

Developing Engagement and Participation in a Community Choir: A Music Education Perspective

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Abstract. This study looks at how teaching strategies and rehearsal structures in adult community choirs within Singapore's multicultural socio-cultural context shape participant engagement, learning motivation and sense of belonging. A Practice-as-Research (PaR) framework is used, with a focus on a four-week adult community choir project built around the Cantonese pop song Hong Ri, ending in a large-scale Buddhist community performance. Data were gathered through rehearsal observations, video recordings, questionnaires, semi-structured interviews with 20 choir members and expert practitioner interviews, all reviewed through thematic cross-referencing. It was found that rehearsal designs bringing together psychological safety, graduated skill demand and collaborative participation can support growth in musical ability, performance confidence and social connection among adult choral singers. The study adds to growing practice-based knowledge in community music pedagogy and can offer transferable insights for educators working in inclusive adult learning environments.

Keywords: Community choir, adult learning, rehearsal design, practice-as-research, engagement, Singapore.

1. Introduction and Project Overview

Community music is widely understood as a practice in which values of community interaction, shared ownership and collective participation take precedence over technical mastery [1]. Higgins [1] characterises community music as a methodology centred on active involvement, mutual ownership and social interaction, situating musical learning within the fabric of daily community life. That conceptual background informs the present Master Project, which investigates an adult community choir operating in Singapore.

The study examines how teaching strategies and rehearsal structures in adult community choirs within Singapore's multicultural social context shape participant engagement, learning motivation and sense of belonging during rehearsals. The research subjects formed an adult community choir of 20 regular members aged between 30 and 70. The choir maintained stable membership across the project and rehearsed toward a shared performance goal. The Cantonese pop song Hong Ri (Red Sun) served as the core repertoire, and the project culminated in a community performance organised by a Singaporean Buddhist group. The entire project lasted approximately four weeks and included four formal rehearsals, each of roughly three hours, covering vocal exercises, part-specific exercises, rhythm and physical activity design and overall stage presentation. Within that clearly defined practical framework, the study explores how teaching and rehearsal decisions shape adult learning experiences through continuous observation and reflection.

The outcomes of this Master Project are presented in three interrelated parts. First, the community choir functions as an artistic and pedagogical output in itself. Second, a lecture-based videographic artefact situates the project within relevant educational theory and reflects on pedagogical choice. Third, a written critical commentary looks at the practice in an analytical way, drawing on scholarly literature and practitioner insight. Taken together, these elements show how practice-based enquiry can deepen understanding of adult community choir pedagogy in the multicultural environment of Singapore.

The dissertation is organised into six chapters. Chapter 2 reviews literature on community music, adult learning and motivation theories, providing a theoretical foundation. Chapter 3 elaborates the

approaches used in the study by adopting the Practice-as-Research framework. Chapter 4 presents descriptive information on the project implementation process and rehearsal practices, covering rehearsal structure, instructional activity design and participant responses at various stages. Chapter 5 builds on that foundation with analysis and discussion of significant practice experiences, investigating how instructional decisions connect to participation, learning motivation and sense of belonging. Chapter 6, as a reflection, summarises professional learning and the implications for future work in adult community choral practice.

2. Contextual and Theoretical Framework

This chapter sets out the theoretical framework underpinning the design, practice and analysis of the study. Rather than offering a comprehensive survey of the existing literature, it explains how the selected theories function as operational tools within the analysis and decision-making processes of subsequent rehearsal practice. Three questions organise the theories covered here: (1) the role of these theories in shaping how participation is observed; (2) their influence on the development of rehearsal and instructional strategies; and (3) the framework of understanding they provide for subsequent analysis.

2.1 Community Music and Participation

According to Higgins [1], community music is a vigorous practice centred on active participation, mutual ownership and cooperation. In this study the theory is not invoked as an abstract consideration but is used directly to define the object of study and to set the pedagogical priority of participation in rehearsals. Participation is understood here not as synonymous with technical proficiency but as contingent on whether members regularly sing together, respond to rehearsal exercises and engage in group dynamics. That operationalisation had a direct influence on the observation focus, so that pitch accuracy, timbre and part-specific precision were not used as main indicators of participation. Attention was instead directed at whether members attended regularly, involved themselves actively in the rehearsal process and group musical activities and responded proactively. These observable behaviours became the working definition of participation used throughout the study.

Inclusivity and emotional safety are placed ahead of achievement and individual performance evaluation in this approach. Rehearsal structures were therefore set up to lower barriers to entry, reduce the pressure of individual exposure and keep participation going through collective singing. These conclusions did not come from a static reading of community music theory but grew instead out of its use in particular pedagogical situations.

Community music studies also point out that the development of a sense of belonging and identity is closely tied to participatory experiences. Balsnes [2] notes that community singing is an interactive activity in which the musical experience is bound up with a feeling of belonging and a sense of identity. That perspective becomes concrete in the context of choral singing within the Singaporean Chinese community where this study is carried out, given the emphasis on cultural familiarity and shared musical memory.

2.2 Motivation and Engagement: Self-Determination Theory and Flow

People are more likely to develop lasting and intrinsic motives for participation when their needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness are met. Deci and Ryan [3] identify autonomy, competence and relatedness as basic psychological needs, and the meeting of these needs is seen as a primary condition for self-determined engagement. In this study SDT is used not as a tool for quantifying psychological states but as an analytical framework for understanding the motivational background of rehearsal interactions.

SDT is enacted through a set of teaching and organisational decisions in rehearsal practice. A sense of autonomy is encouraged by rehearsing at a flexible pace and allowing space for members to express views; a sense of competence is fostered by gradually escalating and attainable musical tasks; a sense

of relatedness is slowly built through an established group rehearsal routine and shared direction. These dimensions are applied in explaining the degree of involvement, confidence change and attendance retention of participants at various rehearsal stages.

At the level of analysis, SDT provides a platform for understanding how engagement motivation is shaped by context rather than viewed as a fixed trait of any individual. The intrinsic and extrinsic motivation framework described by Ryan and Deci [3] is particularly useful in interpreting the motivation to remain involved as reported in interviews and questionnaires. Such motives relate more to pleasure, affiliation and personal meaning than to external judgment or outcomes.

Flow theory also contributes to understanding the quality of engagement. Csikszentmihalyi [4] defines flow as a state of deep absorption, concentration and self-fulfillment during an activity, typically occurring when challenge and ability are relatively well matched. In the rehearsal setting of this study, flow theory is not applied to diagnose individual psychological states but serves as an explanatory standpoint for identifying whether the rehearsal structure promoted deep engagement. Of particular interest was the presence of sustained singing, emotional expression and consistent involvement, and whether these were associated with rehearsing familiar repertoire, continuous music-making or rehearsal arrangements with fewer interruptions. Whereas high practitioner involvement and engagement were easier to detect, a stronger emphasis on inaccuracies or technical considerations during rehearsals tended to produce tension, withdrawal or distraction; greater scores were observed when musical continuity was preserved.

Flow theory is thus used not as a diagnostic method for psychological states but as a lens for examining the relationship between rehearsal structure and participatory experience. This standpoint helps to tell apart surface participation such as passive singing along and deep engagement such as active expression and focus, and in doing so gives a more nuanced picture of the quality of participation.

To conclude, SDT and flow theory are used in this study not as autonomy-heredity theories to be described for their own sake but as analytical elements for explaining adult community choral participation experiences. These theories illuminate the analysis of changes in participation, motivation and engagement through their tangible expression in rehearsal practice.

2.3 Adult Learning in Musical Contexts

In this study, theories of adult learning are applied to the property of adult community choral singing so as to understand learning responses in terms of the construction of learning patterns, style of participation and adaptations required in the instructional process.

Adult learning research suggests that adult learners arrive in learning situations with already formed experiences, self-concepts and emotional expectations, and that their involvement in a learning activity is often shaped by their sense of dignity, safety and the respect extended to them. Brookfield [5] argues that adult learning cannot be understood purely as skill acquisition; it is rather a form of experience that depends greatly on the learning environment and relationships, and the role of power relations and emotional factors is extremely important. An educator who is aware of this fact is better placed to interpret the way participants respond to instruction during rehearsals.

In a rehearsal situation with an adult community choir, participants differ widely in musical skill, learning experience and self-confidence. Adult choir members are more susceptible to anxiety and withdrawal behaviour when they are exposed in public, corrected immediately or evaluated relative to others, unlike children or professional performers. Rehearsals in this study were therefore not treated as zones of technical correction but as educational environments where emotional safety had to be maintained and a sense of respect kept up at all times.

Related studies also point out that the benefits of adult choral participation go beyond musical ability to social bonding and emotional wellbeing. Clift and Hancox [6] note that group singing can provide social support for adults and facilitate emotional expression and social connection. This view supports the choice of collective experience as a rehearsal design priority, placed ahead of individual technical uniformity.

At the analytical level, adult learning theory is translated into three observable phenomena: (1) the extent to which participants show tolerance for error and a willingness to make attempts during rehearsals; (2) the degree to which the teaching approach keeps members of various ability levels continuously involved; and (3) the effect of the rehearsal environment in preserving respect, equality and emotional safety. Adult learning theory therefore works in this study not as a recitation of abstract principles but as an explanatory lens for examining the relationship between rehearsal interaction, instructional judgment and learning experience.

3. Methodology and Practice-as-Research Design

A Practice-as-Research (PaR) framework is used as the methodological approach of this study. Within this framework, choral rehearsal practice is treated as a site of knowledge generation rather than merely as background to a research object. No pre-existing teaching hypotheses are assumed and no attempt is made to test causal relations between fixed variables on a quantitative basis. It examines instead how teaching choices shape the participatory and learning processes of adult community choir members through continuous observation, reflection and documentation in the ongoing practice of teaching and learning.

This chapter does not re-state the theoretical definition of PaR. It focuses on explaining why and how the approach is used within the particular context of this study, and how the teaching experience, real-time reactions and reflection are converted into analysable research data from which practical knowledge can emerge.

3.1 Practical Path of Knowledge Generation

The interactive relationships, participation levels and sense of group integration addressed in this study are experiential phenomena dynamically created during rehearsals. These phenomena cannot be defined prior to the research process, nor can they be explained by data collected at a single moment in time; they must instead be understood through sustained practice. The study therefore adopts the practice-driven method of research, in which observation, teaching modifications and reflection within the framework of repeated rehearsal are treated as the principal knowledge-generating processes.

In this study, each repeated rehearsal was treated as a single but interdependent research unit. The teaching choices made during rehearsals grew out of the researchers' immediate responses to participants and were later reviewed and recorded alongside participation patterns. Through this practice-observation-adjustment cycle, understanding of instruction was not grounded in any specific episode but built up gradually through the repetition of several exercises.

Participation, enthusiasm and sense of belonging were not treated as abstract psychological states. They were read instead through observable behaviours during rehearsals, including vocal engagement, responses to instructional prompts, patterns of peer interaction and the degree of involvement in group activities. This practical approach keeps the research grounded in real-life choral teaching situations.

3.2 Practice-as-Research Cycle in the Hong Ri Project

The methodological structure of the study is the practice-research cycle. It runs continuously and includes three interdependent stages: practice, reflection and documentation (see Table 1). During the practice phase the researcher took on the role of choral conductor, leading weekly rehearsals covering repertoire selection, vocal exercises, part practice and the overall architecture of the rehearsal. Teaching choices were not fixed in advance but were adjusted during rehearsals in response to observed participation, interaction and group dynamics.

Reflection took place both during and after rehearsals. Researchers engaged in reflection-in-action, adjusting pace and approach in real time in response to participant feedback. After rehearsals, they also undertook reflection-on-action, carrying out a systematic review of teaching decisions and their

effects. Such reflections informed subsequent rehearsals and contributed to the ongoing refinement of teaching strategies.

The documentation phase systematically organised and coded the recordings and reflective notes from rehearsals into research data. Through repeated review of written reflections, audio-visual recordings and interview transcripts, the researchers identified general patterns of participation and teaching phenomena across different rehearsal stages, thereby establishing the basis for further analysis.

Table 1. Practice-as-Research Cycle in the Choir Project

Stage	Description	Evidence Generated	Analytical Purpose
Practice	Weekly choir rehearsals involving repertoire selection, vocal warm-ups, ensemble work and rehearsal strategies designed for a mixed-ability adult choir. Pedagogical decisions were made responsively in relation to participants' engagement, confidence and group dynamics.	Rehearsal observations, rehearsal recordings, conductor's rehearsal notes.	To capture pedagogical decision-making in real time and identify patterns of engagement, challenge and adaptation within rehearsal practice.
Reflection	Ongoing reflection occurred both during rehearsals (reflection-in-action) and after rehearsals (reflection-on-action), informing adjustments to pacing, instruction and interaction.	Reflective journal, post-rehearsal notes, review of recordings.	To critically examine teaching decisions and interpret how rehearsal strategies shaped participant experience over time.
Documentation	Reflections and observations were systematically recorded and organised to support later analysis. Selected moments were revisited to identify recurring patterns across the rehearsal process.	Written reflections, interview transcripts, audio-visual materials.	To transform practice-based insights into analysable data within a practice-as-research framework.

Table 2. Overview of Data Sources and Analytical Focus

Data Source	Description	Purpose in the Study	Analytical Focus
Rehearsal Observations	Systematic observation of weekly choir rehearsals led by the researcher, focusing on participant behaviour, interaction and response to rehearsal strategies.	To capture real-time pedagogical practice and participant engagement.	Levels of participation, confidence, responsiveness to rehearsal tasks, group dynamics.
Rehearsal Recordings	Audio and video recordings of selected rehearsals documenting musical processes and interactional moments.	To enable repeated review and analytical distance.	Vocal confidence, ensemble cohesion, moments of adaptation.
Reflective Journals	Ongoing written reflections maintained by the researcher following rehearsals.	To support reflexivity and trace pedagogical development over time.	Reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action; evolving strategies.
Participant Interviews	Semi-structured interviews conducted with selected choir members.	To foreground participant perspectives and triangulate observational data.	Motivation, confidence, belonging, sustained participation.
Expert Interviews	Interviews with experienced community music practitioners.	To contextualise the project within broader professional practice.	Pedagogical validation and comparative insight.

The cross-validation of multiple data sources was used to facilitate analysis under the practice-as-research model. In Table 2, observable behaviour and interaction of participants during rehearsals were captured through rehearsal observations; audio-visual recordings provided opportunities for repeated review and analytical distance; reflective logs traced the development of teaching considerations; and semi-structured interviews enriched the professional perspective of the study.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

The data collection techniques adopted here were developed and ethically approved in the prior stage of the research plan. The same practice and research framework is followed in this dissertation; only the particular application and analytical orientation of these methods to the present research stage is discussed here, without repeating technical details.

To understand the participatory experience of adult community choir members during the rehearsal process, the study uses video-based observations, questionnaires and interviews. These approaches are complementary, jointly modelling the dynamic relationship among teaching practices, participation behaviours and learning experiences.

3.3.1 Rehearsal Observation

Rehearsal observation is one of the key data sources of this research. Observations were conducted through video recording of the rehearsal process; selected rehearsals were systematically captured to ensure that the original context of teaching activities, musical practice and group interaction was fully documented. Video records enabled the researcher to study observable behaviours such as vocal interaction, physical involvement, reading of instructional cues and peer interaction patterns. To reduce subjective bias arising from the researcher also acting as choral conductor, observational records were mainly completed after rehearsals and compiled through multiple reviews of the video recordings.

3.3.2 Questionnaire and Interviews

A short questionnaire survey was administered at the final rehearsal stage to complement the evidence from video observation. All choir members received the questionnaire, which addressed their perceptions of rehearsal participation, degree of engagement, development of confidence and sense of belonging to the group (via Google Forms). Questionnaire data were analysed mainly descriptively to present the general trends of experience.

Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with selected choir members to gain a fuller view of their feelings about the rehearsal process and the way they were taught. Interview data served as an auxiliary source of evidence relative to the video analysis and questionnaire outcomes.

3.4 Data Analysis Methods

In this study, attendance was not treated as a fixed or pre-set outcome variable but rather as naturally generated feedback during the ongoing choral rehearsal process. As rehearsal goals became clearer and collective practice deepened, participants' attendance was understood as an external expression of their motivation, level of engagement and sense of project identification gradually formed through practice. Attendance data were therefore used to support a holistic understanding of changing trends in participation and to cross-validate with interview and video observation data rather than to establish causal relationships.

During the analysis, researchers repeatedly reviewed and compared rehearsal videos, open-ended questionnaire responses and interview data to identify recurring meaningful units and gradually summarise them into analytical themes. The theoretical frameworks used in thematic construction drew on autonomy, competence and relatedness from SDT, as well as participation and interaction indicators commonly found in community music research [1, 2, 3].

The various materials were not treated in isolation but were integrated through cross-referencing to explore how teaching strategies and rehearsal structures shape the formation and changes of participatory experience in practice.

3.5 Ethical Considerations and Data Management Guidelines

The ethical procedures applicable to this study, including informed consent, participant anonymity and data handling procedures, were established and approved in the previous phase of the research plan. The current paper follows the same approved ethical framework; elaborate technical details are therefore not repeated here.

All participants took part voluntarily and gave informed consent before data were gathered. They also agreed to take part in rehearsals and interviews, to complete questionnaires and allow video recording, and to the use of selected audio-visual material in academic research, evaluation and reflective documentation. Each participant was made aware of their right to withdraw at any point without penalty.

During the research process, data were handled within existing ethical principles so as to protect the privacy and rights of participants. Video recordings, interview data and questionnaires were stored securely and used only for scholarly examination and assessment. Anonymity was applied where needed, and no documents were shared beyond the researcher for the purposes of this study.

4. Description of the Practical Project and Artefact

4.1 Overview of the Practical Project

This chapter documents the practical project and the research artefact submitted as part of the study, and places both within the practice-as-research (PaR) framework. The project is a Singapore-based adult community choir project that ended in a large-scale public performance as the ultimate expression of the practice. The performers are adults with varied musical backgrounds. Some members have experience in choral work; the majority have never had any organised professional music training. This diversity means that rehearsals have to be modelled on real-life community musical environments, with accessibility, sustained participation and the overall cohesion of the choral group as key priorities.

The general pattern of the rehearsal process and its pedagogical focus are summarised in Table 3, which shows the transformations in vocal focus, instrumental and movement elements and pedagogical purpose across the various stages of the project. Table 3 also demonstrates that the study tracks these changes systematically, as required by a reference to each relevant table in the analysis that follows.

Table 3. Overview of the Rehearsal Process for Hong Ri

Rehearsal Phase	Vocal Focus	Instrumental / Movement Elements	Pedagogical Focus
Initial Phase	Breath release, smooth onset, basic legato singing.	Simple body movement; light percussion.	Establishing accessibility, emotional safety and familiarity with the rehearsal process.
Development Phase	Legato phrasing, controlled dynamics, rhythmic accuracy.	Tambourine, buckets, biscuit tins; basic rhythmic movement.	Coordinating voice, rhythm and movement while gradually increasing musical demand.
Refinement Phase	Dynamic contrast and balance between vocal sections.	Violin with layered percussion.	Shaping ensemble texture, balance and collective listening.
Repetition and Freezing	Reinforcement of accuracy and ensemble balance.	Freezing and reset moments in sound or movement.	Stabilising timing, ensemble coordination and shared focus.
Reflection and Closure	Gentle vocal release and informal verbal reflection.	Minimal movement; spoken reflection.	Supporting rehearsal continuity and reflective awareness.

4.2 Rehearsal Design through an Educator-Theoretical Lens

The concept of pedagogical judgment described by music education scholar Jorgensen [7] provides the basis for the rehearsal design shown in Table 3. According to Jorgensen [7], good teaching is characterised by an ongoing pedagogical judgment in which decisions are made in response to the learner, the content and the context rather than by adherence to a predetermined set of methods. It is understood as a contextualised, responsive view of teaching in which educators adapt their choices throughout the teaching process rather than applying lesson plans inflexibly.

Rehearsals in practice were not taught sequentially but were structured as a sequence. At the initial stages, the primary content covered low-risk vocal work, breath release and easy physical movements. The aim was to develop familiarity with the rehearsal process and musical content and to establish a psychologically safe learning environment.

Technical, rhythmic and expressive requirements were introduced progressively with rehearsal. Percussion, instrumental accompaniment and synchronised movements were not introduced until the choir had developed sufficient confidence and a sense of identification with other group members. This step-by-step approach reflects the instructor's continuous monitoring and evaluation of participants' readiness during rehearsals.

Table 4 presents the main instructional and artistic techniques used during the rehearsal process. Both Table 3 and Table 4 illustrate that teaching choices were constantly modified as rehearsals progressed and as the participants' state changed.

Table 4. Pedagogical and Artistic Strategies Employed during Rehearsals

Strategy	Description	Pedagogical Purpose
Structured vocal warm-ups	Use of breath-focused and legato-based vocal preparation at the start of rehearsals.	To reduce physical tension, support vocal safety and establish a predictable rehearsal routine.
Repetition of short musical units	Rehearsing small sections repeatedly before assembling the full piece.	To support accuracy, confidence and ensemble alignment without cognitive overload.
Layered percussion	Introduction of accessible percussion instruments alongside singing.	To strengthen rhythmic stability and provide alternative modes of participation.
Movement integration	Simple, coordinated movement linked to musical structure.	To support embodied learning, coordination and collective engagement.
Gradual increase in challenge	Progressive introduction of technical and expressive demands.	To balance accessibility with musical growth in a mixed-ability ensemble.
Freezing and resetting	Pausing sound or movement to recalibrate ensemble focus.	To stabilise timing, listening and collective coordination.
Collaborative decision-making	Involving participants in discussions about staging and presentation.	To support autonomy, ownership and sustained engagement.

Based on the phased rehearsal design described above, the choir was able to develop from initial participation and familiarisation toward a higher level of musical focus and ensemble coordination. Musical challenges were introduced gradually without reducing the involvement of participants with different musical backgrounds, keeping them active throughout the practice.

The rehearsal design of this project is an expression of the practical operation of instructional judgment in the sense described by Jorgensen [7]. There was no fixed lesson plan; instructional decisions formed naturally through continuous observation and in-rehearsal adjustment. This approach affirms the idea of teaching as a context-dependent practice and establishes rehearsal as a fundamental site for the generation of instructional knowledge in this study.

4.3 The Artefact as Analytical Documentation

The artefact used in this project is a video lecture of approximately thirty minutes, delivered in a research-led format and followed by a live question-and-answer session. Rather than serving as a

documentary record of the rehearsal or performance, the artefact is designed as an analytical and reflective statement in which the researcher articulates the pedagogical implications, the practice-based research outcomes and the theoretical relationships that emerge from the project.

The video lecture is organised to summarise the main points of the practice-as-research process, covering rehearsal design, participant-lecturer interaction and learning outcomes. Selected rehearsal and performance excerpts and interview fragments are used to support analysis, while the researcher's narration provides critical reflection and frames the context. The Q&A session adds to the analytical function of the artefact by enabling emerging interpretations to be clarified, questioned and developed through dialogue with an audience.

In this study, the artefact is used as one of the principal sites of knowledge articulation rather than as a location in which unprocessed data are stored. It is not intended to document the entirety of the rehearsal process but rather to offer a reflective and explanatory account of practice, highlighting analytically significant moments in relation to the research questions. This model is consistent with practice-as-research in which knowledge is produced through reflective display of practice rather than through comprehensive documentation. Table 5 sets out the structure of the lecture-style video artefact.

Table 5. Structure of the Lecture-Style Video Artefact

Artefact Section	Content Description	Analytical Purpose
Introduction	Research context, project overview and purpose of the artefact.	To situate the practical project within a Practice-as-Research framework.
Rehearsal Context	Selected excerpts from rehearsals showing vocal, rhythmic and movement activities.	To illustrate how pedagogical decisions emerged through rehearsal practice.
Pedagogical Focus	Researcher commentary linking rehearsal excerpts to teaching intentions.	To foreground pedagogical judgment without presenting evaluative analysis.
Participant Perspectives	Short interview excerpts from selected participants.	To provide contextual insight into participant experience (not treated as outcome data).
Performance Context	Brief footage or description of the final public performance.	To demonstrate the culmination of the rehearsal process.
Reflective Commentary	Researcher reflection on rehearsal design and artefact construction.	To synthesise practice-based insights and prepare for further analysis in Chapter 5.

In addition to the five-minute research presentation, the researchers also produced a longer video lecture reflecting on the teaching process after the performance, to deepen reflection on rehearsal design and teaching experience. Together, these constitute an analytical output grounded in practice rather than simply a performance record.

4.4 Repertoire Background: Hong Ri

Hong Ri is a Cantonese pop song performed by the Hong Kong singer Hacken Lee and released in 1992. The song has grown very widely known within Chinese-speaking communities since its release. Its melody is easy to remember and its rhythmic pattern is stable; its overall tone is positive and joyful, and this makes it well suited to adult community choirs with varied musical backgrounds.

In the social and cultural context of Singapore, Hong Ri is culturally familiar and carries cross-generational appeal. Many participants already knew the piece before rehearsals began, so their engagement drew on inherited cultural memory rather than adaptation to unfamiliar material. The composition is also well structured and allows for the addition of percussion, physical movement and multi-layered choral arrangement.

The choice of Hong Ri was therefore based not only on its popularity but also on its ability to encourage inclusive participation while supporting gradual musical growth in teaching. Throughout the rehearsal and practice process, the piece worked simultaneously as a teaching resource and a performance work.

4.5 Performance Outcome and Contextual Response

The rehearsal process ended in a large-scale public performance at a Buddhist community event in Singapore, drawing around two thousand audience members. The performance brought together choral singing, layered percussion, simple physical movements and stage choreography, and reflected the pedagogical and artistic decisions made during the rehearsal process.

From a performance perspective, the choir showed stability in overall coordination, structural clarity and the maintenance of collective energy. Audience responses were generally positive and engaged. It must be emphasised, however, that audience responses were not treated as evaluative data in this study; they served rather as supplementary information regarding the completion of the performance.

4.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has fully presented the design and execution of the practical project through description of the rehearsal structure, teaching and artistic strategies and research outcome structure. By describing the rehearsal practice within the framework of educator theory, the chapter lays a clear practical and methodological foundation for the analysis of participants' experiences, engagement and musical learning development in Chapter 5.

5. Analysis of Practice and Key Findings

This chapter analyses the results of the community choir project within a community practice-as-research (PaR) framework. Drawing on questionnaire responses, observed rehearsals, semi-structured interviews with participants, expert interviews and video recordings, the analysis examines the influence of pedagogical format and rehearsal on participant engagement, musical growth, confidence and sense of group identity. The chapter builds on the descriptive account in Chapter 4 and is concerned with understanding why certain methods were effective in this particular adult community choir situation.

5.1 Participation and Motivation

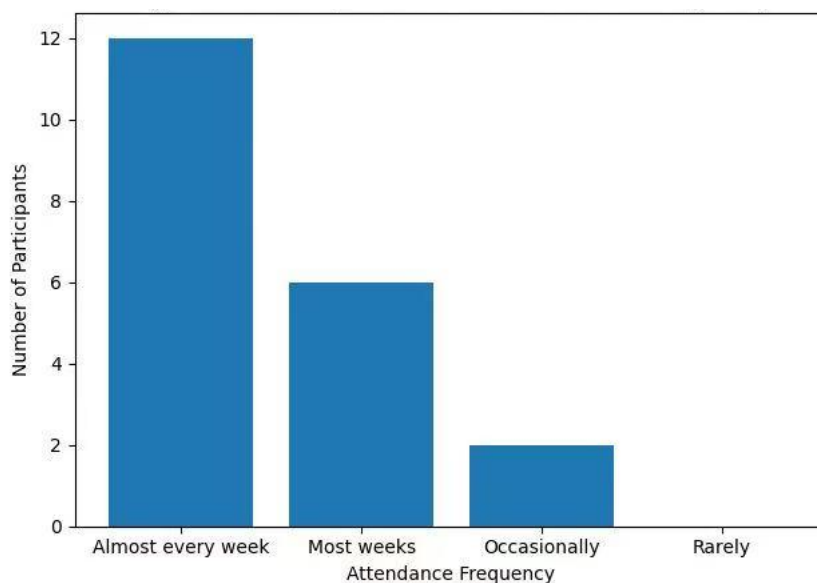


Figure 1. Participation and attendance patterns across the four rehearsals (n = 20)

This section examines participation and motivation as they emerged through the rehearsal process of the community choir project. Consistent with the Practice-as-Research approach, participation is understood not as a fixed outcome but as a process shaped through ongoing rehearsal experiences and the gradual clarification of a shared performance goal.

The majority of participants attended rehearsals almost every week or most weeks, as shown in Figure 5.1. Rather than being treated as a fixed measure, attendance is viewed here as feedback generated during the rehearsal process. As the goals of the rehearsal process became clearer over time, regular attendance and an increased sense of commitment to the overall project emerged among the members.

This process is reflected in participant accounts. According to an interview conducted in video format, a choir member identified as Dan Gang reported: my motivation and attendance before this project were not so regular; however, I became highly motivated later in the work as I realised the aim of the project and the performance indicators, and I was more serious and regularly attended rehearsals (Video Interview E). Attendance thus served as a behavioural expression of emergent motivation rather than of previously decided commitment.

Expert views corroborate this observation. Wang Lao Shi, a graduate of the Central Conservatory of Music with over two decades of experience as an instructor of adult and community choirs and the founder of the Baihe Women's Choir, noted that adults are likely to stay active when they are aware of the purpose of rehearsing and the overall objective, and that in situations where rehearsals are meaningful they will be ready to put in time and energy (Video Interview F). Taken together, questionnaire results, personal reflections and expert insights suggest that participation in this community choir was supported by effective rehearsal organisation and well-defined objectives. Attendance was treated as a process-based indicator of motivation rather than as a definitive measure of engagement.

5.2 Confidence and Vocal Engagement

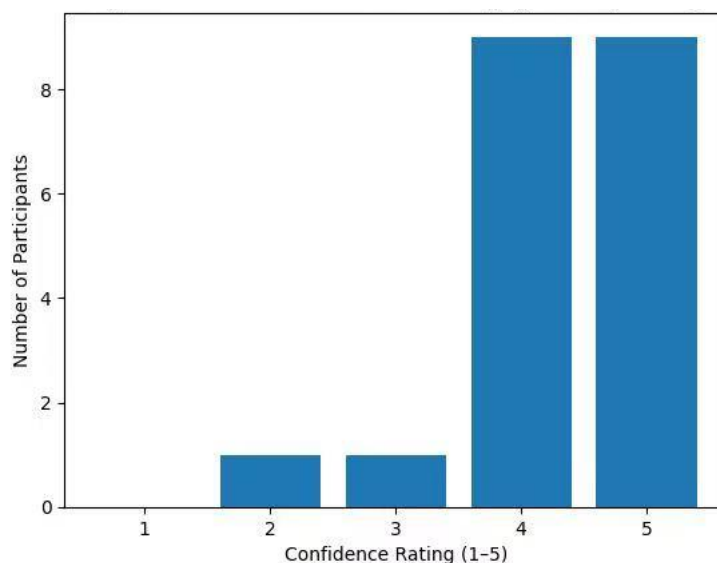


Figure 2. Self-reported confidence ratings across the project stages (n = 20)

Figure 2 shows a clear increase in self-reported confidence scores, with the majority of singers reporting confidence at levels 4 and 5 at the later project stages. This shift suggests that the development of greater vocal involvement was not the result of technical reinforcement alone but grew gradually through continued involvement in a psychologically scaffolded rehearsal setting.

Interview data help to contextualise this trend. In one semi-structured video-based interview, a participant identified as Carol reflected on her personal progress during the project: I have learned to be more confident in my abilities and not fear mistakes (Video Interview C). Her account points to a shift from error-avoidance to a willingness to experiment and take vocal risks, and this is consistent with the higher confidence ratings seen within the cohort.

This points to a change from a result-based mode of participation toward a process-based one. Rather than treating mistakes as failures, participants came to see them as a normal and productive part of learning. The outcome of this attitudinal change was that the rehearsal design, focused on psychological safety, allowed singers to be more active in terms of vocal and emotional involvement.

This interpretation is further supported by observational evidence from an experienced choral teacher, who noted that normalising mistakes in the context of adult learning was a major contributor to the maintenance of engagement, as it restructured the rehearsal space as one of exploration rather than assessment. The development of confidence in adult community choirs is therefore closely linked to rehearsal conditions that strike a balance between facilitative support and incremental challenge.

Taken together, the convergence of questionnaire, participant interview and expert observation data suggests that confidence in this community choir was strongly shaped by inclusive, low-pressure and process-oriented rehearsal practice. Such conditions promoted sustained vocal engagement and increased the self-efficacy of participants within a shared musical environment.

5.3 Musical Development

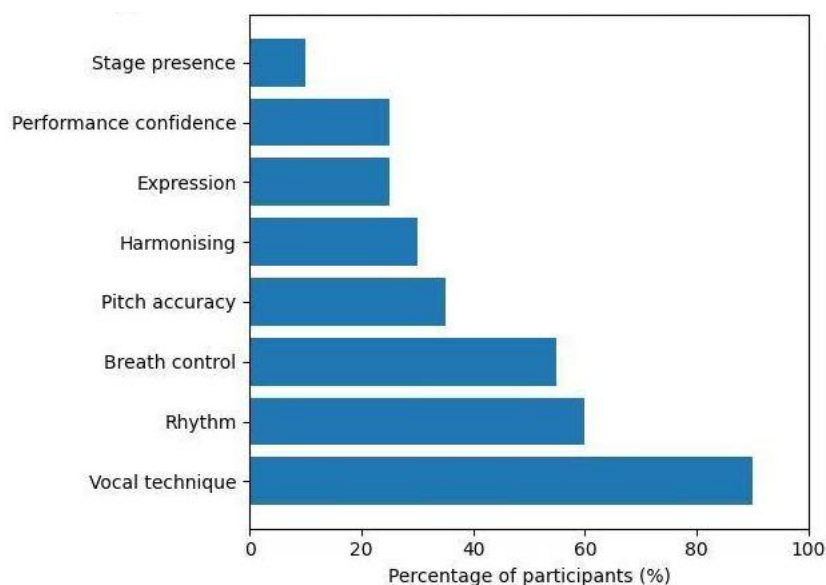


Figure 3. Participants' self-reported areas of musical development across the project (n = 20)

Figure 3 shows the self-reported areas of musical development across the project, with the most frequently identified improvements relating to vocal technique, rhythm, breath control and pitch accuracy. These outcomes suggest that musical development was experienced not only as individual skill acquisition but as a collectively supported process shaped through rehearsal practice and performance preparation.

Interview data give qualitative evidence in line with these patterns. Bei Ping reflected on the musical achievements of the group and stated that he had significantly improved in music and that his pitch and rhythm were much more balanced than before (Video Interview A). This remark runs parallel to the increased proportions of pitch accuracy and rhythmic stability shown in Figure 5.3, suggesting that technical improvement was both observed and felt to be significant by the participants themselves, and not only from the outside.

In addition to technical development, participants pointed to increased expressive and performative growth. Dan Gang highlighted the effect of a well-considered visual and musical presentation, noting that the performance was visually stimulating and musically versatile through the choice of costumes and the use of percussion instruments, and that this made the performance more engaging and active (Video Interview E). This reflection supports the strengthening of expression, stage presence and performance confidence, suggesting that the process of musical development went beyond sound production to include the performative and embodied sense of consciousness.

Taken together, these results support educational perspectives that treat musical learning as a situated, experiential and socially mediated process. Elliott and Silverman [8] establish that musical knowledge cannot be built apart from participation in music, through which technique, expression

and meaning are constructed in practice rather than through isolated teaching. This principle is evident in the current project: through low-stress, repetition-based activities strengthening technical skills such as pitch and rhythm, expressive development was supported by multimodal activities including movement, percussion and visual presentation.

The synthesis of questionnaire documentation and interview evidence suggests that the pedagogical approach taken in this project was sufficient to facilitate wide-ranging musical growth within the mixed-ability adult community choir. The appropriateness of a practice-as-research framework in generating pedagogical knowledge from lived musical experience is affirmed here, given that it operates within the context of inclusive, performance-based practice.

5.4 Social Connection and Group Identity

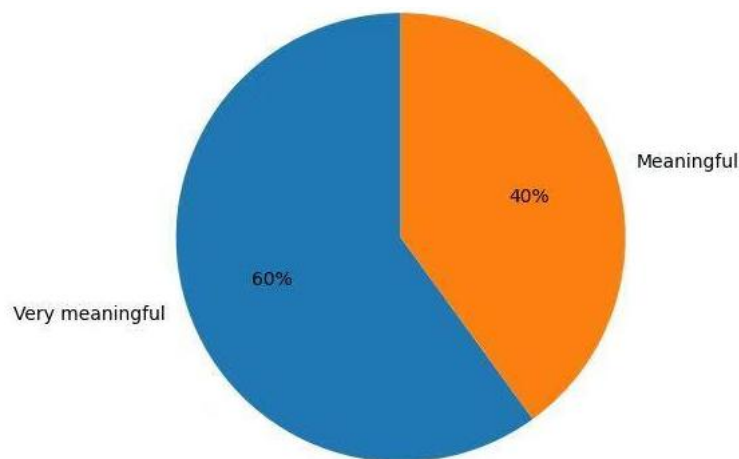


Figure 4. Perceived meaningfulness of charity and community performances among participants (n = 20)

Figure 4 shows that participants found charity and community performances highly meaningful, with 60 per cent describing them as very meaningful and 40 per cent as meaningful. Social connection and shared purpose were central outcomes of participation in the choir.

Interview data show how community performances created emotional fulfilment and collective identity. According to Xu Qi, singing at nursing homes was not only about raising funds or volunteering to help others; it carried a powerful sense of achievement, and he noted that singing to bring happiness and relief to others made the choir's work more significant (Video Interview B). In the same way, Jimmy reflected that these kinds of performances added greater meaning to the overall participation and he described them as massively fulfilling and socially meaningful (Video Interview D).

These responses connect with the SDT need for relatedness, understood as the sense of belonging to others while being involved in a common cause [3]. By performing for community and charity audiences, singers and musicians came to feel that their musical activity was socially valued and purpose-driven rather than talent-based. Such feelings of belonging extended not only to the choir itself but to the listeners and the audience, and in doing so developed a more extensive social identity.

In the context of practice-as-research, the results suggest that bringing community-related performances into the project was helpful in addressing the psychological needs of participants in the relevance-meaning dimension. The practice shows that choral work linked with social activities can reinforce group identity, keep motivation going and add to the overall value of participation, and this supports the pedagogical approach taken in this study.

5.5 Performance Outcome and Audience Response

The project was completed with a live concert at a large-scale Buddhist community event featuring approximately one to two thousand audience members. Audience responses were enthusiastic, and a

strong level of participation and communal singing was observed. Participants reported increased confidence and a high level of achievement after the event.

The flow concept developed by Csikszentmihalyi [4] is helpful in explaining this outcome. The concert involved appropriate organisation, moderate difficulty and shared concentration, and in doing so created an environment of immersive musical experience. Participants indicated that they wished to have more opportunities to perform on large stages in front of the public, showing that the performance gave them a boost of motivation and dedication toward continued involvement in the choir.

Taken together, the results suggest that inclusive teaching models, group practice frameworks and purposeful performance environments were among the factors that supported long-term engagement, musical growth, confidence and social integration. The combination of practice-as-research and community music pedagogy principles allowed the project to generate both artistic and situated pedagogical knowledge applicable to adult community choral practice.

6. Reflective Discussion: Practitioner Learning and Professional Development

The reflective discussion in this chapter draws on both theoretical knowledge and real-world experience built up during this research project in testing, adjusting and affirming the educational theories introduced earlier through the practical methods of adult community choral practice. A significant professional learning outcome is that the theoretical models discussed, such as SDT, flow theory and the concept of participatory teaching, can be not only theoretically designed but also put into practice through conscious rehearsal design in concrete teaching processes. These theories were enacted through the design of rhythm within rehearsals, the gradual progression of task difficulty and the building of a psychologically supportive learning environment. The favourable musical and social results of the project affirm that theory-based teaching practices can succeed in improving member engagement, confidence and overall musical development.

A second critical domain of professional learning involves the identity and role change of the practitioner. The effect of this project was that researchers re-engaged the role of the conductor in the community choral singing environment, moving away from traditional musical authority toward the role of a learning facilitator who is also guiding and responsive. Successful choral educators, as noted by practitioner Lv Zheng, must be able to draw on the full range of professional competency while also engaging in self-directed learning and self-reflection. This research confirms that in actual rehearsal, practitioners not only occupy the dual roles of conductor and researcher but must also constantly modify their teaching plans in accordance with the learning capacities and requirements of choir members. This process emphasises the professional obligation of community choral leaders in their effort to balance musical aims with the realities of adult learner needs, and underlines the importance of remaining in a position of ongoing professional development.

At the same time, the irreconcilable tensions within adult community choral practice are also evident in this project. Members of adult choirs have to balance their time, family responsibilities and work, and these factors directly shape their attendance, learning process and overall progress. This reality creates tensions during teaching between the pursuit of musical quality and the commitment to inclusivity. Furthermore, as the musical backgrounds and performance capacities of group members gradually improve, how to keep advancing their initiative, unity and learning motivation has become a basic question that practitioners have to address. In response to these issues, the project adopted a more flexible approach to rehearsing, a staged skill-development process and a teaching model grounded in shared responsibilities and intrinsic motivations.

What these considerations show is that the professional learning of practitioners does not come from any single theory or teaching methodology; it grows out of the ongoing interaction of theory, practice and reflection. The challenges encountered in the project did not reduce the efficiency of the teaching system but instead pushed practitioners to look more closely at the importance of constant adaptation and the use of educational theories within the concrete community environment. This gives

a valuable lesson for future choral leadership approaches, covering the selection of repertoire, the scheduling of rehearsals and the planning of the performance process, so that the purposes of musical development are oriented toward the values of inclusivity and community. Through the ongoing integration of educational theory, expert experience and reflective teaching, adult community choral education can be expected to remain sustainable over the long term and to better address the real needs of its participants and communities.

This present study has managed to bring theoretically important practical considerations into the domain of individual rehearsal experience. Teaching modifications, rehearsal principles and participant responses in the project offer sustainable development suggestions not only to choirs within this institution but also to the practice of adult community choruses more broadly. The simulation of a successful model is not the primary goal of this institute; rather, the goal is a career trajectory of professional development that is practice-based and focused on reflection.

7. Conclusion

The study applies a Practice-as-Research (PaR) methodology framework to investigate an adult community choral project, with the rehearsals and performance of Hong Ri as the research field. The research examines the relationship between inclusive rehearsal design and the facilitation of musical growth, motivational drive and a sense of community among adults in community choruses. It is conducted through the systematic documentation of the rehearsal process, the gathering and analysis of questionnaire and interview data and through reflective writing.

The results suggest that when a rehearsal design brings together the factors of psychological safety, available skill challenge and collaborative involvement, adult choir members are able to achieve positive growth in musical ability, performance confidence and social connectivity. The musical development seen in the project is not a case of isolated technical improvement but the result of processes embedded in common practice and shared experience. This observation further supports the focus on participation, belonging and meaning-making in the theories of community music and adult education [1, 2, 5].

Furthermore, the study supports the appropriateness of the practice-as-research methodology as applied to community music. By treating the real-life practice of teaching as a field for knowledge generation, researchers can test educational theories in practical rehearsal and performance circumstances and adjust their teaching choices accordingly. The process does not simply broaden the professional insight of practitioners but also gives evidence-based pedagogical ideas for community choral education.

In general, this study can offer a practice-based and reflective research paradigm to the adult community choral music area. It shows a model in which a research project both delivers the results of a particular project and exemplifies a research path that is theory-driven, practical and conducive to professional development. Future studies can look into the potential of this practice-focused methodology in varied community cultures and musical settings to continually strengthen the theoretical and implemented foundations of community music education.

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