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Title: What are the skills, attributes and knowledge for group singing facilitators?: A systematic review

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Abstract

Community-based open-to-all choirs or singing groups are popular internationally and associated with multiple health and well-being benefits. Facilitators of such groups require specific skills, attributes and knowledge. Therefore, we examined literature to identify key characteristics of group singing facilitators (GSFs) using a systematic review approach. Eighteen studies are included in the current review. These studies utilized qualitative research methods to illustrate GSFs' roles within the community context. Narrative synthesis revealed two meta-themes, namely music-related and group facilitation-related. Within both meta-themes, there were various skills, attributes and knowledge specific to GSFs, which appear to be intertwined. This analysis also revealed the complexity of group singing facilitation along with a lack of opportunities for training and support for GSFs. Further research is needed to develop and evaluate holistic learning to support GSFs with essential skills, attributes and knowledge to promote group singing in the community setting.

Keywords: Choir directors, community choir, amateur singers, leadership, group facilitation, well-being

Introduction

Group singing is a popular leisure activity in the United Kingdom. For example, people's positive experiences of singing in a group or choir have recently been reported in the United Kingdom's popular media, such as Our Dementia Choir with Vicky McClure and Gareth Malone's The Choir. Indeed, in the United Kingdom, 2.14 million people are reported to take part in choirs/singing groups, more than the number of people who report playing football/soccer (Voices Now 2017). Many of these choirs and singing groups are open to all without audition, attracting amateur singers of all abilities and from many backgrounds. According to a large-scale survey of members of 3200 choirs based in the United Kingdom in 2017, 67 per cent of UK choirs are non-auditioned and non-professional; 36 per cent were community choirs (Voices Now 2017).

Frequently, choir singers reported that singing in a group offers enjoyment and well-being, along with a sense of belonging and comradery (Camlin et al. 2020). Over the last twenty years, increasing numbers of research studies on singing suggest that group singing can promote health and prevent illness (Fancourt and Finn 2019). The UK All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts and Health reported a range of health benefits from group singing (Gordon-Nesbit 2017). For example, the endocrinological effects of singing together with others include increased oxytocin and beta-endorphins, which have a positive effect on prosocial behaviours, such as bonding, developing trust and group solidarity (Bowling et al. 2022). Additionally, group singing results in reductions in cortisol, a stress hormone (Beck et al. 2000). Moreover, group singing participation has been reported to promote respiratory health (Lewis et al. 2017), reduce chronic pain (Irons et al. 2020) and reduce mental ill-health (Williams et al. 2018). Further, singing together can lead to mood enhancement and improvements in general psychological well-being (Clift and Hancox 2001; Judd and Pooley 2014; Unwin et al. 2002). Positive emotional outcomes include increased confidence and self-esteem and reduced isolation and loneliness (Bailey and Davidson 2002, 2005). Furthermore, singers have reported a sense of belonging, social cohesion and camaraderie through singing with other people (Giæver 2019; Pearce et al. 2015, 2017). More specifically, group singing is reported to be beneficial for managing one's long-term health condition. For individuals with chronic depression, singing can help to increase positive emotions, encourage interaction, build self-confidence, improve general health, social integration (Dingle et al. 2013), reduce depression and improve general well-being (Williams et al. 2020). People living with Parkinson's experienced reduced quality of life, anxiety and stress (Irons et al. 2021).

We focus here on community choirs, groups of people coming together for the purpose of singing (Bell 2008); these informal community choirs are open to all without auditions, and they differ from other professional choirs that require auditions and aim for formal performances. Indeed, informal community choirs usually focus on leisure, enjoyment and/or well-being (Irons and Hancox 2021). Moreover, the central ethos of community group singing practice is that everyone can sing (Bithell 2014; Irons and Hancox 2021). For this study, we used an umbrella term, group singing facilitators (GSFs) for those individuals who lead or facilitate community group singing practice. GSFs differ from traditional choral conductors or directors of professional choirs, as the term facilitators conveys a less formalized title and implies a non-hierarchical relationship with singers. GSFs endeavour to provide uplifting singing experiences for diverse groups of individuals with and without previous singing experiences: they lead a group of people with the common aim of enjoying singing and making sounds together through regular sessions and, in some cases, public performances. They may also liaise with local health authorities and charities to apply for funding. Such multiple roles are described in literature. For example, Forbes and Bartlett (2020) illustrate that group singing facilitation is a specialized blend of work, including strong musical, pedagogical and interpersonal skills and leadership attributes of service, care and inclusion. From music pedagogical perspectives, GSFs undertake various tasks from developing appropriate repertoire to motivating singers and fostering singers' self-efficacy and achievement. Most of all, clearly communicating both musical and non-musical matters is regarded as the pivotal requirement for GSFs (Joseph and Southcott 2020). Moreover, based on the community music therapy framework, GSFs can also empower singers and help them to make social connections and share common values as well as create group sounds (noted in Helitzer et al. 2022). Further, singing researchers acknowledged that GSFs' personal qualities, appropriate professional training, having knowledge of health conditions and understanding of group work/dynamics may be crucial variables or even the deciding factors that impact on singers' overall experience (Dingle et al. 2019).

In summary, GSFs appear to play an important role in making group singing a positive and beneficial experience for the singers through their multi-faceted roles. However, what do we know about what makes an effective GSF? What are the required skills, attributes and knowledge needed to be a successful GSF (Dingle et al. 2019)? To answer these questions, we systematically reviewed the literature to identify the most important skills, attributes and knowledge for GSFs in community settings.

Method

From our initial literature searches, it was evident that there has not been much focus on GSFs in the group singing-related literature, although over the last twenty years we have seen increased research into the potential benefits of community-based singing groups or non-professional choirs. Therefore, we searched for peer-reviewed, empirical studies reporting on community group singing in non-clinical settings, with the intention to extract relevant data on GSFs. We searched for studies written in English involving adult participants (>18 years old), using defined research methodology (e.g. descriptive, correlational, qualitative and/or quantitative research methodology) and published after 2000. We excluded editorials, commentaries, opinion pieces and review articles. We also excluded studies focused on professional choirs and other musical activities (e.g. playing musical instruments, listening to music or dancing with music) rather than focused on group singing. Additionally, we excluded studies involving children and studies in a clinical setting (e.g. music therapy).

Using the key words 'choir*', 'chorus', 'choral', 'group sing*', 'singer*' and 'communit*', we searched major electronic databases (Medline, PsycINFO, AMED and Web of Science), the first ten pages of Google Scholar and cross-checked reference lists in two key publications: the recent WHO scoping review on arts for health (Fancourt and Finn 2019) and the Oxford Textbook of Creative Arts, Health, and Wellbeing (Clift and Camic 2015). The last search was conducted on 1 June 2023 (please see Appendix 1).

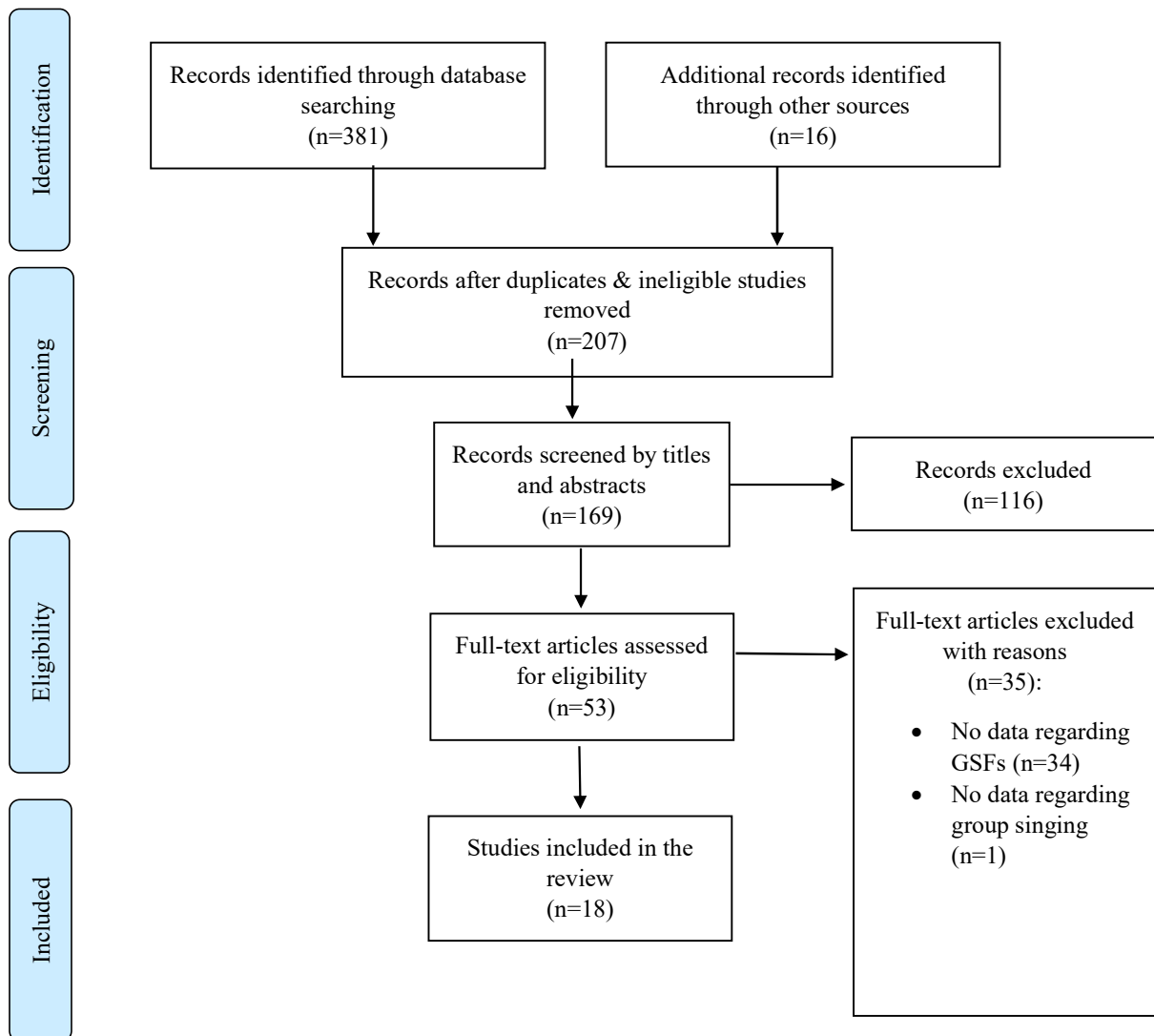
Data extraction and analysis

Three reviewers (MB, LT and JYI) independently extracted data from the selected articles, and any discrepancy was resolved by another reviewer (DS). We extracted information about research methods (qualitative and/or quantitative), key concepts and relevant findings regarding our review topic using a pre-developed data extraction form. For this review, the narrative synthesis approach (Popay et al. 2006) was adopted to bring together the findings from the included studies. To answer our review questions, we thematically analysed qualitative data.

From the databases and citation searches, 397 records were found. After removing duplicates and irrelevant records, we screened titles and abstracts of 169 records. Following the full texts inspections of 53 studies, eighteen studies met the inclusion criteria and were subsequently

included for the analysis (Figure 1: PRISMA flow chart). The characteristics of these studies are presented in Table 1.

Figure 1: PRISMA flowchart



Thirteen studies included accounts from singers, three studies included accounts from facilitators (Forbes and Bartlett 2020; Lewis et al. 2017; Tamplin and Thompson 2023) and two studies included accounts from both (Richards and Durrant 2003; Tarrant et al. 2016). Three studies (Bibb and Skewes McFerran 2018; Lagacé et al. 2016; Shakespeare and Whieldon 2018) included singers living with mental health conditions; a further three studies focused on other long-term health conditions, namely respiratory conditions (Lewis et al. 2017), neurological conditions (Tarrant et al. 2016) and cancer (Warran et al. 2019). Three studies were specifically recruited to older adult singers (Davidson et al. 2014; Joseph and Southcott 2020; Lamont et al. 2018). Two studies focused on female singers, with one related to British Armed Forces personnel (Clift et al. 2016) and the other recruiting women from disadvantaged areas (Helitzer et al. 2022). One study explored GSFs' roles when working with self-defined 'non-singers' (Richards and Durrant 2003). A recent international study assessed GSFs' experiences of facilitating online singing sessions initiated in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (Tamplin and Thompson 2023). The remaining five studies captured accounts from amateur choir and open-to-all singing group conductors/leaders (Bailey and Davidson 2002; Bonshor 2017; Forbes and Bartlett 2020; Joseph and Southcott 2020; Judd and Pooley 2014; Kreutz and Brünger 2012).

All included studies employed qualitative research methods: studies collected data through open-ended questions within surveys (Clift et al. 2016; Kreutz and Brünger 2012; Lewis et al. 2017; Richards and Durrant 2003; Tamplin and Thompson 2023), focus group discussions (Bonshor 2017; Helitzer et al. 2022; Joseph and Southcott 2020; Tarrant et al. 2016; Shakespeare and Whieldon 2018; Warran et al. 2019) or through in-depth interviews (Bailey and Davidson 2002; Bibb and Skewes McFerran 2018; Bonshor 2017; Davidson et al. 2014; Joseph and Southcott 2020; Judd and Pooley 2014; Forbes and Bartlett 2020; Lagacé et al. 2016). Additionally, Lamont et al. (2018) adopted a participatory discussion format, 'World Café', which provided an opportunity for participants to draw/doodle during a group discussion. Data were analysed using inductive methods, such as thematic analysis (Forbes and Bartlett 2020; Clift et al. 2016; Helitzer et al. 2022; Joseph and Southcott 2020; Judd and Pooley 2014; Lamont et al. 2018; Lewis et al. 2017; Shakespeare and Whieldon 2018; Tamplin and Thompson 2023; Tarrant et al. 2016), interpretative phenomenological analysis (Bailey and Davidson 2002; Bonshor 2017; Davidson et al. 2014), content analysis (Kreutz and Brünger 2012; Lagacé et al. 2016), grounded theory (Bibb and Skewes McFerran 2018; Warran et al. 2019) and narrative analysis (Richards and Durrant 2003). Three studies collected quantitative data; however, the details were either not reported (Kreutz and Brünger 2012) or not relevant to this review's aims (Davidson et al. 2014; Clift et al. 2016).

Several studies reported underpinning frameworks, theories or concepts relevant to community group singing. For example, Forbes and Bartlett (2020) and Lamont et al. (2018) discussed a positive psychology approach, the Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Achievement (PERMA) framework, as a congruent concept to describe group singing experiences, while Bailey and Davidson (2002) adopted another positive psychology perspective, Flow theory (Csikszentmihalyi and LeFevre 1989). Mental health recovery frameworks formed the basis for two studies (Lagacé et al. 2016; Shakespeare and Whieldon 2018), while the community music therapy framework was adopted by Helitzer et al. (2023) and Bibb and Skewes McFerran (2018). Music pedagogy underpinned studies by Joseph and Southcott (2020) and Richards and Durrant (2003), and the theories of development of self-efficacy and confidence were the cornerstone of Bonshor's (2017) study. Further, several studies discussed group singing for health and well-being (Clift et al. 2016; Judd and Pooley 2014; Kreutz and Brünger 2012; Lewis et al. 2017; Tamplin and Thompson 2023). Appendix 2 presents the relevant characteristics of included studies with detailed GSFs-related findings.

Narrative analysis

Within these studies, GSFs were described using several different terms: a facilitator (Tamplin and Thompson 2023), a musical director (Bonshor 2017; Clift et al. 2016; Joseph and Southcott 2020; Judd and Pooley 2014), a singing coach (Shakespeare and Whieldon 2018), a choir leader (Helitzer et al. 2022; Warran et al. 2019) or a specifically trained singing facilitator for health conditions (Lewis et al. 2017; Forbes and Bartlett 2020), and as a unique blend between music therapists' and community musicians' roles (Bibb and Skewes McFerran 2018), differing from traditional music teachers', music therapists' and/or choral conductors' roles (Forbes and Bartlett 2020). Further, GSFs were seen as important for promoting social cohesion and positive social identity in the group singing context (Tarrant et al. 2016). Similarly, Warran et al. (2019) reflected on GSFs as a key component of group singing, as they were 'an anchor, holding the group together' (2019: 6). Moreover, Forbes and Bartlett (2020) describe the nature of GSFs' work as building and maintaining a 'unique relationship' with their group members (2020: 6). Helitzer et al. (2022) referred to this as creating a 'family' (2022: 6), although no data were reported as to what kind of skills and personal qualities GSFs were required to create a family. Further, a GSF is an inspirational leader who positively contributes to improved well-being (Warran et al. 2019). In a similar way, GSFs were reported to play an essential role in mental health recovery (Lagacé et al. 2016) and in activating positive changes using singing (Bibb and Skewes McFerran 2018).

In order to summarize the findings of the eighteen studies, we adopted a narrative thematic analysis method (Popay et al. 2006) involving four steps: (1) extracting raw data relating to GSFs from the included studies, (2) examining the themes/interpretations presented by the study authors, (3) interpreting key knowledge, attributes and skills of GSFs and (4) drawing out meta-themes by clustering-related themes. These steps allowed us to strongly link to the data of the included studies at the explicit level. This process yielded two overarching meta-themes related to GSFs' important knowledge, attributes and skills: (1) music-related and (2) group facilitation-related essential skills, attributes and knowledge. The music-related meta-theme addresses the importance of GSFs' musical competency and music pedagogy, while the group facilitation-related meta-theme encompasses organizational leadership, personal qualities and attributes as a facilitator, leadership qualities and styles, communication skills as well as training requirements. Table 1 presents the meta-themes, themes and sub-themes.

Music-related meta-themes

Group singing offers unique group music-making experience, which is undoubtedly the central purpose of open-to-all choirs/singing groups. Thus, this meta-theme highlights GSFs' desired knowledge and skills of group singing, including two themes: (1) musical competency and (2) music pedagogy.

Musical competency

First, studies discussed musical competency as the key requirement for GSFs. For example, Clift et al. (2016) regarded GSFs' musical competency as having a direct link with singers' positive and negative experiences, while singers in Judd and Pooley (2014) associated high musical competency with the desired quality. In the study with the trainee GSFs for specific group Singing for Lung Health programmes, a range of specific knowledge on the anatomy of the respiratory function, physiology of breathing and psychology of breathing was compulsory components (Lewis et al. 2017).

The second sub-theme concerns the musical adaptabilities and flexibilities used to support the singers and their needs in relation to singing exercises and repertoires. In a group singing study with older adults (Davidson et al. 2014), the researchers emphasized GSFs' ability to adapt to older adults' needs. This includes, for example, introducing appropriate breathing and posture exercises for older singers (Davidson et al. 2014). Joseph and Southcott (2020) also discussed GSFs' ability to adapt their teaching to the specific needs of the older singers as essential.

Similarly, when the GSFs could not adapt their musical competency to the level of their group, it was seen as having a negative effect on the whole of the group singing experience (Kreutz and Brünger 2012). Additionally, when leading a group of people with long-term respiratory conditions, the GSFs musical adaptability includes being able to choose the repertoire that can meet the singers' needs and having the ability to introduce songs that could challenge them (Lewis et al. 2017). In relation to repertoire, being more flexible and sensitive to the singers' emotional needs was important for the cancer survivors' choir (Warran et al. 2019).

Music pedagogy

The focus of this theme is how best to deliver GSFs' teaching of group singing. In an Australian community choir study, the GSF was the musical role model for the singers, who adopted their GSF's performance and approaches to group singing (Joseph and Southcott 2020). Another important pedagogical approach was discussed in the context of teaching singing to a group of self-defined non-singers: the 'Human-compatible style of teaching' is based on non-threatening, positive and supportive approaches to promote self-confidence, which can increase enjoyment of group singing (Richards and Durrant 2003). Further, studies highlighted GSFs' skills to support singers to achieve their musical goals. Singers reported that their own musical attainment through group singing provided rewards and enjoyment (Warran et al. 2019). Tamplin and Thompson (2023) also illustrated a set of knowledge and specific skills regarding online singing, which emerged through the lockdowns of COVID-19 pandemic. Online setting meant that GSFs needed to have extra preparation to enable the singers to experience positives from online, i.e. not-in-person, settings. Finally, the Singing for Lung Health training programme recommended a reflective teaching practice, in which GSFs' own reflection on the previous sessions can greatly help their next session planning and preparation (Lewis et al. 2017).

Group facilitation meta-themes

The second meta-theme centred on group facilitation aspects of GSFs' role, consisting of five themes: (1) organizational leadership, (2) personal qualities and attributes as a facilitator, (3) leadership qualities and styles, (4) communication skills and (5) training requirements. The included studies underlined GSFs' facilitation-related knowledge, attributes and skills alongside music, indicating that group facilitation is as important as music in community open-to-all singing groups.

Organizational leadership

This theme is concerned with group management and structural issues. In the context of working with marginalized individuals who experienced homelessness, setting rules and providing a stable environment was crucial (Bailey and Davidson 2002). While some other groups might have a committee, and the committee might be actively involved in establishing group rules and structures (e.g. Clift et al. 2016), GSFs are seen as the leader of the group, who is expected to set the ground rules, which is an important component of facilitating a group of diverse individuals. Alongside setting rules, the included studies discussed being flexible to these organizational structures. For example, in the stroke survivors' choir (Tarrant et al. 2016), a flexible approach meant that the GSFs were able to adopt the singing session structures according to the singers' engagement levels. Such ability was regarded as a necessity (Tarrant et al. 2016). Similarly, when GSFs were inflexible about choir's structures (e.g. numbers of rehearsals and clothing for performances), the GSFs were held in disfavour. Consistency is another important aspect of organizational leadership. Having one committed, long-term GSF appears to provide consistency that offers a sense of community for women from deprived areas (Herlitzer et al. 2022). In this community group, the singers experienced their choir as an extended 'family' (2022: 5) and led by a consistent GSF, which was of great importance for the singers (Herlitzer et al. 2022).

Personal qualities and attributes as a facilitator

This theme is associated with desired personal characteristics and features which were frequently mentioned by the singers in the included studies. We have categorized them into six sub-themes. First, having genuine interests and concerns about the singers are considered as important attributes. Singers favoured GSFs who appeared to show a genuine interest in them personally (Bailey and Davidson 2002). GSFs also regarded having genuine concern for their singers to be a very important part of their job, as Forbes and Bartlett (2020) revealed in their findings from a focus group discussion involving GSFs. Moreover, Shakespeare and Whieldon (2018) reported showing genuine concern towards the singers might reduce anxieties or uncertainties for some singers, especially when they are new to the group.

Second, the included studies found GSFs' ability to create relaxed environment and atmosphere as a key attribute in group facilitation. Bibb and Skewes McFerran's (2018), Davidson et al. (2014) and Shakespeare and Whieldon (2018) all described creating a relaxed environment or having a relaxed approach to singing as an easy-going or tolerant way to make music together in the community open-to-all group singing context, as there is a great diversity

within the group in terms of musical abilities and competencies. Thus, in order to bring such a diverse group of people, GSFs' ability to create a relaxed atmosphere appeared to be relevant.

Third, several studies highlighted a range of personal qualities of GSFs, such as warm, welcoming, friendly, accepting, empathetic, patient, tolerant, encouraging, positive, not being self-adulatory, being interactive and enthusiastic/with passion. In a group singing programme for mental health service users, participants reported that the GSFs' 'welcoming', 'warm', 'accepting' and 'friendly' nature helped them to feel included and accepted (Bibb and Skewes McFerran 2018: 242). Clift et al. (2016) demonstrated empathetic GSFs means that they understand the singers' circumstances, 'ups and downs' in the study of military wives' choirs. Additionally, Joseph and Southcott (2020) found that being patient and tolerant of mistakes are another significant personal trait, which may impact on singers' experience of group singing. Judd and Pooley (2014) also described that GSFs' positive attitude and encouragement may be linked with psychological benefits experienced by singers. Tarrant et al. (2016) added that non-verbal interactions, such as eye-contact, are important when interacting with a group of singers who have limited language skills, while Kreutz and Brünger (2012) reported GSFs' self-adulatory behaviour had a negative impact on singers' singing experience. Moreover, being enthusiastic and having passion might be another crucial attribute. GSFs' enthusiasm and passion were praised in a singing study of older adults (Lamont et al. 2018).

The fourth sub-theme is having a sense of humour. GSFs' ability to make jokes and make singers laugh might put them at ease, and this might help build rapport with singers. Two studies (Joseph and Southcott 2020; Judd and Pooley 2014) found that having a sense of humour influenced the overall experience of singers.

The fifth sub-theme includes treating singers with respect and equally, as well as having stigma-free and non-judgemental approaches. Studies involving singers with mental health conditions (Lagacé et al. 2016; Shakespeare and Whieldon 2018) voiced that the singers wanted to be treated inclusively and without prejudice in relation to having mental ill-health experiences. Additionally, establishing a non-judgemental atmosphere from the very beginning was seen as GSFs' role (Richards and Durrant 2003). Further, singers disliked GSFs treating them like children (Bailey and Davidson 2002: 235) and they strongly disapproved of GSFs having a favourite singer or group of singers (Clift et al. 2016; Kreutz and Brünger 2014).

Leadership qualities and styles

The third theme within the group-related meta-theme concerned with leadership qualities and styles. Three sub-themes are being a democratic leader, being an effective coach and being able to make social connections. First, several studies emphasized being non-hierarchical, collaborative, compassionate democratic leader. Singers described the GSF being a ‘dictator’ because they felt their repertoire choices were not heard by GSFs (Bailey and Davidson 2002: 235) and for example, when all decisions relating rehearsals and performances were made only by GSFs (Clift et al. 2016). GSFs themselves expressed that collaborative leadership is essential for facilitating group singing based on non-hierarchical approaches (Forbes and Bartlett 2020). In the context of music pedagogical framework, Joseph and Southcott (2020) described GSFs’ role as being a ‘compassionate dictator’ (2020: 1498), who has well-developed skills in listening to people, managing difficult personalities and the ability to make strategic decisions for the whole group.

Being an effective coach is the second sub-theme of leadership qualities and styles. An effective coach has the skills and knowledge to empower others to develop, achieve their goals and overcome barriers (Peláez Zuberbuhler et al. 2020). In the context of group singing, two studies emphasized GSFs’ coaching skills especially when working with self-defined non-singers (Richards and Durrant 2003) and stroke survivors who have limited abilities to sing (Tarrant et al. 2016). In a stroke survivors’ choir, the GSF empowered them to engage with singing through offering kazoos (as an alternative to singing) to some, so that all choir members could engage with singing, making sounds together (Tarrant et al. 2016). For self-defined non-singers, GSFs’ encouragement and empowerment was the key which helped them overcome barriers, such as negative self-belief, and gain increased self-confidence in singing (Richards and Durrant 2003). Additionally, Lewis et al. (2017) reported GSF’s coaching skills as one of the necessary skills: GSFs focused on supporting singers who suffer from irreversible lung conditions to overcome their difficulties and enjoy singing and improve singing activities (e.g. holding notes for a longer period time) which could translate into health benefits such as improved breathing. Further, in the choirs of mental health service users (Lagacé et al. 2016) and homeless men (Bailey and Davidson 2002), the GSFs were praised for creating an environment where the singers could achieve their personal and/or musical goals and experience the flow state through group singing. In these studies, encouragement and empowerment appeared to be the crucial coaching-based leadership qualities for singers who had health conditions and demonstrated low self-confidence in singing.

The third sub-theme of leadership qualities and styles is associated with GSFs' skills of developing social connection and a sense of belonging ('collective ownership') within the group. For example, GSFs' contributed to developing 'collective ownership' amongst the singer through supporting them to make group decisions collaboratively (Tarrant et al. 2016: 6). Similarly, Lewis et al. (2017) highlighted that GSFs play an important role in developing a feeling of being connected with each other. Two further studies compared choir as an 'extended family' (Helitzer et al. 2022: 6), where the GSF was an 'anchor' holding everybody together (Warran et al. 2019: 6). Both studies highlighted GSFs' leadership to manage the group of diverse individuals through group singing activities.

Communication skills

This fourth theme is concerned with communication skills in relation to providing feedback to the singers. First, two music pedagogy framework studies found that offering encouraging, positive feedback to singers is important, as the GSFs' feedback could significantly impact singers' confidence (Bonshor 2017; Richards and Durrant 2003). Additionally, Bonshor (2017) learned from the singers that they disapproved when GSFs openly criticized certain choir members or pointed to one or two singers for their mistakes, which again had negative impact on singers' confidence. In some cases, GSFs' negative and rather direct feedback made the singers discontinue with the choir (Kreutz and Brünger 2012). Further, feedback needed to be delivered in a constructive way with the right balance between criticism and praise (Bonshor 2017). Singers also expressed that they wanted to receive feedback in a respectful and age-appropriate way (Bonshor 2017).

Training requirements

The fifth theme referred to training requirements. In the study of training GSFs for Singing for Lung Health groups, Lewis et al. (2017) addressed that GSFs ought to understand the long-term lung health issues from which the singers suffer, to understand the singers' needs better and therefore to provide appropriate and tailored singing activities for them. Similarly, Shakespeare and Whieldon (2018) noted that GSFs are required to understand mental ill-health and know the mental health first aid to offer any assistance when needed. Further, Lewis et al. (2017) added that GSFs also need to engage with ongoing support following their initial training to continue learning and developing.

Table 1: Meta-themes, themes and sub-themes of group singing facilitators’ important skills, attributes and knowledge

Meta-themes	Themes	Sub-themes	Examples in the included studies
1. Music-related	1.1 Musical competency	<p>1.1.1 Musical competency (knowledge of important vocal, breathing, and physical exercises; singing & respiratory mechanisms)</p> <p>1.1.2 Musical adaptabilities and flexibilities to support the singers and their needs in relation to singing exercises and repertoires</p>	<p>1.1.1 Clift, 2016; Davidson, 2014; Judd, 2014; Kreutz, 2012; Lewis, 2017</p> <p>1.1.2 Davidson, 2014; Joseph, 2020; Kreutz, 2012; Lewis, 2017; Warran, 2019</p>
	1.2 Music pedagogy	<p>1.2.1 Being a role model as musicians and performers</p> <p>1.2.2 ‘Human-compatible style of teaching’ (free from threat, but learning through positive and supportive approaches)</p> <p>1.2.3 Supporting singers’ musical skill attainment as well as enabling them to have fun (including online settings)</p> <p>1.2.4 Reflective teaching practice</p>	<p>1.2.1 Joseph, 2020</p> <p>1.2.2 Richards, 2003</p> <p>1.2.3 Warran, 2019; Tamplin, 2023</p> <p>1.2.4 Lewis, 2018</p>

<p>2. Group facilitation-related</p>	<p>2.1 Organisational Leadership</p>	<p>2.1.1 Setting rules and providing a stable environment to support group process</p> <p>2.1.2 Flexibility (ability to adjust group sessions and settings according to the needs of the group, including online settings)</p> <p>2.1.3 Consistency</p>	<p>2.1.1 Bailey, 2002</p> <p>2.1.2 Clift, 2016; Tarrant, 2016; Tamplin, 2023</p> <p>2.1.3 Helitzer, 2022</p>
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	<p>2.2 Personal qualities and attributes as a facilitator</p>	<p>2.2.1 Having genuine interests and concerns about their singers</p> <p>2.2.2 Ability to create relaxed environment and atmosphere</p> <p>2.2.3 Being warm, welcoming, friendly, accepting; empathetic; patient & tolerant; encouraging, positive; not being self-adulatory; being interactive; with enthusiasm & passion</p> <p>2.2.4 Having a sense of humour</p> <p>2.2.5 Treating singers with respect and equally; stigma-free and non-judgemental</p>	<p>2.2.1 Bailey, 2002; Forbes, 2020; Shakespeare, 2018</p> <p>2.2.2 Bibb, 2018; Davidson, 2014; Shakespeare, 2018</p> <p>2.2.3 Bibb, 2018; Clift, 2016; Joseph, 2020; Judd, 2014; Kreutz, 2012; Tarrant, 2016; Lamont, 2018; Richards, 2003</p> <p>2.2.4 Joseph, 2020; Judd, 2014</p> <p>2.2.5 Bailey, 2002; Clift, 2016; Kreutz, 2012; Lagacé, 2016; Richards, 2003; Shakespeare, 2018</p>
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	<p>2.3 Leadership qualities and styles</p>	<p>2.3.1 Being a democratic leader (non-hierarchical; collaborative; ‘compassionate’)</p> <p>2.3.2 Being an effective coach (inspiring, encouraging, enables singers to overcome barriers; improve/experience ‘flow’ state/fun)</p> <p>2.3.3 Ability to develop social connectedness; a sense of group belonging/’collective ownership’; ‘being an anchor’</p>	<p>2.3.1 Bailey, 2002; Clift, 2016; Forbes, 2020; Joseph, 2020</p> <p>2.3.2 Bailey, 2002; Lagacé, 2016; Lamont, 2018; Lewis, 2017; Richards, 2003; Tarrant, 2016</p> <p>2.3.3 Helitzer, 2022; Lewis, 2017; Tarrant, 2016; Warran, 2019</p>
	<p>2.4 Communication skills</p>	<p>2.4.1 Ability to provide constructive, age-appropriate, balanced feedback; positive & encouraging communication</p>	<p>2.4.1 Bonshor, 2017; Kreutz, 2012; Richards, 2003</p>
	<p>2.5 Training requirements</p>	<p>2.5.1 Having required knowledge about health conditions</p>	<p>2.5.1 Lewis, 2017; Shakespeare, 2018</p>

Discussion

Using systematic searches, the current review identified eighteen studies that explored the important skills, attributes and knowledge of GSFs in the community context. All included studies utilized qualitative research methods involving singers' and GSFs' perspectives on the effective skills, attributes and required knowledge for facilitating group singing. Data synthesis of the included studies revealed two meta-themes, seven themes and nineteen sub-themes. The music-related and group-related meta-themes appear to be overlapping and intertwined, and in practice, singing facilitators would be using a mixture of those skills, attributes and knowledge to develop and deliver group singing programmes successfully. Based on the synthesis, GSFs' work can be defined as the unique application of musical competency and group facilitation-related social skills, attribution and knowledge. Such application is described as fully utilizing their musical competency, creativity and social skills in a meaningful way (Forbes and Bartlett 2020). It is noteworthy that there are more themes and sub-themes in the group facilitation-related meta-theme compared with the music-related meta-theme. This might be due to the nature of community singing groups, which draw diverse singers with different levels of musical abilities, experience and needs and from all walks of life. Therefore, our analysis corroborates that facilitating community singing groups requires multi-faceted skills, attributes and knowledge.

First, the music-related meta-theme emphasizes not only musical competency but also the ability to adapt musical materials according to the needs of the group singers (Davidson et al. 2014; Kreutz and Brünger 2012; Lewis et al. 2017; Warran et al. 2019). Such an attuned approach consequently may be linked with singers' positive experience of group singing (Davidson et al. 2014; Richards and Durrant 2003). Moreover, the GSFs' musical expertise plays an important role in supporting groups to achieve shared musical goals (Lamont et al. 2018). Previous research into amateur choir singing discussed support including peer-support, as an effective approach that could optimize informal learning and achievement (Einarsdottir 2014; Bonshor 2016). Peer-support enables singers to learn from each other through imitation and observation (Einarsdottir 2014; Bonshor 2016).

Second, our analysis of group facilitation-related meta-theme reflects that group singing facilitation is more than teaching singing but is an artful craft. A range of personal qualities and attributes were highlighted, such as being warm, friendly, encouraging, positive and non-judgemental (Bibb and Skewes McFerran 2018; Clift et al. 2016; Joseph and Southcott 2020;

Judd and Pooley 2014; Kreutz and Brünger 2012; Lamont et al. 2018; Richards and Durrant 2003; Tarrant et al. 2016). It appears that such qualities and attributes contribute to establishing relationships and providing 'emotional scaffolding' (Hogle 2021), which has been shown to be important in community music settings (Creech et al. 2014). This was also evident in a similar study of teaching musical instruments to older adults (Hallam et al. 2016), which noted that the group facilitators' personal qualities and extramusical skills such as organizational and communication skills are often more important than the GSFs' subject knowledge of music. Similarly, this analysis emphasizes positive and encouraging communication including the ability to provide constructive, age-appropriate and balanced feedback (Bonshor 2017). Additionally, there are important GSFs' leadership qualities and styles as our synthesis revealed: being a democratic leader, an effective coach and a creator of a sense of togetherness and belonging. These qualities appear to correspond to the compassionate leadership discussions within the educational setting: compassionate school leaders can motivate people, supporting people to feel a sense of belonging through engagement and building trust (Harris and Jones 2023). Conversely, our synthesis indicates that authoritative or dictatorial styles were disapproved by the singers (Bailey and Davidson 2002; Clift et al. 2016), which can be corroborated by similar findings from a recent systematic review in management. That review reported that authoritarian leadership negatively affected the team's self-confidence and therefore yielded worsened performance (Pizzolitto et al. 2022). Further, previous research into traditional choral conductors emphasized that successful leadership in music requires a range of non-musical qualities, which include social awareness (e.g. empathy), social skills (conflict management; collaboration and teamwork), emotional self-awareness, as well as self-management (self-control, adaptability and positive attitude) (Carnicer et al. 2015). Most of all, Carnicer et al. (2015) consider leadership as a social competence that can have both innate and acquired foundations. GSFs' role in leading group singing can correspond with collaborative teamwork, where GSFs and the group establish a series of goals and work out how to achieve them together. A great deal of self-awareness and ability to reflect on one's approaches are also important. Socially competent leadership that can also successfully work through conflicts is desired.

Moreover, building the social membership and a sense of belonging appear to be an important task for GSFs, which may play key roles in promoting psycho-social well-being in singers (Tarrant et al. 2017). This has been also highlighted in a recent study of group singing as a mental health recovery project (Williams et al. 2021). Singing facilitators, as role models, appear to play a key role in nurturing and fostering positive social identity in their group members. They

may achieve this through initiating and promoting positive interactions between the singers. Moreover, GSFs need to facilitate positive social learning processes which can promote positive belief in novice singers (cf. Bonshor 2016). Further, GSFs as music educators need to learn to relate and connect effectively with others, as interpersonal relationships can influence learning, development and well-being of students. Building positive relationships with students, being a compassionate and caring educator appears to be a core quality (Steele Royston 2017). The attitude and personality of the GSFs can affect the social dynamics and ethos of the choir, either positively or negatively, and this can influence the extent to which the singers experience the potential psychological benefits of participation in group singing (Judd and Pooley 2014; Hallam et al. 2016; Kreutz and Brünger 2012).

Given GSFs' unique blend of multiple roles, e.g. leader, performer, teacher, organizer, motivator, coach, musician, administrator or 'factotum' (Joseph and Southcott 2020: 1493), it is surprising that opportunities for training for this demanding role are often limited in content or not widely available (Hallam et al. 2016; Jansson and Balsnes 2020 ; Joseph and Southcott 2020; Varvarigou and Durrant 2011). Some GSFs have received no specialized formal training at all, while others who have received formal conducting training during higher education have reported that this often overemphasizes studying advanced repertoire to the detriment of acquiring the necessary interpersonal skills or adopting a suitable approach for the level of the choir (Jansson and Balsnes 2020). Reviewed articles have suggested several potential training solutions, which could include increased opportunities for peer mentoring, shadowing experienced GSFs, attending seminars and workshops, setting up networks for collaborating and sharing information, and using social media to spread the word about successful strategies (Joseph and Southcott 2020). Moreover, formalized training in group leadership has been suggested as an important component of training programmes for GSFs when working with people living with long-term health conditions, such as stroke (Tarrant et al. 2016) and chronic lung conditions (Lewis et al. 2017). However, in the context of open-to-all singing groups or choirs, GSFs often report that they learn their craft 'on the job', frequently working in isolation, with few opportunities to discuss their work with or learn from their peers (cf. Hallam et al. 2016). Indeed, Cooper (2017) and Joseph and Southcott (2020) suggest that informal learning among GSFs could help to fill the learning gap, which is comparable to the situated learning approaches in community musicians (Camlin and Zesearson 2018). Similarly, Jansson and Balsnes (2020) recommend exploring ways of creating opportunities for realistic practice for GSFs in a variety of community settings, which would facilitate authentic learning (Camlin and Zesearson 2018). As discussed above, owing to the dynamic and complex nature of GSFs work,

some of skills, qualities, attributes and knowledge could be learnt through situated learning in the relevant context, while some of them could be achieved through formalized training programmes. Thus, including both formalized and informal learning and training opportunities may optimize GSFs' learning and development.

Limitations and implications on practice and research

The eighteen included studies were diverse in several ways: (1) their conceptual frameworks and theoretical approaches; (2) the heterogeneity of settings and singers (e.g. self-identified non-singers [Richards and Durrant 2003], homeless men [Bailey and Davidson 2002], mental health service users [Lagacé et al. 2016; Shakespeare and Whieldon 2018]); (3) variable GSFs-related data. Additionally, most studies did not have facilitators as the primary research focus, thus, findings were related to GSFs' roles, skills and knowledge and did not provide extensive discussion of how they were developed. Additionally, all included studies are from high-income industrialized countries, where group singing/choir is culturally well embedded. Also, most included studies recruited White Caucasian singers and facilitators; there are few studies involving singers and facilitators from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

This review is the first step in responding to the previous study's call for more research (Dingle et al. 2019) to understand the benefits and drawbacks of different approaches to group singing facilitation through a systematic review method. Future studies could explore how GSFs optimally acquire both musical and group facilitation skills and knowledge, whether they learn specific skills in situ or through formalized training. Evidence from such could lead to the development of specialized training programmes for GSFs with both formal and informal learning components. Relatedly, research into best practice guidelines could inform GSFs and relevant stakeholders, including local and national governments, education sectors and public health. For example, those research outcomes could inform social prescribing in the United Kingdom, which is a community-based approach to promote health and well-being using creative interventions, such as group singing. Ensuring group singing programmes are led by well-trained facilitators is important for positive group singing experiences and enhanced health and well-being in the community.

Conclusion

The current systematic review revealed a range of important skills, attributes and knowledge for GSFs who lead open-to-all group singing in community settings. Synthesis of findings of the

eighteen included studies revealed the unique and complex nature of facilitating group singing and addressed their key roles in optimizing singers' positive group singing experience. This systematic review also highlighted the sporadic nature of research dedicated to the complexity of group singing facilitation as well as a lack of formal training opportunities and ongoing support for GSFs. Further research is needed to develop and evaluate holistic learning approaches (formal training and situated learning) to support GSFs with key skills, attributes and knowledge to promote effective group singing in the community.

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Appendix 1: Search protocol (last searched on 1 June 2023)

1. Search key words

'choir*', 'chorus', 'choral', 'group sing*', 'singer*' and 'communit*'.

2. Data bases

Medline, PsycINFO, Web of Science (Social Sciences Citation Index), AMED (Allied and Complementary Medicine Database) and Google Scholar.

3. Inclusion criteria

- (a) Empirical studies (both qualitative and quantitative studies) published in peer-reviewed journals
- (b) Studies including adults (≥ 18 years old)
- (c) Focus on open-to-all choirs/singing groups; non-auditioned choirs/singing groups.

4. Exclusion criteria

- (a) Non-research articles (e.g. editorials, commentaries and opinion pieces)
- (b) Publications including professional choirs, children and having a focus on other musical activities than group singing
- (c) Systematic reviews and trial protocols
- (d) Non-English publications.

Appendix 2. Key characteristics of the included studies with their findings

Study ID	Aims	Methods	Findings
First author Year Country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underpinning framework/theory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants • Design • Approach to analysis 	(Relevant findings only regarding Group Singing Facilitators' (GSFs) skills, attributes and knowledge)
#1. Bailey 2002 U.K.	To explore a homeless choir singers' experience of group singing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flow theory & adaptation framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N=7 (male; <i> Mage</i> = 52.14 years (range 45 – 62 years)) • Semi-structured interviews with the singers • Interpretive phenomenological analysis 	Choir director's leadership played a significant role in the successful choir programme and transforming homeless singers' lives. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GSF's leadership: setting rules and providing a stable environment. • Having genuine concerns about their singers. Negative experiences include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The choir leader being dictatorial, favouring certain member. • Treating the choir like children.

<p>#2. Bibb 2018 Australia</p>	<p>To explore how group singing might contribute to promoting mental health recovery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community music therapy framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A total of 23 (<i>Mage</i>=38.7 years (range 22-72 years) ; N=5 (from community groups); N=18 (from hospital groups) • In-depth interviews • Grounded theory 	<p>The knowledge, skills and attitude of the facilitator that contributed to singers' positive singing experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be able to create a relaxed and flexible environment, • To have an inclusive attitude, and • To have musical and group leadership skills. <p>GSFs were the major influence on the singers' both positive and negative experiences.</p>
<p>#3. Bonshor 2017 U.K.</p>	<p>To explore the lived experience of amateur choral singers in relation to confidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of self-efficacy and confidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N=34 amateur choral singers (<i>Mage</i>=NR) • Focus group & semi-structured individual interviews • Interpretative phenomenological analysis 	<p>Amateur singers reported that conductors should avoid:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving authoritative and critical feedback • Having 'schoolmasterly' approach/communication style. <p>Conductors' desired behaviours and skills include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing constructive feedback • Age-appropriate feedback based on mutual respect • Recognising needs of adult learners • Well-balanced criticism and praise

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopting a good-humoured approach
#4. Clift 2016 U.K.	<p>To explore the benefits of a choir programme for wives, partners, and families of military personnel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group singing for health and wellbeing framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N=464 (the military wives choir singers); N=173 (choir committee members) • A cross-sectional survey with an open-ended question about the ‘best and worst bits of singers’ experience’ and any additional feedback • Thematic analysis 	<p>Essential requirements for GSFs are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Musical competency, the key for positive choir experience; • Understanding military families' special needs/situations <p>Ineffective leadership includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not listening to singers (e.g., too many or little rehearsals, being inflexible about the choir uniforms, not consulting on repertoires, showing favouritism, and putting pressures around performances)
#5. Davidson 2014 Australia	<p>To assess the health and wellbeing benefits of an 8-week group singing programme for older</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N=29; <i>Mean</i>=77.5 years old (<i>SD</i>=4.7) • In-depth interviews with the singers 	<p>The community music facilitator was key to the success of this program. Key elements included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having a great sense of humour and social skills were important and put the older singers at ease.

	<p>people living in the community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group singing as an ‘active ageing’ framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through relaxed approaches to singing and the age-appropriate exercises for breath control and posture, the older singers were able to experience the group singing positively. • Additionally, age-appropriate choice of repertoire allowed the singers to experience a sense of shared history.
<p>#6. Forbes 2020 Australia</p>	<p>To explore group singing facilitators’ experiences through Seligman’s theory of wellbeing (PERMA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postive psychology, PERMA framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N=11 (GSFs) Mage=48.8 years (range 25-72), male=2 • Semi-structured interviews • Thematic Analysis. 	<p>GSFs found their work rewarding and beneficial for their wellbeing; 3 main themes relating to PERMA were identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing positive relationships with group members: GSF ‘<i>walk with the group members</i>’ i.e., having genuine care and concern for their group members and connecting with group members to develop genuine relationship are seen as nature of their work. • Having a non-hierarchical approach expressed as ‘circle

			<p>of joy’ as a core approach to group singing facilitation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration with group members is another essential skill: e.g., including group feedback, encouraging group participation, & co-creating ‘buzz’ (positive feelings). • Engagement: i.e., facilitators fully utilize their ‘signature strengths’ (Seligman, 2011). GSF regard their work as optimising their unique skills (e.g., social skills & creativity) and attributes in a meaningful way.
#7. Helitzer 2022 Ireland	<p>To explore the emotional, social and practical impacts of group singing for women from an area of disadvantage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community music therapy framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N=9 (all-female community choir members from an area of disadvantage); Mage=42 years (range 28-61) • Mixed-methods design (survey + focus group 	<p>The three themes (social impact, health and well-being aspects, and practical issues) and nine sub-themes were reported. The following two subthemes contained data relating to GSFs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theme 1 "social impact" -> subtheme (1.1) "Choir as an extended family" due to the efforts of the choir leader. • Theme 3 "practical issues" -> subtheme (3.1)

		discussion) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thematic analysis 	"Importance of leadership" highlighting having sustainable, trustworthy choir leaders as the key for singers' motivation and commitment
#8. Joseph 2020 Australia	To explore how music directors/conductors of community choirs understand working with older people; To explore how older choir members understand the role of their music directors/conductors. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music pedagogy framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N=2 (community choir/musical directors) + unreported number of choir members • Interviews with musical directors & focus group discussions with choir singers. • Thematic analysis. 	Specific knowledge and skills required when teaching older adults to sing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the needs of older singers and ability to adjust teaching styles for older singers are important. • Essential personal qualities include sense of humour, patience and tolerance of mistakes. • Modelling expertise as musicians and performers • Ability to listen to singers • "Compassionate dictator" ability to negotiate different personalities • Collegially leading the group with passion and commitment.
#9. Judd	To discover the factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N=10 (amateur singers); 	The GSFs' personality, musical ability, teaching style and

<p>2014 Australia</p>	<p>associated with the psychological benefits experienced by choir singers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group singing for health and wellbeing framework 	<p>males=4, <i>M</i>_{age}=54 years (range 33-72 years)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-depth interviews • Thematic analysis. 	<p>their vision for the group affect singers' experiences (positively and negatively).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Musical competency • Having a positive attitude (e.g., encouraging) • Sense of humour. <p>However, 'having no vision' for the group was reported as having negative impact on the group dynamic.</p>
<p>#10. Kreutz 2012 Germany</p>	<p>To explore negative experiences in amateur choir singers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group singing for health and wellbeing framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N=778 (amateur choir singers) (<i>M</i>_{age}=41.17, SD=14.9 years) • survey using open-ended question on negative experiences ("<i>Have you ever had bad</i>") 	<p>Singers' negative experiences were identified in two main themes, i.e., social issues and musical issues. The social issues theme was associated with GSFs.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GSF's did not adapt their expectations to singers' abilities. • Preferential treatment of some singers within the whole choir

		<p><i>experiences with singing in a choir? If yes, how did this negative experience come about? ”)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor communication skills • ‘Dictatorship’ style of leadership • Musical incompetence, such as not having good knowledge and teaching skills of vocal health.
#11. Lagacé 2016 Canada	<p>To explore the benefits of community-based group singing activity led by a singing teacher and a co-ordinator</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A recovery oriented mental health framework (e.g., CHIME) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N=13 having a diagnosis of mental illness, singing teacher & co-ordinator; Mage = 51.8 years (SD=10.4), range = 32- 69 years old • Interviews • Content analysis using the QDA-Miner software 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GSFs to develop singing sessions including beneficial exercises such as vocal warm-ups, adopting good posture for singing, and physical exercises. • The high expectations and support for all from the singing teacher were an important factor in the success of the group singing programme. • Normalising mental health conditions and ensuring a stigma-free environment by treating members as singing students rather than mental health service users. • The singing teacher provided singing activities to use

	(connectedness, hope, identity, meaning in life & empowerment))		singers' skills to their full potentials and created an environment conducive to achieving a 'flow state'.
#12. Lamont 2018 U.K.	To explore older adults' experiences of singing in a community choir <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive psychology, PERMA framework (Seligman, 2011) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N=42 (from two periods): Phase 1 (2009) N= 11; age range=55-82 years old; 9 females; Phase 2 (2013) N=31; age range=58-78 years old; female=28 Individual interviews & focus groups from Phase 1; small group discussions using a <i>World Café</i> 	<p>The GSF's roles were directly linked with the theme of leadership and organisation corresponding with <i>Meaning in the PERMA</i> model.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> GSF's strong leadership was essential for the success of the group, which includes GSF's enthusiasm, passion and clear vision of their choir. It is discussed that GSFs should provide structured singing activities which engender the 'flow' state that might be associated with positive emotions and engagement in singers. As part of GSF's organisational skills, involving singers

		<p><i>participatory</i> discussion format from Phase 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thematic analysis based on the conceptual framework of PERMA 	<p>in the decision-making process (e.g., repertoire) was positively received by the singers.</p>
#13. Lewis 2017 U.K.	<p>To assess experiences of group facilitators of ‘Singing for Lung Health’, a British Lung Foundation group singing programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group singing for health and wellbeing framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N=15 (GSFs after completing ‘Singing for Lung Health’ training); Mage=NR; males=1 • Semi-structured interviews • Thematic analysis. 	<p>Trainees reported that providing lung health specific group programmes is ‘complicated’. A range of GSFs’ essential skills and knowledge include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To enable participants to have fun and gain clinical benefit simultaneously • To create a new culture which is based on strong social connections with a shared purpose and creative performance • To adapt repertoires for singers’ health benefits (e.g., breathing) while expanding repertoires and singers’ musicality.

<p>#14. Richards 2003 U.K.</p>	<p>To explore ways of encouraging self-defined non-singers to take part in group singing activities and changing perceptions of singing as an elite activity for the 'talented'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music pedagogy framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N=40 (singers of the 'Can't Sing Choir'); Age range=40-60 years old; majority were female • Researchers' observation of 14 choir rehearsals; questionnaires with open-ended questions for singers; interviews 5 singers and the choir director • Narrative analyses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GSF established a positive, encouraging, and non-judgemental environment through providing constant encouragement (e.g., "you can't be wrong") and constructive feedback. • Singers praised particular qualities of the GSF, e.g., "wonderful," "enthusiastic," "encouraging," "inspiring" and "motivating", which helped build confidence and/or overcome barriers of self-belief ("I can't sing") and past negative experiences. • The "human-compatible" style of facilitation, which does not use threat, but adopts positive reinforcement, which may have boosted confidence in self-defined non-singers; this helped them improve their singing ability as well as experience increased enjoyment.
<p>#15. Shakespeare</p>	<p>To assess the impacts of 'Sing Your Heart Out'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N=20 (SYHO choir singers, who experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GSF created a stigma-free environment through providing an opportunity to sing together as a fun, low-

<p>2018 U.K.</p>	<p>(SYHO), a mental health recovery choir programme, and to identify key features that made the approach distinctive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community mental health recovery framework 	<p>mental health conditions), N=2 (GSFs), N=4 (founders) and key organizers (N=NR)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus group discussions with GSFs, founders and key organizers; In-depth interviews with singers (N=17 identified as current or former mental health service users) Inductive thematic analysis 	<p>key activity without pressure of being a formal choir (e.g., having a focus on perfecting music).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Singers appreciated personal approach by the GSF: e.g., making direct eye-contact and showing genuine interest in singers. GSFs also should know the signs of distress, disruption or having symptoms of mental illness, and how to cope with them.
<p>#16. Tarrant 2016</p>	<p>To identify key relevant elements a group</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N=2 (community singing facilitators); 	<p>GSFs play a role in developing a sense of group belonging through providing positive interactions using both verbal</p>

U.K.	<p>singing intervention that can benefit stroke survivors with aphasia with a focus on nurturing social connections between stroke survivors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social identity theory/framework 	<p>N=10 (stroke survivors with aphasia) <i>Mean</i>=58.60 years (SD=6.93)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with singing facilitators; focus group discussion with stroke survivors with aphasia • NVivo10 qualitative data analysis software; Thematic analysis. 	<p>and non-verbal communication.</p> <p>In order to engage stroke survivors with aphasia in group singing, GSFs used flexible approaches:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible delivery: GSF delivered singing sessions flexibly, to pace with singers' responses. E.g., They would include a break when judging the participants needed one, or extending the session time, when there was a high-level of interaction. • Encouraging different forms of participation: GSF offered to use a kazoo for singers who may find singing is challenging. • Empowering participants: GSF engaged singers when choosing songs, to provide a sense of control and help them gain collective ownership over the group and its direction.
#17. Tamplin	To understand (i) how	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N=50 (English-speaking 	Five key themes were generated: (i) Motivators for Moving

<p>2023 Australia</p>	<p>health-focused choirs have adapted due to COVID-19; (ii) the barriers and enablers of online choir sessions; (iii) the positive and negative aspects of online choir sessions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group singing for health and wellbeing framework 	<p>choir facilitators or organisers of health focused choirs)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thematic analysis of survey participants' responses 	<p>Online; (ii) Technology Challenges Facilitators and Participants; (iii) Online Benefits Outweigh the Challenges; (iv) Strategies for Facilitating Online Singing; and (v) The Future is Online.</p> <p>Survey respondents voiced specific challenges of facilitating online singing sessions and shared helpful guides, including required technology, preparations, instructions to give to group members and how to make online sessions more enjoyable while overcoming some limitations.</p>
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<p>#18. Warran 2019 UK</p>	<p>To understand how the process of singing impacts on those who are affected by cancer, including patients, staff, carers and those who have been bereaved</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group singing for health and wellbeing framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N=32 (Choirs for patients, staff, carers affected by cancer, who had participated for a minimum of 6 weeks; Mage= 63 years • Focus group discussions • A grounded theory analysis 	<p>Four overarching themes were reported (building resilience, social support, psychological dimensions and process issues) highlighting that group singing contributed to building resilience in those affected by cancer. The 4th theme of Process Issues is related to GSFs roles and skills, which includes four sub-themes (musical skills, leadership, administrative tasks & choice of repertoires).</p>
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Mage= Mean age; SD=Standard Deviation; NR = Not Reported; GSF=Group Singing Facilitator

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