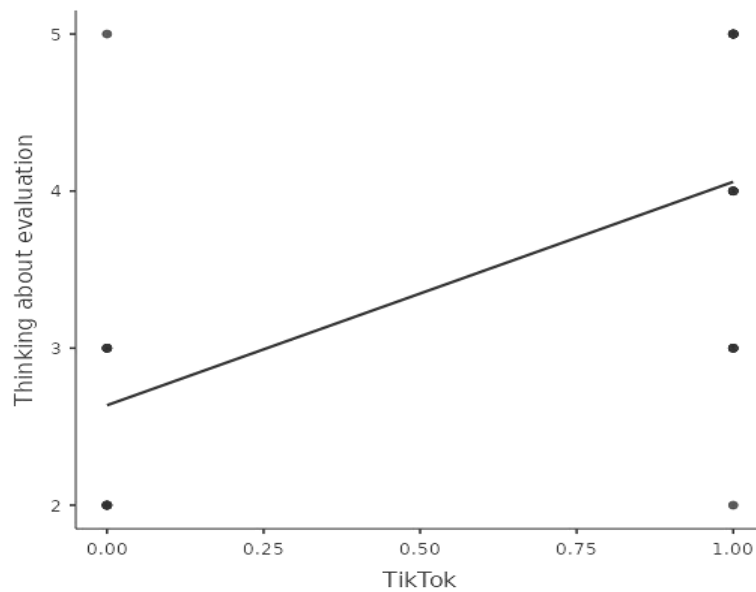
There was a statistically significant moderate positive correlation between I often compare my performances to other musicians I see on social media and I like performing but dislike seeing footage of myself online ($r = 0.479$ $p = 0.010$). This suggests that individuals who frequently compare themselves to others are also more likely to feel uneasy about their online self-presentation, despite enjoying live performance.

Scatterplot 3



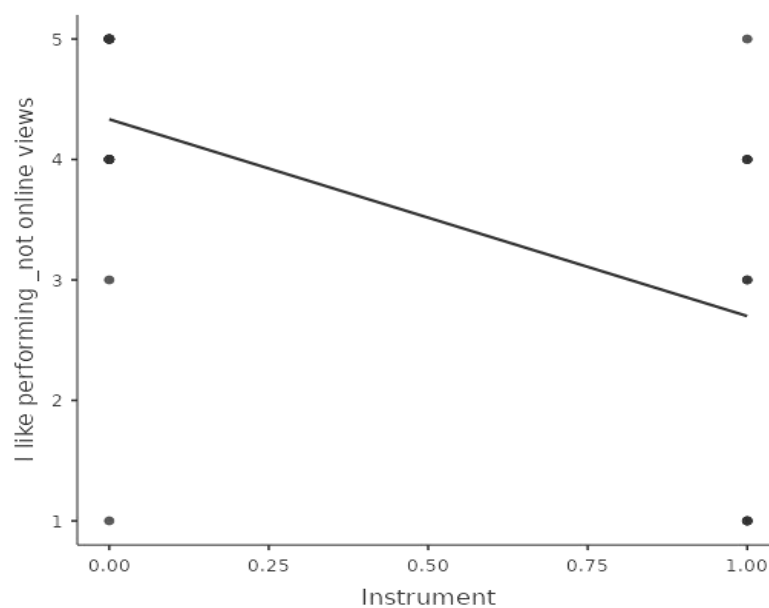
There was a statistically significant strong positive correlation between age and whether or not participants used instagram ($r = 0.616$ $p < .001$). This shows that within the adolescent sample instagram preference increases with age. So, while all participants are adolescents the ones between 16-18 are more inclined toward instagram, while the younger ones 12-14 may prefer TikTok or snapchat.

Scatterplot 4



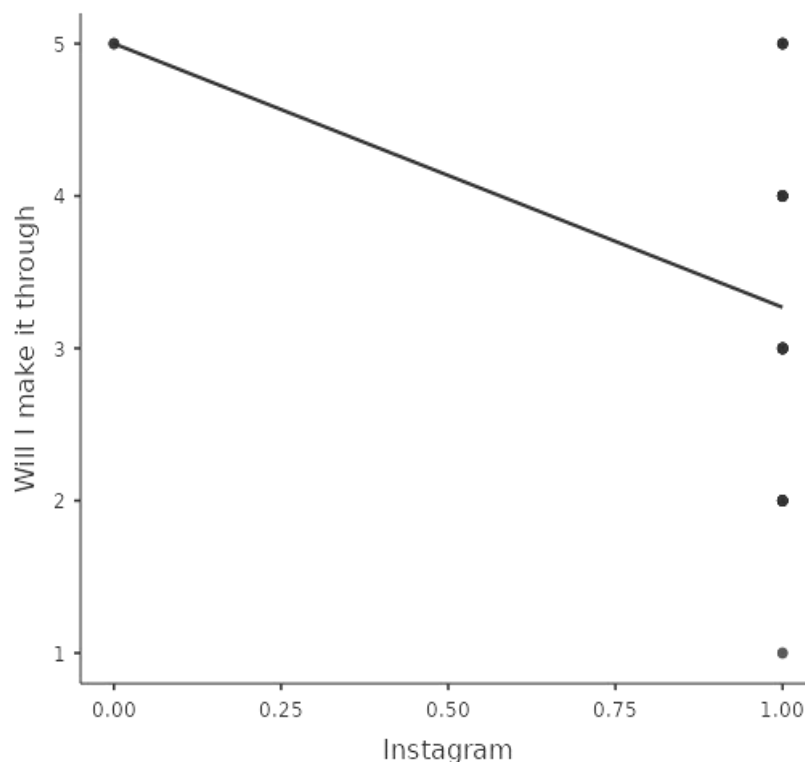
There was a statistically significant strong positive correlation between TikTok use and thinking about the evaluation I may get interferes with my performance ($r = 0.604$ $p < .001$). This suggests that participants who use TikTok more frequently are also more likely to report concerns about being evaluated, and the ways in which that interferes with their performance.

Scatterplot 5



There was a statistically significant moderate negative correlation between instrument and I like performing but dislike seeing footage of myself online ($r = -0.547$ $p = 0.003$). This suggests that instrumentalist may be more comfortable with recordings of themselves online compared to non-instrumentalist.

Scatterplot 6



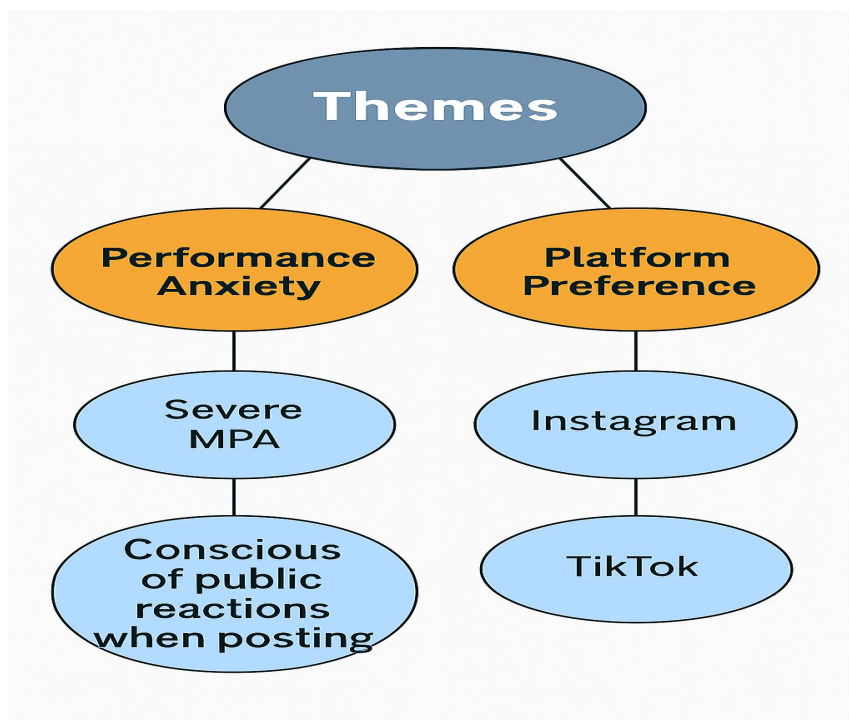
There was a statistically significant weak negative correlation between Instagram use and during a performance I find myself thinking about whether I'll even get through ($r = -0.389$ $p = 0.041$). This suggests that higher Instagram use is associated with lower levels of performance-related self-doubt or anxiety, as reflected in this item. However, the relationship is weak and should be interpreted with caution.

Qualitative data

Thematic Analysis:

Thematic analysis was conducted by personally reviewing the recorded data and developing codes grounded in the themes that emerged from the participants' responses.

Theme	Code	Points
Major themes		6 or more points
Minor themes		3 points
Performance Anxiety	(pa)	
Platform Preference	(it)	



After Thematic Analysis was conducted 2 major themes were identified with 4 sub-themes. For the purpose of this study I will only focus on the two major themes.

- Performance Anxiety
- Platform Preference

Qualitative data findings:

Below are some participant responses.

Performance Anxiety

How do you usually feel before a musical performance such as in class, competitions, recitals or examinations?

“My heart tends to drop into my stomach. I don’t know.... like as soon as I realize I have to stand up on a stage or have people watch me, I start to feel like something gripping down on me” (P2 , FG1, 2025).

“Like if its like an actual performance, I does get really really nervous before, but if is like to come practice in class with my friends I doh really feel nervous” (P3 , FG2, 2025).

A total of 71.43% of participants reported experiencing varying levels of MPA before performances, indicating that performance anxiety is a common experience among the adolescent musicians who participated in the focus groups.

Platform Preference

For how many hours do you use social media in a day?

“Too many, if I don’t catch myself properly and like...manually remove myself from TikTok, I could sit down there for 4 hours a day” (P1, FG1,2025).

Do you think social media has any effect on how you feel about performing music?

A lot uh know....because when I post on TikTok or Instagram it always getting likes, and is from some people you don’t know. So it boost your confidence” (P1, FG2, 2025).

All focus group participants reported using Instagram and TikTok daily, with 14.4% posting fairly consistently.

DISCUSSION

Qualitative Insights:

The qualitative component of this study examined the lived experience of adolescent musicians with MPA, and explored the influence social media had on their experiences.

Two focus groups were conducted; one online session with participants from various music schools Trinidad with whom I had no prior working experience, and one in person session with my students at the Bishop's School of Performing Arts. The intended number of participants for each group were five, however, securing commitment, especially from non students, proved difficult. While five of my students committed to the process, only three were able to attend on the day. As a result, the online group included four participants, while the in-person group included three. They both lasted for an hour, and participants were highly engaged and shared their experiences openly.

Conducting both groups was essential to reduce potential bias that could arise from relying solely on my students, thereby enhancing the credibility and diversity of perspectives in the research.

Approach to Data Interpretation

This study aims to explore adolescents' lived experiences of music performance anxiety, investigate how social media influences their performance experiences and relates to the severity of their anxiety, and identify specific aspects of social media use that may either worsen or alleviate these feelings, thereby addressing the research question: What is the impact of social media on MPA in adolescents?

While this study employed a mixed methods approach, the interpretation of findings is guided primarily by a qualitative lens, emphasizing participants' lived experiences. This emphasis further justifies the use of a phenomenological approach, aligning with my position as a qualitative-first researcher.

Integration of Findings

Performance Anxiety and Platform Preference

Quantitative findings indicate that 71.4% of participants experience music performance anxiety, with frequent TikTok use associated with a greater likelihood of reporting concerns about evaluation pressure interfering with performance. Qualitative data further highlight TikTok as one of the most frequently used platforms, with one participant describing a perceived pressure to “*be better*” (P4, FG1, 2025) as a result of social media exposure.

Across both data-sets, a clear link emerges between social media engagement; particularly TikTok use, and heightened music performance anxiety. Quantitatively, 71.4% of participants reported experiencing MPA, with higher TikTok usage correlating with greater concerns about evaluation pressure affecting performance. Qualitatively, participants reinforced this connection, with one noting that social media creates “*a pressure of feeling like you have to be better,*” (P4, FG1, 2025) suggesting that online visibility may amplify self-comparison and performance-related stress. This pattern echoes Hendrikse and Liminou (2024) finding of a significant association between time spent on TikTok and elevated levels of depression, suggesting that frequent use of a platform may intensify negative emotional states that could exacerbate music performance anxiety.

Present findings suggest that adolescents who frequently engage in social comparison are more likely to feel unsettled by critical feedback online, even if they generally enjoy live performance. This pattern, seen in the quantitative results, is further illuminated by qualitative insights into how participants interpret and respond to online feedback. While some struggled to accept praise when they felt their performance fell short: “*Sometimes I feel undeserving of them, because I know I didn’t put out my best*” (P2, FG1, 2025); another participant adopted a more constructive stance, embracing compliments while using criticism as motivation: “*I will take the good comments, but the bad comments I go take into consideration and be like...alright, ah could do better*” (P1, FG2, 2025).

An interesting finding from the quantitative data was that instrumentalists were generally more comfortable sharing their performances online compared to non-instrumentalists. However, qualitative analysis revealed that this comfort was particularly evident among male instrumentalists. Female participants, on the other

hand, tended to experience levels of anxiety around performing and sharing their work online. It is important to note though, that females outnumbered males in the sample, which may influence this assessment, with 71.4% females and 28.6% males. Notably, 80% of female participants reported experiencing moderate to severe anxiety.

After analyzing the findings, one participant highlighted the positive effects of posting content online, noting that having people from around the world view, like, and comment on their work can be highly motivating. This suggests that online sharing can foster a global community, encourage content engagement, and provide an outlet for self-expression (Vaingankar et al., 2022; Katella, 2024). However, other participants expressed that when their work is viewed but it receives no likes or comments, they may feel annoyed or become self-conscious, as Katella (2024) also stated can occur. This reaction can sometimes lead to a downward emotional spiral and even depressive states, as Robinson and Smith (2020) describe, particularly when their sense of self appears uncertain (Claney, 2023). Personally, I believe it is important for a musician to receive feedback whether positive or negative, because it can make you a better performer. That said, how the message is delivered can determine the outcome.

Kenny (2023) speaks about MPA being a concern among young people, yet there is not enough research on this topic. One participant who has debilitating MPA recounted a horrible examination experience, but chose not to go in detail. This experience ultimately made that participant no longer want to perform as it is “*too much*” for them to endure. This often makes me think about the mental health of adolescents and how they cope, as they are going through a period of significant hormonal and physical changes as Blakemore (2019) mentions. A recent study investigated whether MPA can be facilitating or debilitating; the results suggested MPA is not bad, it is the emotion surrounding it which make it good or bad (Murphy et al., 2025). I agree with these findings because I believe that a moderate level of anxiety reflects care and commitment to the task, but when the emotions become overwhelming, they can hinder performance.

An analysis of existing research on social media and mental health reveals diverse perspectives: Robinson and Smith (2020) and Katella (2024) express the harmful effects of social media, Vaingankar et al., (2022) and Katella (2024) recognise the positive effects, and Valkenburg et al., (2022) highlight the inconsistencies in findings. Research reveals no conclusive answer. While emerging research increasingly

points to the adverse effects of social media on adolescent mental health, the literature remains inconclusive.

There is a gap in Caribbean research in the area of MPA, particularly in relation to the influence of social media among adolescents. Awareness of the gap in research prompted this study. As a teacher and coach I am attuned to the experiences of my students, and I have repeatedly considered perfectionism as a cause of MPA. In a study by Dempsey (2015) on MPA in children and teenagers, findings suggest perfectionism can increase vulnerability, however self-efficacy may help protect it. From my experience as a teacher working with adolescents who experience MPA, I have noted that while perfectionism is present, self-efficacy often predominates.

Results

Despite the scarcity of existing research on social media's influence on MPA in adolescents, results of the present study suggest social media amplifies music performance anxiety in adolescents by increasing self-evaluation, social comparison, and discomfort with public visibility.

CONCLUSION

This study examines the relationship between social media and Music Performance Anxiety (MPA) in adolescents. Although prior research in the area is limited, the results indicate that social media can either exacerbate anxiety or motivate adolescents to become better performers depending on individual usage and perceptions. Quantitative data indicate a considerable majority of participants experience MPA, with significant positive correlations between social media and self comparison, aligning with Robinson and Smith's (2020) discussion of self-worth. Qualitative data reveal two notable themes: performance anxiety and platform preference. Further, the qualitative data also suggests both the motivating potential of online engagement (Vaingankar, 2022; Katella, 2024), and the negative effects (Katella, 2024).

These findings underscore the importance of a balanced approach to social media use for young musicians, and point to the need for further research to develop targeted interventions that help mitigate the negative effects, while enhancing the positive influences of social media on performance anxiety.

Limitations

- Due to the 6,000 word limit for this research, the qualitative thematic analysis was restricted to focusing on the two major themes which may limit the depth of insights derived from the data.
- The research timeline was constrained, and more time would have allowed for a more thorough analysis and deeper exploration of the findings, given the workload involved.

Recommendations

- Future research should consider a larger-scale investigation into coping strategies for music performance anxiety among adolescents, building on the current study's findings regarding the influence of social media.

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APPENDICES