

Psychological Benefits of Community Choir Participation in Older Adults: Evidence from Chicagoland

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Background

- Better psychological outcomes are associated with involvement in leisurely activities and social programming¹
- Specifically, senior health community choirs are associated with a reduction in loneliness, increase in interest in life, and increase in sense of purpose^{2,3}
- We aim to study the association between music programming and psychosocial outcomes in adults with and without cognitive impairment in a naturalistic longitudinal design.

Methods

- Participants:** Hundred and sixty-nine (169) participants aged 55-90. Seven with cognitive impairment (Table 1).
- Choir sessions:** 7 sites; once a week for 15 weeks and included structured physical and vocal warm-ups, rehearsal, and a final public performance.
- Psychosocial outcomes:** life purpose, psychological well-being, social support, negative affect, anxiety, and loneliness.
- Design:** delayed enrollment. Outcomes were assessed twice pre-program (1 month before and at baseline) and once post-program.
- Analysis:** Linear mixed models and reliable change indices were used to evaluate changes across timepoints.

Male, n, %	Age	State anxiety (20-80)	Trait anxiety (20-80)	Negative affect (10-50)	Loneliness (3-9)	Social support (1-5)	Well-being (1-7)	Life purpose (10-50)
24 (14.2%)	74.3(6.4)	32.4(9.6)	31.7(8.7)	14.3(5.1)	4.2(1.4)	4.4(0.9)	5.9(0.7)	40.1(5.2)

Table 1. Participant characteristics. Average values are demonstrated. Values in parentheses represent standard deviation

Results

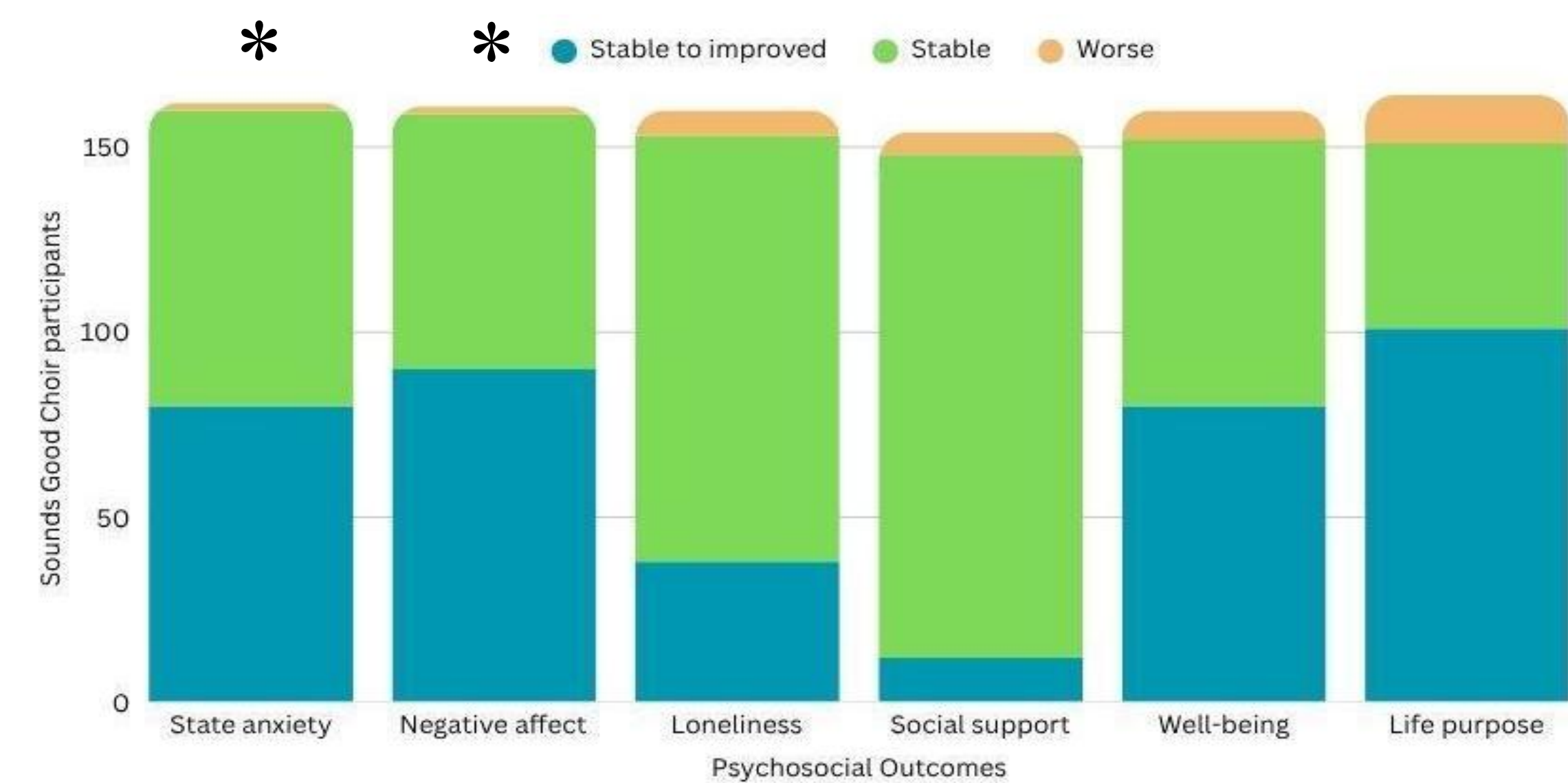


Figure 1. Response to choir sessions using reliable change indices. Number of individual choir participants reliable change indices results across psychosocial outcomes. Significant reductions were observed in negative affect and state anxiety. Note: Stable to improved refers to individuals who either improve based on the reliable change index or had baseline scores that were stable AND too high/low to show any improvement.

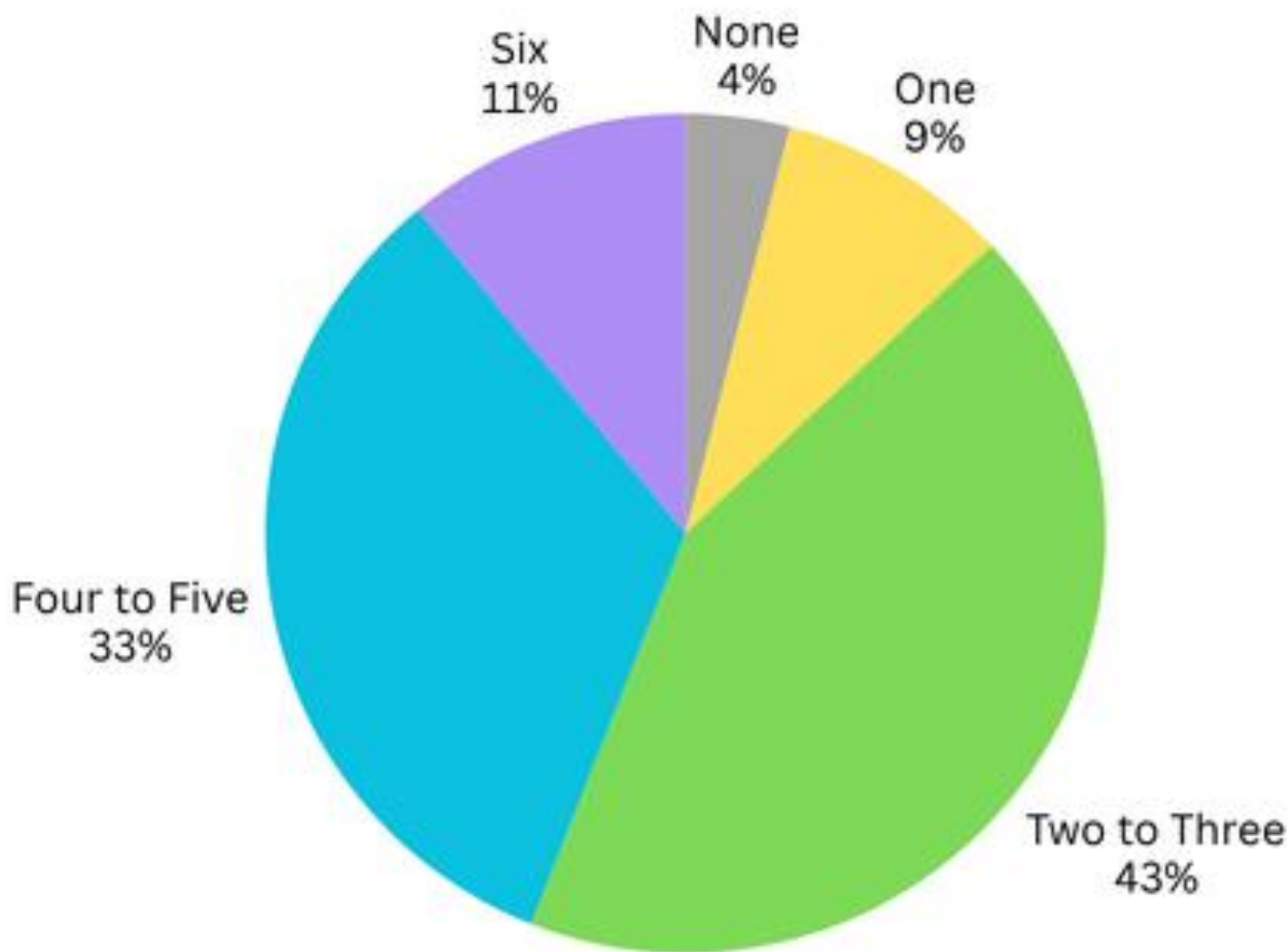


Figure 2. The cumulative count of psychosocial outcomes in which participants showed consistently high or reliably improved scores from pre- to post-intervention across the 15-week program, based on established reliable change indices.

- Significant reductions were observed in negative affect ($p=.01$) and state anxiety ($p=.02$) from pre- to post-session (Figure 1).
- Reliable change analyses indicated that 96% of participants demonstrated either improvement or stable strong scores on at least one of the psychosocial outcomes (Figure 2).
- At baseline, those individuals who had previously participated in the program (nearly 50% for 5+ years) exhibited high levels of psychological well-being and perceived social support.

Discussion

- Findings support the role of community-based choir programs in reducing negative affect and anxiety among older adults, even in samples with high baseline well-being.
- Choir participation may serve as a maintaining factor for psychological health, with potential for greater impact in individuals at risk for poor outcomes.
- Future research will examine the effect of participation in choirs in a randomized placebo-controlled study, examining larger samples of program-naïve participants, physiologic markers, physiologic markers, and exploring long-term effects of sustained engagement.

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References

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