

What Distinguishes Singing as a Unique Form of Expression?

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ABSTRACT

Singing has consistently been regarded as a fundamental aspect of human expression, transcending cultural boundaries and serving as a universally practised pastime. The act of singing is widely recognised for its ability to elicit feelings of happiness and provide a means of emotional expression. However, an increasing body of research suggests that singing also yields other beneficial outcomes in the realms of social interaction, psychological well-being, and physical health. This qualitative study aims to explore the advantages of regular singing through in-depth interviews with a sample of 10 individuals. The activity of vocalising musical sounds, commonly referred to as singing, has been observed to have a positive impact on an individual's psychological state, specifically their mental well-being. This is attributed to the cultivation of a sense of purpose and accomplishment that singing facilitates. The act of performing in front of an audience or effectively mastering a challenging musical piece have the capacity to positively impact an individual's mental well-being. The findings additionally suggested that engaging in singing has the capacity to substantially enhance an individual's overall state of health and level of satisfaction with life, regardless of whether it is performed privately in a personal setting, as a member of a choral ensemble, or as a vocation within the realm of music.

INTRODUCTION

The act of singing is a source of enjoyment for individuals. Regardless of their ability to sing in tune, individuals generally understand that engaging in vocalisation through singing is beneficial and promotes excellent health. In actuality, there exists compelling scientific evidence supporting the notion that singing confers benefits to both physical and mental well-being. Research indicates that singing offers a diverse range of health benefits. Engaging in this activity has the potential to contribute to stress reduction, memory enhancement, mental health improvement, immune system strengthening, improved lung function, and the management of physical and emotional discomfort. One of the most commendable attributes of singing is its ability to be enjoyed irrespective of one's level of aptitude. Individuals have the option to engage in vocal performances of their preferred musical compositions either through singing along to popular songs broadcasted on the radio or privately in the confines of a shower enclosure. Alternatively, to further enhance the benefits of social connection and a sense of belonging, individuals may consider participating in a choir or singing group.

This study aims to examine the various benefits associated with singing in terms of social, mental, and physical well-being. Besides, it examines the factors contributing to and the subjective encounters of individuals who engage in regular singing activities. Additionally, it investigates the potential impact of singing on an individual's holistic state of well-being.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The act of singing has been found to enhance immune function. The study conducted by Theorell (2019) examined the effects and advantages of both solitary and group singing. This chapter centres on the biological aspects of singing. A multitude of scientific investigations have been carried out about the immediate effects. The correlation between respiration and heart rate variability has emerged as a prominent topic of investigation. Research on vocal performance has also examined the impact of endocrine factors such as endorphins, oxytocin, cortisol, and testosterone, as well as immunological responses including TNF alpha, fibrinogen, and immunoglobulins. The presence of cohesiveness plays a pivotal role in the context of group singing. During choral rehearsals, engaging in collective singing has been found to elicit a greater release of oxytocin compared to engaging in conversation with others. There exists a positive correlation between elevated levels of oxytocin and the presence of strong sentiments of togetherness. Oxytocin has been found to have the ability to reduce both pain and anxiety levels. There exists empirical evidence suggesting that singing training has the potential to influence various aspects, including brain development, the ability of the body to synchronise heart and lung function, and the extent of regenerative activity. Insufficient research has been conducted on the enduring effects of vocal training and regular practise. The individual also stated that the release of endorphins, a neurochemical associated with positive emotions and feelings of joy, has been seen to occur during the act of singing. Furthermore, scholars have identified a minuscule anatomical feature inside the auditory system referred to as the

sacculus, which exhibits responsiveness to the various frequencies generated during vocalisation. Irrespective of the quality of the vocal performance, the instant reaction evokes a sense of elation. Moreover, engaging in singing activities has the potential to enhance one's emotional state by effectively diverting attention away from the challenges and concerns encountered throughout the day. Singing can be considered a form of physical activity.

Batt-Rawden and Stedje (2020) undertook a qualitative, longitudinal study in Norway to investigate the potential health-promoting effects of singing in aged care settings. Singing interventions have the potential to greatly enhance the health, well-being, and overall quality of life for both residents and personnel inside nursing care settings.

According to Batt-Rawden and Stedje (2020), singing has been identified as a potentially beneficial physical activity for individuals who are elderly, have disabilities, or are recovering from injuries. Even individuals who possess good physical health can engage in lung-strengthening activities by employing appropriate singing techniques and vocal projections. In addition to its aesthetic appeal, singing has been found to enhance the power of the diaphragm and promote overall circulation, hence contributing to several associated health advantages. There exists a viewpoint among certain individuals that singing has the potential to enhance one's aerobic capacity and stamina due to the increased intake of oxygen when singing compared to various other forms of physical activity.

In a study conducted by Maxfield (2023), the impact of one's voice on their health was examined. Numerous regions over the globe are afflicted with mental health challenges. There is a growing body of evidence indicating that engaging in music listening can have beneficial impacts on an individual's mental health and overall state of well-being. Singing instructors possess a distinct advantage in harnessing these benefits for their personal well-being as well as for the vocalists under their tutelage. The enhanced circulation of blood and the presence of oxygenated blood facilitate an increased supply of oxygen to the brain. This phenomenon improves memory, concentration, and cognitive performance. The Alzheimer's Society has just introduced a service called "Singing for the Brain" with the aim of assisting individuals afflicted with dementia and Alzheimer's disease in preserving their memories.

The study conducted by Robens et al. (2022) investigated the impact of choir singing on mental health through an online cross-sectional study. Based on the results, individuals of various age groups, genders, and educational backgrounds hold the belief that engaging in choral activities positively impacts their physical and emotional well-being. According to their statement, the inclusion of singing has been found to have a stress-reducing effect. Engaging in any form of music creation elicits a relaxing effect. Moreover, engaging in singing activities has been found to effectively alleviate muscular tension and reduce the presence of cortisol, a hormone associated with stress, in the bloodstream.

Camlin et al. (2020) conducted a study to examine the impact of group singing on the overall well-being of individuals in the general population. The

research primarily examined the impact of adult group singing on the promotion of public health. The study presented empirical support for the idea that engaging in group singing facilitates social bonding, highlighting the capacity for interpersonal synchronisation and connection, as well as a profound subjective encounter of heightened emotional states. This study introduces a new viewpoint on collective singing by emphasising the importance of participant experience in the perception of music as a comprehensive and intricate adaptive system. This study presents empirical support for the enduring nature of the social bonding phenomenon, illustrating its relative resilience to variations induced by contextual and situational influences. Furthermore, this study underscores the possibility of collective vocalisation as a means of enhancing mental health recovery, hence supporting prior empirical investigations. By utilising these findings to emphasise the significance of individual interactions and the understanding of those interactions as a descriptive and reflective self-awareness, it provides a subjective understanding of sociocultural and musical collective vocalisation. The testimonies and discussions provided by the participants regarding group singing and its advantages illustrate a complex interplay among many musical, neurological, and psychological systems, which can be subject to objective and unbiased analysis. An emerging concept suggests that collective singing has inherent effectiveness since it provides a platform for individuals to develop and demonstrate positive social connections, therefore emphasising its potential as a means of promoting well-being in communities.

According to Camlin et al. (2020), an unforeseen benefit of singing is its potential to improve one's social life, regardless of whether an individual engages in choral activities or simply enjoys singing karaoke with friends. The development of connections through group singing can hold significant importance due to the inherent presence of intimacy.

Singing has gained popularity as an educational activity inside schools due to its potential to enhance students' learning, skill refinement, and overall development, including several aspects such as coordination, social interaction, cognitive abilities, emotional well-being, and motor sensorimotor skills (Ismail et al., 2023; Sa'aid et al., 2022).

METHODOLOGY

The present study employs a qualitative research methodology to investigate the unique experiences, perspectives, and insights of the participants pertaining to the benefits associated with singing. The methodology section outlines the procedural framework employed in conducting a qualitative study on the benefits of singing. The primary objective of this qualitative study is to provide valuable insights into the social, psychological, and bodily benefits associated with singing. Our objective is to enhance our understanding of the positive impacts of singing on overall well-being by conducting comprehensive interviews with a sample of 10 individuals who engage in regular singing activities. The 10 participants selected for in-depth interviews were chosen through a purposive sample technique. Participants are chosen for their involvement in singing activities, regardless of

their age, gender, or favourite singing style. The primary method employed for data collecting is the utilisation of semi-structured interviews. The mode of conducting interviews is determined by the interests of the participants, with options including face-to-face interactions or video conferencing. The duration of each interview typically ranges from 45 to 60 minutes. Audio recordings of interviews are conducted with the explicit consent of the participants. In order to facilitate informal discussions with participants, a semi-structured interview guide is developed. Participants are queried regarding their past singing experiences, the perceived benefits they possess, and the motivations underlying their engagement in singing activities.

The questions are as follows:

1. Could you kindly provide me with your singing history and experiences?
2. What are the physical benefits associated with singing?
3. What are the impacts of singing on one's mental and emotional well-being?
4. In what ways has the practise of singing contributed to the enhancement of your interpersonal connections and social interactions?

Considerations for Ethics

All participants are requested to provide their informed consent. Throughout the entirety of the study, strict measures are implemented to ensure the preservation of participant confidentiality and anonymity. Participants are afforded the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any point without incurring any negative consequences.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Participants' sharing their singing history and experiences.

Four participants highlighted that singing serves as a medium for individuals to express and describe their emotional experiences, including a diverse array of feelings like joy, sadness, love, and anger. The given medium possesses the capacity to serve as a powerful mechanism for the manifestation of emotional expression and the attainment of cathartic release. Moreover, research has shown that engaging in singing can effectively alleviate tension and promote relaxation by triggering the production of endorphins, naturally occurring compounds that enhance mood. Furthermore, the acquisition of suitable vocal technique requires the attainment of regulated respiration, hence promoting an increase in pulmonary capacity and the enhancement of respiratory efficacy. As a result, these physiological adjustments provide significant benefits to overall respiratory health. Moreover, participating in singing endeavours possesses the capacity to augment an individual's emotional well-being by eliciting heightened mood states and cultivating a profound sensation of happiness. Moreover, in the face of difficult situations, it possesses the capacity to serve as a means of comfort.

According to six participants, engaging in group singing activities fosters a sense of communal belonging and interpersonal connection. Participating in collective vocalisation possesses the capacity to promote interpersonal

solidarity and nurture a sense of belonging. The development of vocal skills and engaging in public performances have the capacity to enhance an individual's self-confidence and self-esteem. The act of singing requires the ability to articulate with precision and effectively convey emotions, which may result in improved communication skills across many real-world situations. The cognitive benefits of learning and memorising lyrics and melodies are evident, as this activity has the capacity to stimulate the brain and enhance cognitive functioning, particularly in the areas of memory and attention.

According to the statements provided by five participants, engaging in singing has been found to provide various physical advantages. This is attributed to the activation of multiple muscle groups during the act of singing, which consequently leads to greater physical fitness and enhanced control over one's posture. The function of vocalising in the context of language acquisition, particularly in the case of young individuals, is to enhance the development of lexicon, articulation, and auditory comprehension skills. The application of music therapy, which includes the use of vocalisation, functions as a method to support individuals who are experiencing a wide range of medical and psychological conditions, including autism, depression, and speech impairments, by offering therapeutic advantages. Individuals across different age groups and skill levels can experience benefits from participating in singing activities, regardless of their preference for solo singing, joining a choir, receiving formal training, or engaging in karaoke sessions with others. The activity of vocalising, commonly known as singing, is a complex and enjoyable pursuit that has the capacity to yield advantageous outcomes for an individual's holistic well-being, encompassing both their physical and cerebral dimensions.

Participants' Perception on Singing has Physical Advantages

According to the statements of six participants, engaging in singing, especially in a collective setting or with a focus on the action itself, has the capacity to stimulate the release of endorphins and reduce the levels of stress-related substances like cortisol, so promoting the alleviation of stress. This phenomena possesses the capacity to yield reduced levels of tension, improved emotional well-being, and an elevated state of relaxation. The use of an optimal singing style is associated with the promotion of proper posture and body alignment, hence reducing tension and minimising the risk of musculoskeletal problems. Participating in vocal exercises contributes to the strengthening and improvement of the muscles involved in vocal production, hence promoting the development of a resilient, flexible, and long-lasting voice. Participating in regular vocal exercises, such as singing, can enhance the acquisition of proficient voice projection abilities, hence promoting enhanced audibility in many social and professional settings. Multiple studies have demonstrated that the act of singing has the potential to stimulate the production of immunoglobulins and enhance the effectiveness of the immune system, hence potentially bolstering the body's ability to defend against diseases.

According to the statements of seven participants, it has been seen that singing is linked to an increase in heart rate variability, which is known to be connected with improved cardiovascular well-being. Moreover, it possesses the capacity to reduce blood pressure and improve blood circulation. The act of singing requires the coordination of several brain regions, potentially enhancing cognitive functions such as memory, attention, and problem-solving skills. The act of singing possesses the capacity to stimulate the release of endorphins, which serve as innate pain-relieving substances. This intervention exhibits the capacity to alleviate minor discomfort and muscular soreness. Engaging in collective singing endeavours promotes interpersonal involvement and unity, which has been linked to improved psychological and emotional well-being.

According to the responses of six participants, it has been seen that involvement in singing activities can lead to a state of relaxation in both the physical and mental aspects. Consequently, this relaxation state aids in the facilitation of falling asleep and contributes to a more revitalising sleep encounter for specific individuals. The application of singing as a therapy modality has been determined to yield positive outcomes for individuals with speech difficulties, encompassing individuals in the recovery phase following injuries or individuals diagnosed with speech disorders. This phenomenon can be related to the facilitation of improved vocal control and articulation. It is important to recognise that singing can offer a range of potential physiological benefits, but the magnitude of these advantages may vary among individuals. Moreover, the extent of these advantages may depend on the frequency and intensity at which singing is engaged in. In order to get these benefits, individuals may consider the option of joining a choral ensemble, engaging in voice training, or incorporating singing into their daily routine as a gratifying and advantageous endeavour.

The Effects of Singing on Participants' Mental and Emotional Health

Based on the testimony of six participants, it has been observed that engaging in the activity of singing, particularly in a communal context such as a collective ensemble or choral group, has been associated with a beneficial influence on the alleviation of stress. The act of stimulating the secretion of endorphins results in the subsequent release of endogenous compounds that have the ability to enhance one's mood. In addition to its aesthetic and emotive attributes, singing has been discovered to possess the capacity to diminish cortisol levels, a hormone that is linked to stress. Participating in vocal performance has the capacity to augment an individual's emotional state and elicit sensations of joy (Snow et al., 2018). The release of dopamine, a neurotransmitter associated with the experience of pleasure and reward, occurs. Participating in vocal performances of individually favoured musical works can function as a method of self-expression and emotional release. The act of singing offers individuals a unique means through which they can communicate their emotions. The act of vocalising, regardless of the genre or mood of the song, can function as a mechanism for emotional cognition and

articulation. Engaging in communal vocal performances, such as ensemble choirs or karaoke gatherings, fosters a sense of inclusiveness and interpersonal cohesion. Participating in this pastime possesses the capacity to alleviate instances of social isolation and bolster psychological well-being.

Based on the accounts of seven participants, it can be argued that participation in singing activities holds the capacity to enhance an individual's self-esteem and levels of confidence. As individuals improve their vocal skills and receive positive assessments, they may encounter an elevated sense of accomplishment and self-worth. The act of singing requires individuals to direct their attention and focus towards their breath and vocal technique, thereby exhibiting similarities to mindfulness practises. This intervention possesses the capacity to promote relaxation and mitigate symptoms linked to anxiety. The act of singing involves the application of deep breathing methods, which possess the power to augment an individual's pulmonary capacity and foster comprehensive respiratory health. The augmentation of oxygenation has the capacity to elicit a state of tranquility in both the physiological and psychological dimensions of an individual.

Based on the perspectives of five individuals, it can be observed that engaging in singing serves as a catalyst for the demonstration of creativity and self-expression. Engaging in the creation of original songs or participating in melodic improvisation can be considered a therapeutic approach for the goal of expressing one's thoughts and emotions. Research has demonstrated that the process of acquiring lyrics and melodies might yield beneficial effects on memory and cognitive functioning. This can provide a significant benefit for older adults in maintaining cognitive flexibility. The act of vocalising through singing has the capacity to mitigate physical stress inside the human body. Participating in this activity can potentially function as a method of catharsis and stress alleviation, similar to engaging in physical exercise. It is vital to recognise that the influence of singing on mental and emotional well-being might vary among persons. Some individuals may regard singing as a powerful method for emotional expression and overall well-being, whereas others may not experience these benefits. Regardless of an individual's level of skill in vocal performance, incorporating singing into one's daily routine can have advantageous effects on self-care and emotional expression.

How Singing has Improved Participants' Relationships and Social Life

Based on the accounts of seven individuals, frequent singing involves the expression of emotions and feelings via the use of music and poetic creation. When individuals partake in vocal expression, they possess the capacity to effectively communicate their emotions in a unique and genuine manner, hence encouraging the formation of deeper interpersonal connections. The use of non-verbal communication can enhance the conveyance of emotions or thoughts that may provide difficulties when expressed exclusively through verbal methods. Engaging in choral or group singing activities has the potential to cultivate a deep sense of camaraderie and association. The possibility for interpersonal ties to be enhanced is present in collaborative musical encounters,

as participants actively engage in a joint endeavour to create harmonious works. Participating in singing activities can promote the discovery of diverse social opportunities, such as joining a choir, actively participating in karaoke nights, or attending music-centered events. Participating in these activities provides individuals with the chance to create relationships with like-minded persons, thereby supporting the growth of their social network. Participating in singing activities has been found to be an excellent method for reducing levels of tension and anxiety. Individuals who experience reduced levels of stress are more likely to display pleasant behaviour, which might potentially have positive impacts on their interpersonal relationships.

Based on the accounts of five participants, it can be argued that the improvement of singing skills has the capacity to enhance an individual's self-confidence. The act of improving one's self-confidence possesses the capacity to cultivate heightened assertiveness and bolster interpersonal relationships. The act of vocalising through singing offers individuals a medium through which they can manifest their creative abilities and exhibit their distinctive personal traits. Disclosing this aspect of one's identity to others holds the potential to augment one's ability to establish connections and engage the interest of persons in one's immediate surroundings. The facilitation of emotional relationships can be enhanced by engaging in activities such as listening to others sing or participating in group singing. The aural medium of music has the ability to evoke deep emotional reactions, and engaging in these experiences together has the potential to cultivate a stronger sense of intimacy and connection within interpersonal relationships.

Based on the accounts of six individuals, it has been observed that singing is commonly associated with momentous life events, such as weddings, birthdays, and holidays. This practise serves to develop collective memories among participants. Engaging in the shared recollection of musical experiences possesses the capacity to develop lasting bonds among persons within familial and social networks. The process of vocalising through singing is known to elicit pleasurable sensations and has the potential to cultivate a sense of collective gratification, hence augmenting interpersonal bonds. Engaging in vehicular singing or performing at social gatherings has the capacity to cultivate a feeling of togetherness and enhance interpersonal connections. It is crucial to recognise that the impact of singing on interpersonal relationships and social interactions can manifest significant heterogeneity among individuals. While a considerable proportion of individuals view singing as a constructive and intellectually engaging pursuit, there is a subgroup of individuals who may not have the same desire or possess unique preferences when it comes to participating in communal activities.

DISCUSSION

Singing is widely acknowledged as a form of artistic expression and interpersonal communication that encompasses a wide range of physical, cognitive, and affective benefits. The subsequent discourse provides an

examination of various notable advantages linked to the practise of vocalisation.

The act of vocalising through singing offers individuals a unique and powerful method of articulating their emotions. Artistic expression functions as a mechanism by which humans can channel a diverse array of emotions, encompassing but not limited to feelings of joy, grief, love, hate, and several other affective states. This artistic medium enables individuals to engage in the cognitive and emotional processing and subsequent expression of suppressed or stored emotions. Research has shown that engaging in singing can have a beneficial effect on the alleviation of stress and anxiety. When an individual participates in the act of singing, it triggers the production of endorphins, which are endogenous compounds that have the ability to enhance one's emotional state. This phenomenon possesses the capacity to elicit a mood of relaxation and tranquilly. The act of singing has been observed to exert a favourable influence on an individual's emotional state, resulting in an enhancement of feelings associated with happiness. The characteristic of experiencing a feeling of elation after a satisfying vocal performance, whether through solo singing aspirations or participation in collective choral activities, is commonly seen. The act of singing requires the application of deep and controlled respiratory strategies. Research has demonstrated that consistent participation in voice exercises can effectively augment lung capacity and facilitate the attainment of optimal respiratory well-being. This strategy offers notable benefits for individuals afflicted with asthma or other respiratory conditions.

The act of vocalising through singing possesses the capacity to enhance an individual's self-assurance and self-regard. As individuals gather experience and grow their skills, they usually have an elevated sense of self-confidence regarding their competencies. The establishment of social connections is a significant component of singing, as it often involves participating in communal activities such as joining choirs, participating in karaoke sessions, or engaging in musical performances. These activities promote the formation of social relationships, encourage collaborative conduct, and foster a sense of inclusion, potentially leading to improvements in one's psychological well-being. Research has indicated that engaging in singing can result in cognitive advantages by using several cognitive processes, such as memory, attention, and problem-solving skills. Research has demonstrated that the process of acquiring lyrics and melodies can have a positive impact on cognitive capabilities associated with memory. Additionally, participation in improvisational singing has been found to aid the growth of creative thinking skills.

The act of vocalising with proper technique requires the consistent preservation of ideal body alignment and the active engagement of the muscles in the core region. Over a temporal duration, this occurrence can lead to enhanced postural alignment and increased muscular endurance in the core region. The cultivation of proficient communication abilities is enhanced through the engagement in singing, as it involves the articulation of emotions

and narratives through the integrated utilisation of lyrics and music. Participating in this form of communication has the capacity to improve individuals' general competence in effectively transmitting messages during everyday interactions. The importance of physical health in the context of singing cannot be overstated, particularly while participating in demanding concerts or prolonged rehearsal sessions. There is a possibility that this could improve physical fitness and endurance. The practise of vocalising through singing have the capacity to foster a deep and meaningful bond between individuals and their cultural heritage and traditions. The celebration and preservation of cultural identity can be facilitated through the utilisation of music and song as a medium.

According to Anuar and Ismail (2021), the engagement in singing has been identified as a factor that positively influences an individual's mental well-being, as it promotes a sense of purpose and accomplishment. The engagement in public performance or the mastery of a challenging musical piece has the capacity to have a beneficial impact on an individual's psychological state. The process of acquiring new songs and vocal styles might be considered a lifelong pursuit within the framework of ongoing education. The continuous process of acquiring knowledge has the potential to sustain brain function and engagement, hence enhancing cognitive well-being.

CONCLUSION

Singing is regarded as a highly positive endeavour that facilitates personal development and enhances various aspects of well-being, encompassing physical, mental, emotional, and social dimensions (Tapia et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2022). The significance of good singing lies in its ability to cultivate emotional engagement, promote social inclusion, facilitate the acquisition of social skills, and enable effective collaboration among young individuals with diverse ages and abilities, resulting in the creation of exceptional artistic endeavours. The act of singing possesses a remarkable ability to exert various effects on the human brain, such as the production of endorphins and the elevation of mood. Endorphins, classified as a neurotransmitter, have earned the moniker of the "joy molecule" due to scientific investigations demonstrating its ability to elicit feelings of happiness and euphoria. In conclusion, singing offers a diverse array of physical, emotional, and cognitive benefits. The practise of singing has the capacity to greatly enhance an individual's overall state of being and standard of living, regardless of whether it is engaged in privately during shower sessions, as a member of a choral ensemble, or as a professional endeavour within the realm of music.

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