

# Utilizing Active Community Singing Interventions as a Coping Mechanism for Students with Emotional Distress

Michelle B. Banca<sup>1\*</sup>, Maria Monica M. Angeles<sup>1,2</sup> and Patrick Henry L. Ilagan<sup>1,3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Santisimo Rosario, San Pablo City

\*[michelle.banca@deped.gov.ph](mailto:michelle.banca@deped.gov.ph), <sup>2</sup>[mariamonica.angeles@deped.gov.ph](mailto:mariamonica.angeles@deped.gov.ph), <sup>3</sup>[patrick.ilagan@deped.gov.ph](mailto:patrick.ilagan@deped.gov.ph)

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## ABSTRACT

This study was conceived with the purpose of helping students improve their academic performance that focuses on the emerging use of music-based interventions such as community singing, music listening, and active music-making interventions to enhance cognitive functions, such as memory, focus, and spatial-temporal reasoning, while reducing stress and anxiety. The study employed case study as its research design. Cases were identified and underwent CHORALE intervention, a school-based approach in helping the students' inferiority complex and difficulty as regards to their study habits due to their mental health issues for three to four (3-4) weeks. Challenges emerged from some of the students' inferiority complex and learning difficulty as regards to their study habits

due to mental health issues. The researchers came up with action research as innovation in addressing students' mental health to identify specific emotional struggles like stress or anxiety and improve academic success. Improvements observed on the cases include positive sense of responsibility, collaboration with peers, and improved confidence. This implies the positive impact of CHORALE towards students' mental health. This study is only limited to students of Santisimo Rosario Integrated High School during SY 2024-2025.

**Keywords:** *CHORALE, mental health, music-based intervention*

## INTRODUCTION

Music has a healing power as it can heal a person by fighting of stress, enlivening mood, and soothing the soul. It suffices to say that music, therefore, is good for the soul as well as the mental health of all mankind. According to research from Northshore University Health System of Chicago (2023), music stimulates memories that wrap themselves around us; it increases levels of serotonin and endorphins, which in turn elevate mood and relieve depression. Moreover, it also reduces blood pressure and lowers the stress chemical cortisol.

Additionally, music is the food of life. It can be invigorating in a sense that it fights boredom, increases vitality, and improves confidence. Music can be both invigorating and edifying. Ideally, teachers with passion in music should encourage students to develop love for it and motivate them to involve themselves in singing lessons and participate in singing groups like the school choir. Membership in the choir should not only be offered multiple options for music classes (general music and different ensemble offerings) but also by applying music for various academic and non-academic purposes in general education classrooms (Conti and Sloan, 2024). Moreover, when music is present throughout the day and across subject areas, students have more opportunities for social, emotional, and academic success. Sloan, 2024 stated that experiences of listening to and engaging with music in school can enhance students' overall mental health, fostering five specific growth areas: emotional self-regulation, social integration and belonging, identity formation and confidence, global citizenship and open-mindedness, and creative thinking and optimism about the future.

Various studies have explained that music is not only for fun or relaxation; something to listen to, but it also has many benefits regarding overall mental health and well-being. Elle, 2025 explained that listening to music triggers neurochemicals like dopamine, serotonin, and oxytocin as our brains synchronize with the rhythm of the music that we listen to. With reference to this, the study also includes music genres that match the respondents' expectations and interests that induce mental benefits to them such as upbeat pop, sentimental ballad, lo-fi, rock, and mellow music.

Furthermore, different genres and tempos of music produce varying effects on stress levels. Slow-tempo instrumental music, such as classical and lo-fi music, is associated with calming effects while high-tempo music, such as electronic or rock, can either energize or overstimulate the listener, depending on the context (Chen & Wu, 2022).

Students with mental health issues, regardless of its types need to be addressed by protective and supportive environments in the family, at school and in the wider community are deemed important. Mina, 2024 stated that the Philippines faces significant mental health challenges, including high rates of depression, anxiety, and suicide, exacerbated by factors like poverty, natural disasters, and socio-economic inequalities. He further explained that mental disorders in the country affect an estimated 11.3% to 11.6% of the population, translating to about 12.5 million Filipinos suffering from various mental health conditions, predominantly depression and anxiety. Mental health is just as important as physical health. The right to access mental health services for any mental, neurological, or substance-abuse health condition requires a multifaceted approach that is grounded in science, cultural sensitivity, and an ethic of care.

One way of addressing the said issues is by reducing learning difficulty and stress through music as a form of mood regulation and relaxation. Moreover, music is a powerful emotional channel that improves moods and relieves feelings of depression, loneliness or despair.

Since majority of the students in Santisimo Rosario Integrated High School has the inclination and passion for music, both singing and playing musical instruments, each has unique strengths that help students develop in different ways. Nonetheless, most of them choose to join the choir to help them become more confident and precise in their vocal performances and enjoy the spirit of camaraderie while learning and performing.

In addition to that, Santisimo Rosario Integrated High School (SRIHS) has always been committed in improving the academic performance and promoting the mental health awareness of its students. The school should be a place of refuge where students can live mentally healthy lives. Since SRIHS cannot control what happens to students outside of its school environment, it can create mentally healthy environments which enable students to thrive and be resilient to the challenges they face. The commitment of the members of the Rosarian Chorale is critical to developing effective whole-school mental health provision, but their focus has always been on the improvement of their mental health awareness particularly with those who are still struggling with mental well-being among Junior and Senior High School learners.

Consequently, this study was conceived with the purpose of addressing the mental wellness that focuses on the emerging use of music-based interventions such as community singing, music listening, and active music-making interventions to address complex mental health issues and needs suited for both JHS and SHS learners. Researchers believed that addressing mental wellness issues and seeking help is of utmost importance. Through Project CHORALE, students in both JHS and SHS are given learning opportunities to help promote social cohesion, combat loneliness, and provide a support network that can positively impact overall well-being (Reynolds, 2023).

### **Innovation, Intervention, and Strategy**

Mental health has been a focused of interest in research for some years. However, attempts on providing interventions to encourage mental wellness among students are only few. As much as academic research sees teaching and learning process as backbone of education, one should also note that mental health awareness among students should also be equally prioritized.

CHORALE is a proposed intervention activity of Santisimo Rosario Integrated High School among its students who encounter mental health issues. Music-based activities are the primary strategies used in this intervention.

Therefore, CHORALE targets 5 students across year levels as the focal subjects of the study. These students are identified as learners with concerns on mental health since not all the members of the choir have the same mental health issues. These students were identified with the permission of the school guidance coordinator, and their profiles are treated with confidentiality. After which, the students together with their parents were asked by the researchers through an informed consent to be a part of the intervention activities.

There are four (4) intervention activities as part of the implementation phase of the program: *Music Camp*, *Rosarian Chorale*, *Practice Sessions*, and *Events Performances*. *Music Camp* is a whole day engaging workshop activity among the participants. This includes team building activities, music workshop and music performances. Secondly, *Rosarian Chorale* is an organized choir group of the school, and the participants will be part as its member. *Practice sessions* include afternoon exercises on vocal development among the participants. Lastly, *Events Performances* are the culmination of all the initial activities conducted.

After the implementation phase, participants were interviewed about their experiences and music genre preferences to better understand the impacts of CHORALE on their mental health. They were also asked to answer the 10 questions reflected on mental health self-assessment checklist (K10) adapted from [thinkmentalhealthwa.com.au](http://thinkmentalhealthwa.com.au) which is a simple measure of psychological distress. The K10 scale involves 10 questions about emotional states each with a five-level response scale. The measure can be used as a brief screen to identify levels of distress. This simple checklist aims to measure whether one may have been affected by depression and anxiety during the past four weeks.

### **Action Research Questions**

This study is focused on the use of CHORALE, a music-based intervention to address mental issues and needs of the students of Santisimo Rosario Integrated High School. Specifically, this research sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the mental health profiles of the participants under CHORALE?
2. What are the salient behaviors of the participants upon the conduct of CHORALE?
3. How does the conduct of CHORALE influence the improvement of mental health among the participants?

### **Action Research Methods**

#### **Participants and/or other Sources of Data and Information**

Purposive sampling is utilized to identify the respondents. The main objective of a purposive sample is to produce a sample that can be logically assumed to be representative of the population (Sage, 2011).

The subjects of the study were the pre-determined five (5) students of SRIHS who experienced concerns on their mental health as reported by the school guidance office.

#### **Data Gathering Methods**

During the conduct of the study, ethical issues were considered by the researcher to guarantee compliance with research ethics. Also, this study ensured the student subjects involved in the study that they are protected as human respondents. An informed consent is secured for both the students and their guardian. Through this, the subjects were aware of the purpose of research, why they became the part of the study and the procedure that would be followed upon participation. The consent also assured their confidentiality and their freedom of refusal whenever necessary – making research participation completely voluntary.

The study specifically involved CHORALE, a music-based intervention approach on SRIHS learners experiencing mental health struggles. This included identifying their mental health profiles. Students who fell

under the purpose of the program undertook the intervention implementation, answered the questions on the Mental Health Self-Assessment Checklist (K10), and were interviewed to understand the impacts of the intervention program.

The assessment tools used were researcher-made to cater needs of the target students. The assessment tools underwent expert validation to assure its validity and reliability before the implementation among the target students. Moreover, a researcher-made in-depth semi-structure interview was prepared to evaluate the experiences of the participants during the intervention implementation.

After the interview, the data were transcribed, coded and analyzed thematically as to prepare for results, discussion, and conclusion.

### **Data Analysis**

The study employed case study as its research design. Case study is a qualitative research approach of the particularity and complexity of a single case coming to understand its activity within important circumstances.

To understand the influence of CHORALE on the mental health of the respondents, interviews were transcribed in verbatim, coded, and analyzed thematically. The process included searching and identifying concepts of the data items and finding associations between them. Emerging themes were identified from the coded interview. Results were presented as findings incorporating quotes from the participants.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

During the identification process, five (5) students with learning disabilities and mental health issues were referred to CHORALE by their respective class advisers due to the following encountered challenges: 1) difficulty with learning (Case1); 2) inferiority complex (Case 2); 3) mood disturbances (Case 3); 4) emotional stress (Case 4); and 5) low self-esteem (Case 5).

### **Case 1:**

Case 1 is a student in Grade 11-TVL. Due to lack of interest in learning, she struggles to understand complex materials and performs poorly, especially in subjects requiring critical analysis. Upon looking for the cause, it was learned that the student grasps concepts and expresses thoughts in understanding the lesson, impacting her overall academic progress. Also, limited access to reading and writing can impede the development of vocabulary, general knowledge, and language use.

### **Case 2:**

Case 2 is also a student from Grade 11-TVL. The student is one of the academically challenged learners in her class, particularly in communication due to inferiority complex. Difficulty communicating leads to passive behavior, awkwardness, or troubled relationships with classmates.

### **Case 3:**

Case 3 is one of the students in Grade 11-TVL who is considered performing. He exhibits persistence, patience and activation during his stay at SRIHS. However, Case 3 exhibits mood disturbances like persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness, alongside significant mood swings.

### **Case 4:**

Case 4 is another student in Grade 9 who is also an academic achiever. However, the social milieu which has a big impact with her commitment despite hectic schedule in achieving something was observed on the student – which is very unlikely to her previous performance in class. It was reported that she was affected by academic stress that led to a range of adverse effects, such as sleep disorders, anxiety, difficulties concentrating, and demotivation.

### Case 5:

Case 5 is another Grade 11-HUMSS student who struggles with low self-esteem which negatively impacts her academic performance by fostering lack of confidence, leading to self-doubt, academic avoidance, and a reduced willingness to engage in learning or take risks. She believes that for her to know her worth as a person, she must find someone to build a relationship of trust with her to boost her caliber to gain more friends.

**Table 1. *Music Genre Preferences of the Respondents.***

| Music Style                                                        | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Slow-Tempo Music (pop ballads, soul classics, and acoustic tracks) | 2         | 40%        |
| High-Tempo Music (energetic pop, rock, and rapid electronic)       | 3         | 60%        |
| TOTAL                                                              | 5         | 100%       |

Legend: 2 out of 5 respondents prefer slow-tempo music which is associated with calming effects while 3 out of 5 respondents choose high-tempo music, which can either energize or overstimulate the listener, depending on the context.

Table 1 shows the percentage of music genre preferences of the respondents as to slow-tempo or high-tempo music. During the interview, 2 respondents or 40% of the respondents expressed their passion for slow-tempo music, whereas 3 respondents or 60% of the respondents showed their preference for high-tempo music.

**Table 2. *Results of the Administration of Mental Health Self-Assessment (K10).***

| Indicators                                                               | Mean | Sd   | Verbal Interpretation |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|-----------------------|
| 1. About how often you felt tired out for no good reason?                | 3.00 | 0.71 | Some of the Time      |
| 2. About how often you felt nervous?                                     | 2.20 | 0.45 | A Little of the Time  |
| 3. About how often you felt so nervous that nothing could calm you down? | 2.00 | 1.00 | A Little of the Time  |
| 4. About how often you felt hopeless?                                    | 2.60 | 0.89 | A Little of the Time  |
| 5. About how often you felt restless or fidgety?                         | 3.00 | 1.41 | Some of the Time      |
| 6. About how often you felt so restless you could not sit still?         | 2.60 | 1.34 | A Little of the Time  |
| 7. About how often you felt depressed?                                   | 2.60 | 1.34 | A Little of the Time  |
| 8. About how often you felt that everything was an effort?               | 3.40 | 0.89 | Some of the Time      |
| 9. About how often you felt so sad that nothing could cheer you up?      | 2.80 | 1.48 | Some of the Time      |
| 10. About how often you felt worthless?                                  | 3.00 | 1.00 | Some of the Time      |
| TOTAL                                                                    | 2.72 | 0.34 | Some of the Time      |

Legend: 4.21 – 5.00=All the time; 3.41 – 4.20=Most of the Time; 2.61 – 3.40=Some of the time; 1.81 – 2.60=A little of the time; 1.00 – 1.80=None of the Time

The table presents the results of the Mental Health Self-Assessment (K10) across ten indicators. Indicator 1 (feeling tired for no good reason) has a mean of 3.00 (SD = 0.71), interpreted as “Some of the Time.” Indicator 2 (feeling nervous) has a mean of 2.20 (SD = 0.45), interpreted as “A Little of the Time.” Indicator 3 (feeling so nervous that nothing could calm you down) obtained a mean of 2.00 (SD = 1.00), also “A Little of the Time.” Indicator 4 (feeling hopeless) shows a mean of 2.60 (SD = 0.89), “A Little of the Time.” Indicator 5 (feeling restless or fidgety) has a mean of 3.00 (SD = 1.41), “Some of the Time.” Indicator 6 (feeling so restless that you could not sit still) posted

a mean of 2.60 (SD = 1.34), “A Little of the Time.” Indicator 7 (feeling depressed) also has a mean of 2.60 (SD = 1.34), “A Little of the Time.” Indicator 8 (feeling that everything was an effort) registered the highest mean of 3.40 (SD = 0.89), interpreted as “Some of the Time.” Indicator 9 (feeling so sad that nothing could cheer

you up) yielded a mean of 2.80 (SD = 1.48), “Some of the Time.” Lastly, Indicator 10 (feeling worthless) has a mean of 3.00 (SD = 1.00), interpreted as “Some of the Time.”

Overall, the assessment resulted in a mean score of 2.72 (SD = 0.34), which is verbally interpreted as “Some of the Time.” This indicates that the participants experience symptoms related to psychological distress at a moderate rather than persistent level. These findings can imply that there are notable signs of emotional and mental strain—particularly in feelings of effort, fatigue, and restlessness—that may affect daily functioning. This emphasizes the need for targeted mental health support programs, early interventions, and continuous monitoring to prevent the escalation of these symptoms and to promote overall well-being among the respondents.

Table 3 *Interpretation of Scores.*

K10 Score: Likelihood of having a mental disorder (psychological distress)

| Case Number                                     | Score | Interpretation                     |
|-------------------------------------------------|-------|------------------------------------|
| Case 1<br>(difficulty with reading and writing) | 26    | Likely to have a moderate disorder |
| Case 2<br>(difficulty with numeracy)            | 33    | Likely to have a severe disorder   |
| Case 3<br>(with mood disturbances)              | 40    | Likely to have a severe disorder   |
| Case 4<br>(with emotional stress)               | 20    | Likely to have a mild disorder     |
| Case 5 (with low self-esteem)                   | 25    | Likely to have a moderate disorder |

Legend: Scores showing the results of the respondents

Table 3 shows the K10 Score: Likelihood of having a mental disorder (psychological distress). After the administration of the mental health self-awareness (K10), 1 respondent or 20% of the respondents was assessed as Likely to have a mild disorder, whereas 2 respondents or 40% of the respondents were assessed as Likely to have a moderate disorder and another 2 respondents or 40% were assessed as Likely to have a severe disorder.

The data implied that the K10 exhibits sensitivity to internalizing disorders as they occur across the lifespan and can be used with confidence when assessing psychological distress among adolescents. The significant association between higher K10 scores and disability suggests that the presence of psychological distress, regardless of diagnostic status, requires clinician attention.

This accepts the study of McFarland & Holland (2017), that anxiety and distress are common emotional reactions that can lead to feelings of helplessness and uncertainty. Still, they can lead to cognitive distortions, psychosomatic complaints, and physical symptoms like headaches and stomachaches. On the other hand, it argues with some researchers in the Philippines that moderate stress and anxiety can motivate students to excel academically, helping them stay focused and perform better in school (Cochanco et al., 2021; Cebu et al., 2023). Mattoo & Nabi, 2012 stated that excessive or severe anxiety, however, can hinder concentration and memory, leading to procrastination, poor performance, and social withdrawal

### Intervention

After the cases were evaluated, their membership and active participation in CHORALE intervention activities were provided. It was reported that performing as part of an ensemble teaches them responsibility and collaboration while helping them develop confidence in their abilities. Whether they are a beginner or an experienced singer, taking part in choir and group singing lessons can help them develop their musical skills, build their confidence, foster a sense of community, and improve their overall well-being including their academic performance (Sommer, 2023).

## CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, CHORALE was able to retain students' willingness and explore the four key benefits of choir and group singing lessons: 1) develop their vocal skills; 2) build confidence and self-esteem; 3) foster a sense of community; and 4) improve their mental and emotional health. Although at first CHORALE typically captured 20% to 35% of respondents showing intermediate scores, occasional symptoms of stress or anxiety, and mixed lifestyle habits but it offers a wide range of choir and group singing lessons that cater to students of all levels and abilities. Whether they are beginners looking to develop their vocal skills or an experienced singer who wants to hone her craft, CHORALE develops trained and experienced vocal leaders who are passionate about teaching and dedicated to helping the members reach their full potential as a singer.

All the 5 cases finished the target school year and were all promoted. First, Case 1 has increased on-task attention and heightened focus while Case 2 has displayed improved eye contact, shared focus, and non-verbal communication. Next, Case 3 has exhibited constructive mood induction, decreased aggression, and was able to finish the school year With Honors. Then Case 4 has revealed reduced stress indicators such as calmer thoughts and steady mood; was able to move up to senior high school with flying colors. Finally, Case 5 has shared listening and interpretation activities that build an immediate sense of belonging, driving positive peer-to-peer relationships.

CHORALE became an effective avenue in intervening such situations conduit to catering other student's needs – completely intensifying the rate of students' academic performance at SRIHS. Research led by psychologist Nick Stewart of Bath University indicates that people who participate in a choir enjoy a greater feeling of togetherness and being part of a collective endeavor than others involved in different social activities (Smith, 2016).

Through this study, the research revealed that students are less likely to suffer from poor mental health caused by academic stress if the school understands the importance of developing these students behind their difficulties. This can be done if the school is continuously committed in guiding and finding ways to save students from “lagging behind” with school activities (Hawthorne, 2024).

## Recommendations

Since music-based interventions are evidence-based which effectively reduce stress, anxiety, and depression while promoting emotional regulation in students, this study recommends the following:

1. MAPEH teachers can implement active music-making through rhythmic exercises, since it has shown higher effects in motivating the respondents while reducing distress and building relationship of trust with others.
2. Music teachers and teachers who have inclination to music can guide students to use soft instrumental music during transitional and high-stress academic periods to lower cortisol levels (Jiang, S., Patel, R., & Carter, H. (2023).
3. Music, Creative Writing teachers and teachers who have inclination to music can use guided students' lyric analysis or creative composition to give students a safe outlet when they lack the verbal vocabulary to articulate complex emotional distress.
4. Future researchers and others who are interested in this study may read insights on mental wellness from Music as a Therapy to Students' Mental Health to understand the empirical baseline, physiological mechanisms, and contextual gaps required for designing effective school-based procedures.

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