

Buddy's Glee Club, Phase Two: Singing and Wellness

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Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the physical, psychological, social, and emotional effects of singing in a weekly choir facilitated by a music therapist for both cognitively intact and cognitively impaired older adults living in a nursing home.

Research Questions

- 1) What, if any, are the benefits of the lived experience of singing in a glee club facilitated by a music therapist as expressed by older adults living in nursing homes?
- 2) How can a glee club program best be implemented with older adults in nursing homes?
- 3) What is the impact of singing on the physical, social, psychological, and emotional dimensions of health?

Participants

A total of 25 older adult participants were recruited and 5 staff/volunteers. Only 16 of the 25 older adults were included in the data analysis as the other 9 did not attend the choir consistently. 14 out of 16 of the older adult participants were diagnosed with some type of cognitive impairment and other physical issues or health concerns. The age of older participants ranged from 72 to 103, with an average age of 90, while the additional staff/volunteers ranged in age from 22-78.

Procedure

For 16 weeks, participants sang in a weekly 45 minute choir session. Mood, pain, anxiety, happiness, and energy were rated at the beginning and end of each choral session. Interviews were conducted at the completion of the study with all participants.

Results

The average scores of all participant responses showed that for each of the 16 sessions, happiness and mood increased from pre to post test. Energy increased for 14 sessions, pain decreased for 14 sessions, and anxiety decreased for 11 out of 16 sessions.



Quantitative

The charts defined below describe mean changes in levels of anxiety, mood, pain, energy, and happiness

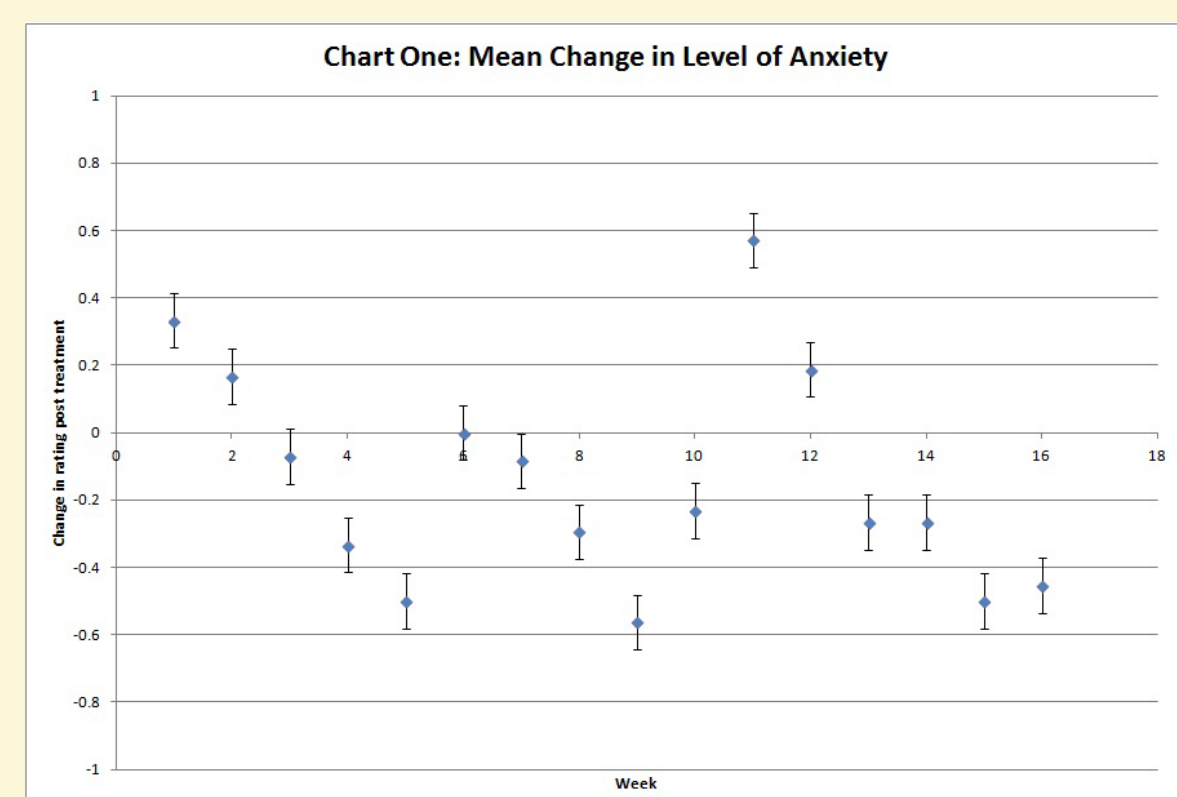


Chart one is the only chart that does not show consistent increase or decrease overall. The data is moderately varied, with some weeks demonstrating the anxiety score decreasing (Week 3-9, 13-16) and some weeks demonstrating the anxiety increasing (Week 1, 2, 11, 12).

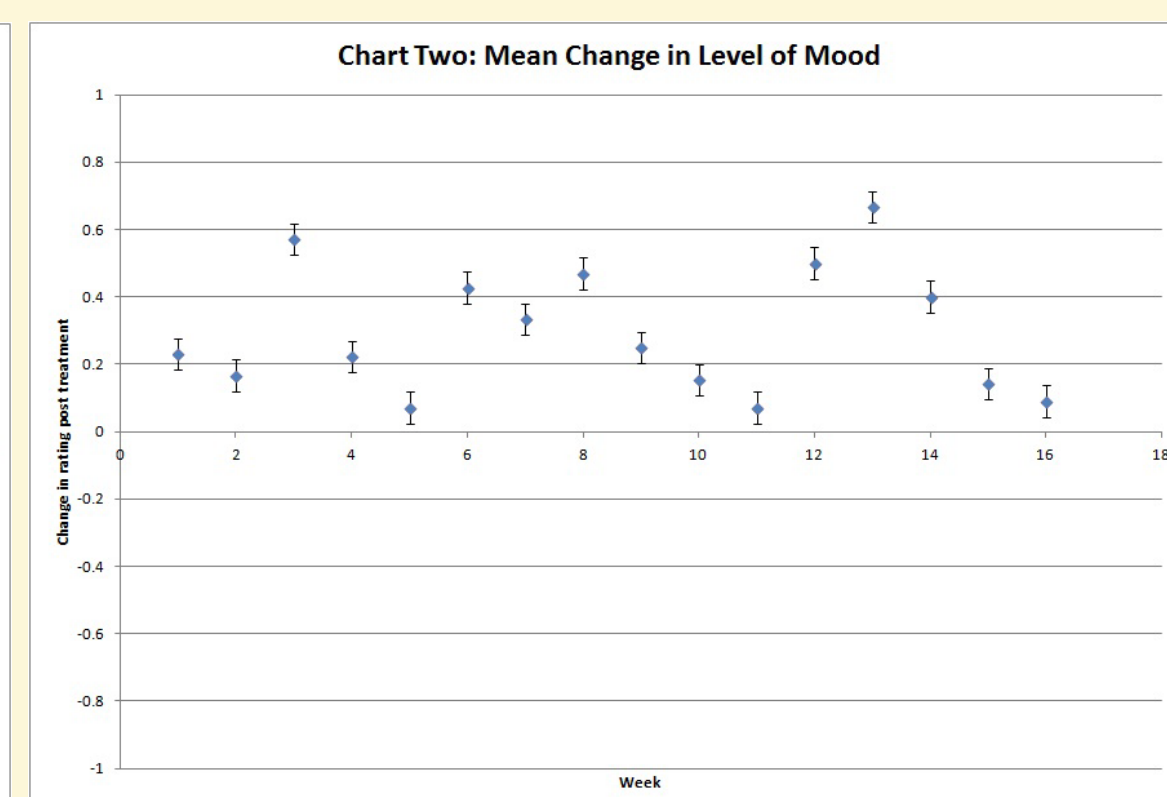


Chart two shows that for all 16 sessions, mood increased from pre to post test.

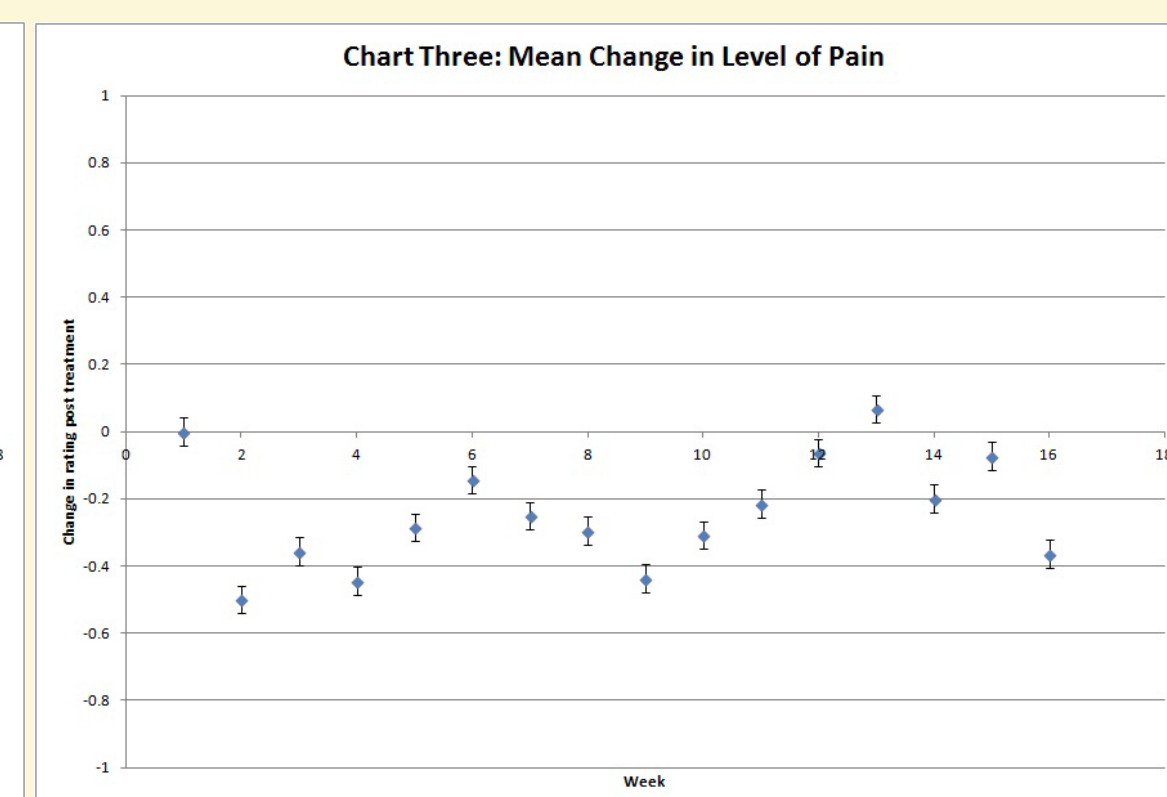


Chart three shows that for every session except for week 1 and 13, pain decreased from pre to post test.

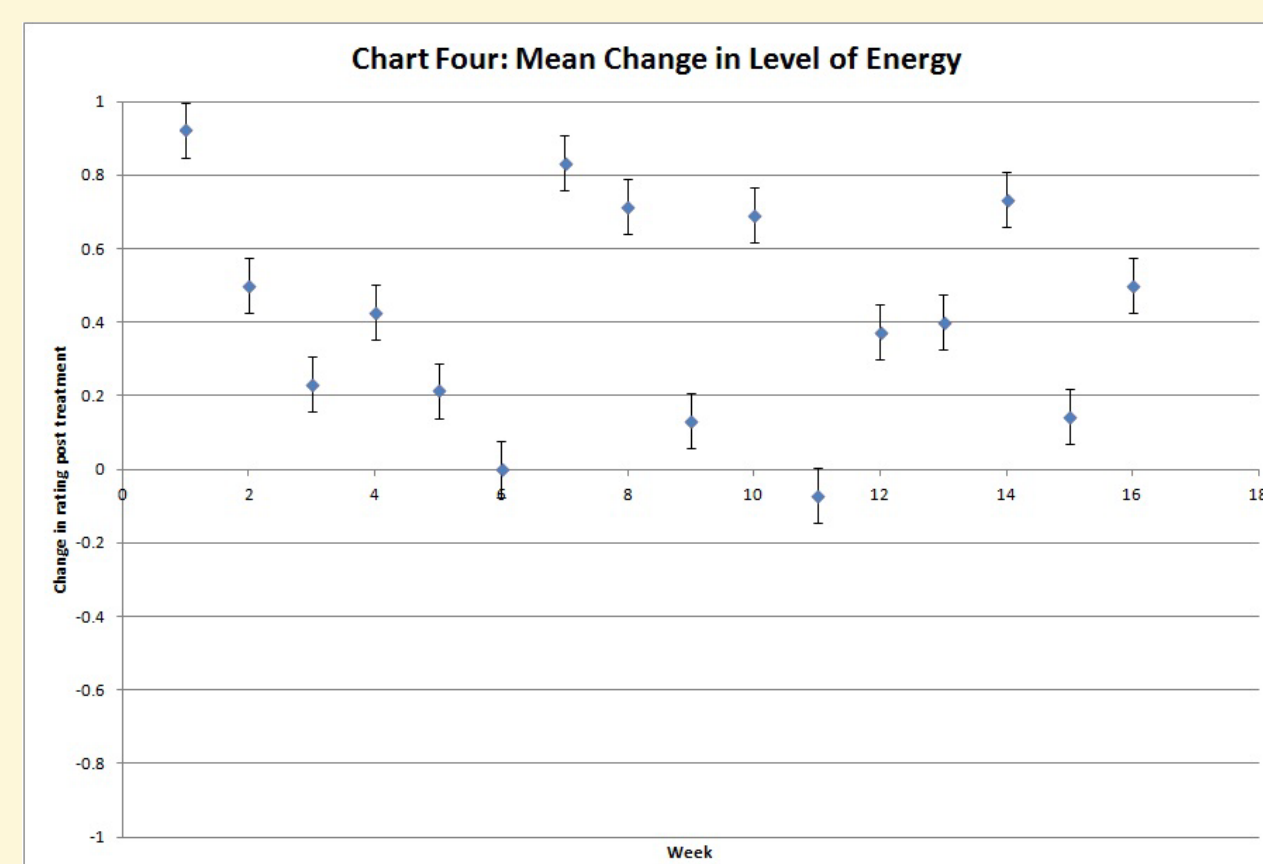


Chart four shows that for the majority of sessions, (Weeks 1-5, 7-10, and 12-16) energy increased from pre to post test.

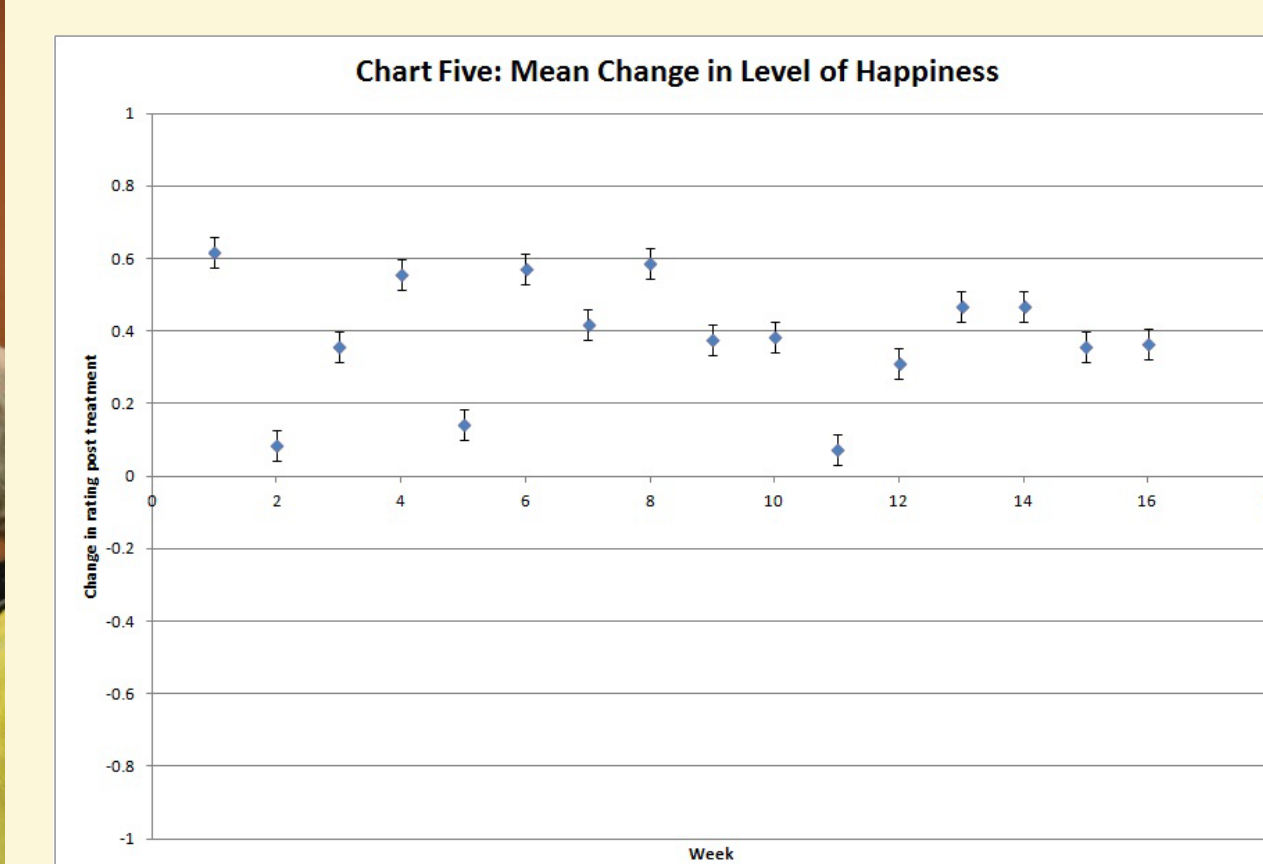


Chart five shows that for all 16 sessions, happiness increased from pre to post test.



Qualitative

Qualitative data saw the emergence of nine major themes: community building/making friends; special moments; climate of positivity; music is therapy; singing makes me feel well/keeps me going; no anxiety at glee; increased mood, energy and alertness; I can do it; and, I love to sing

Participant Quotes

- "I have more energy after singing".
- "I love to sing, music, music is therapy".
- "I have pain everyday but I don't think about it at Glee".
- "The choir has helped with my overall mood, it just makes me happy".
- "This is inspiring".
- "Heavenly fun. When I leave I feel so much better".
- "I like to sing, it makes me all right, it makes me happy".

Conclusion

- This study assessed the effects of choral singing on the anxiety, pain control, happiness, energy, and mood of residents in a long-term care facility, and attempted to discover the best way to implement a choral singing program.
- Singing in a choir helped cognitively intact participants, and participants diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, dementia, and/or cognitive impairment improve mood, happiness, and energy, and decrease pain and anxiety on a week by week basis.
- Results demonstrate that mood and happiness improved each week for 16 weeks. Energy also improved and pain decreased for the majority of the sessions. Results for anxiety were not as significant as mood, happiness, energy, and pain, although outliers in the data pose potential answers to the variations from week to week.
- Participants' comments demonstrate that singing helped decrease anxiety and improve mood, while providing fun and comfort. Although there was no overall increase from the beginning of the choral sessions to the end, on a weekly basis, improvements were made in happiness, pain, mood, energy, and the majority of anxiety scores.
- Benefits of the choir for the participants include helping participants gain a sense of community; increasing confidence, sense of purpose, mood, energy and alertness, and providing a positive climate for participants to fully enjoy the choir experience.
- The therapeutic skills of the choir leader helped create a positive environment and helped participants acknowledge that they were significant and valuable.
- The choir provided an opportunity to participate in an activity that participants loved and were able to thrive in, and as one dedicated choir member commented, "Music is therapy".

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