

**THE PERCEIVED PSYCHOSOCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF CHORAL SINGING IN A
SETSWANA-SPEAKING COMMUNITY**

by

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DECLARATION

Student number: 31157424

I declare that “The perceived psychosocial contributions of choral singing in a Setswana-speaking community” is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



Signature

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ABSTRACT

Choral music has played an important role in the liberation of South African people, and it is still very popular today, including among Setswana-speaking choral groups. This study looks at the role of music, particularly choral music, in **the expression of Setswana-speakers' identity** as well as **the psychological effects on the psychosocial well-being** of the choristers. A qualitative research approach, supported by in-depth interviews, was adopted in this study to better understand the singing experiences of two male choir conductors and two female choristers. For this purpose, thematic analysis technique was employed. The results indicate that singing in the choir contributes to the choristers' physical, emotional, mental, social, and spiritual well-being as well as to their identity formation. Participants also highlighted challenges such as time constraints, poor leadership, socio-economic conditions, unforeseen circumstances, discrimination against younger members, love affairs, and gossip within the choral groups. The results indicate a positive and socially engaging contribution of choral music in the expression of identity as well as in the sense of belonging and connection of choristers. The findings are in line with the literature and indicate that participation in a choir enhances and strengthens psychosocial well-being, that is self-discipline, healthy lifestyle, self-confidence, self-esteem, motivation, physical fitness, emotional expressivity, emotional processing and stress relief, social responsibility, moral growth and development, mental alertness and focus, upliftment and inspiration, connection with God, and nurtures the community social fabric.

KEY TERMS: Singing; choristers; choral music; psychosocial benefits; heritage; relationships; belonging; upliftment; stress relief; breathing; culture; identity.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page no:
DECLARATION	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background and motivation of the research	1
1.2 Problem statement and aims of the study	2
1.3 Research design	3
1.4 Chapter outline	3
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	5
2.1 Psychosocial health	5
2.2 A brief history of the psychological benefits of music	6
2.3 The relationship between music and health	7
2.4 The psychology of music	9
2.4.1 Music and the brain	9
2.5 Choral music	11
2.5.1 Choral music in Africa	11
2.5.2 Choral music and psychosocial well-being	14
2.5.2.1 Physical contributions of choral music	14
2.5.2.2 Psychological contributions of choral music	15
2.5.2.3 Emotional contributions of choral music	16
2.5.2.4 Cognitive contributions of choral music	17

2.5.2.5 Social contributions of choral music	18
2.5.2.6 Spiritual contributions of choral music	18
2.5.3 Choral music and identity formation	19
2.5.3.1 Social Identity Theory	19
2.5.3.2 Setswana identity and brief history	20
2.5.3.3 Setswana choral practices and history	21
2.5.3.4 Choral music and identity	22
3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	24
3.1 Meta-theoretical framework	24
3.2 A qualitative research approach	25
3.3 Research design: Thematic Analysis	25
3.4 Participant selection	26
3.5 Data collection	26
3.6 Data analysis: Thematic analysis	27
3.7 Ethical consideration	29
3.7.1 Informed consent	29
3.7.2 Confidentiality	29
3.7.3 Deception	30
3.7.4 Avoiding harm	30
3.7.5 Right to withdraw	30
3.7.6 Reflexivity	30
4. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS	32
4.1 Research themes: Participant One	32
4.2 Research themes: Participant Two	39
4.3 Research themes: Participant Three	47
4.4 Research themes: Participant Four	53

5. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS	63
5.1 Theme 1: Physical contributions	63
5.2 Theme 2: Emotional contributions	64
5.3 Theme 3: Cognitive contributions	66
5.4 Theme 4: Social contributions	68
5.5 Theme 5: Spiritual contributions	70
5.6 Theme 6: Identity formation	71
5.7 Theme 7: Professionalism	72
5.8 Theme 8: Challenges	73
5.8.1 Age differences, love affairs, and gossip	74
6. CONCLUSION	76
6.1 Review of the rationale, aim, and methodology of the study	76
6.2 Findings	77
6.3 Limitations and recommendations for future research	81
REFERENCES	83
APPENDICES	92
LIST OF FIGURES	
Figure 1: Conceptual framework for music, health, and well-being	8
Figure 2: Music and the brain	11

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The aim of Chapter 1 is to provide background and motivation for the study. To achieve this, preliminary reading and relevant theoretical literature are briefly highlighted to contextualise the study. The research problem, its aim, key questions, and objectives are then identified and articulated. Furthermore, a general indication of the research design and methodology, and an outline for the remainder of the study are presented.

1.1 Background and motivation of the research

South Africa, the rainbow nation, prides itself on its ethnic diversity and 11 official languages. These ethnic groups express their traditions and cultures through music and song. Music in South Africa has a very rich history, and it is regarded as a very powerful tool for unity and expression (Van As, 2009), which played a significant role in the liberation struggle prior to democracy.

Quite apart from being a liberation and emancipation tool, choral music also became a tool to express South African people's indigenous culture and traditional beliefs (Durrant, 2005; Forbes, 2006). Even after 20 years of democracy today, it is still very popular and reflects the stories, and the cultural beliefs of the Black South African people, including Setswana-speaking choral groups, using rhythm and idioms (Njogu, 2008; Okigbo, 2010). Choral music is music sung by a choir with two or more voices assigned to each part. The different parts sung by different voices are mainly Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. It is highly formalised in the sense that good practice and rehearsal by various voices are necessary before the desired harmony and tone can be achieved. Unlike Western choral pieces which are written in staff notation and inaccessible to most Black South Africans, most South African choral pieces are written in Solfa-notation form that is easily understood even by children in primary school. Solfa-notation is therefore easily

learned even by individuals who have not studied music. This has contributed to the successful expression of Black South African culture through music despite the missionaries' quest to squash and control it (Dontsa, 2012).

People affiliate and remain committed to choirs despite lack of financial benefits from the choirs they sing for, despite time and financial demands from the choirs, and despite the socio-economic conditions they are exposed to. Choristers remain committed to singing in the choir despite the above challenges. It, therefore, remains a point of interest to understand what it is that motivates people to affiliate with choirs and what motivates them to remain committed despite the above conditions. In other words, do choral music and song have any personal psychological value? Does choral music and song express Setswana-speakers' identity and what are the psychological effects on their psychosocial well-being?

1.2 Problem statement and aims of the study

Although studies have been done and have shown that choral music and song contributes to the African cultural integrity and identity of people, the studies, however, are limited in showing the psychological effects of choral music. Studies that have shown the psychological effects of choral music have been done in the West and may have applicability to Africa. However, Western choral music is written in staff notation, is meant to be sung to the accompaniment of a musical instrument like a piano, violin, and so forth and does not reflect African rhythm and idiomatic expression. Although Solfa-notation, which was introduced in Africa, became a more accessible form of music for Africans due to its simpler nature, it did not necessarily allow for the expression of African rhythm. African choral composers, however, worked very hard to decolonise choral music and make it more applicable to Africa by using it as a tool to express their identity through the use of dance, rhythm, and idioms (Njogu, 2008; Okigbo, 2010). Although this initiative became successful, especially in the liberation struggle in South Africa, choral music is still highly regarded even after more than 20 years of democracy. Quite a number of people affiliate with choral choirs irrespective of their socio-economic conditions and the time and commitment demands associated with being part of the choir. It is, therefore, the purpose of this study to investigate how choral music and song expresses Setswana-speakers' identity and

what psychological effects there are on their psychosocial well-being including the physical, mental, social, and spiritual dimensions.

1.3 Research design

The study employs a qualitative research design that aims to render an in-depth understanding of the research question. A non-random purposive sampling method was used to recruit four young adult Black male and female choristers who have the experience of singing in church choirs. Two of the participants also have experience in conducting choirs. Semi-structured interviews were used to elicit and gain information from the participants. Following the interviews, thematic analysis was used to analyse the data in relation to the research question.

1.4 Chapter outline

A brief outline of the contents of the different chapters is as follows:

Chapter 1: An introduction to the study and a description of its aims and rationale is provided.

Chapter 2: The body of literature that was explored is covered by discussing factors such as psychosocial health, psychosocial well-being, the relationship between music and health, the psychology of music, choral music and psychosocial well-being, as well as choral music and identity.

Chapter 3: A detailed description of the research design, methodology, interview process, analysis, and ethical considerations is given.

Chapter 4: The results and findings of the interviews are described here. The experiences of participants are described and interpreted as themes.

Chapter 5: An analysis of commonly occurring themes is done with the support of the relevant literature that was discussed in Chapter 2.

Chapter 6: This chapter concludes the study through the discussion of the strengths and limitations of the study, the researcher's experience of the study, and recommendations for future studies.

Summary

Chapter 1 outlined the background and motivation for the study as well as its problem statement and aims. Furthermore, the chapter outlines were listed.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter aims to discuss relevant literature surrounding the research question, to set the context, and gain an in-depth understanding of the role of music, particularly choral music, in the expression of identity as well as its psychological effects on psychosocial well-being. This is achieved by discussing factors such as psychosocial health, psychosocial well-being, the relationship between music and health, the psychology of music, choral music and psychosocial well-being, as well as choral music and identity.

2.1 Psychosocial Health

According to Donatelle and Thompson (2010) and Cheprasov (2017), psychosocial health encompasses four important dimensions of well-being, which are mental, emotional, social, and spiritual health. Mental health refers to how mentally healthy people can respond to life's challenges in a constructive way by accepting their own mistakes, and knowing when to seek help when they need it. Emotional health is related to mental health and includes emotions, feelings, and thought processes that are involved in response to a situation. An emotionally healthy person is one who responds to a situation in a manner that is controllable. Such people may feel down but still have high hopes for the future. Social health postulates that a socially healthy person has the ability to maintain healthy relationships with others, to use social support, and to adapt to situations. He or she is able to relate well with family, friends, and acquaintances due to the being able to listen and find the best fit in society. Spiritual health refers to a spiritually healthy person being at peace with him or herself and with the environment, having a sense of empowerment and personal control, a sense of connection to oneself and to others, and a sense of meaning and purpose.

The above four dimensions therefore enable an individual to attain the state of psychosocial well-being, which refers to the state in which a person realises his or her own potential, can cope

normally with stresses of life, can be productive and fruitful, and can make a contribution to his or her community (WHO, 2014). Furthermore, according to Berridge and Kringelbach (2011), in order for an individual to acquire a state of well-being, there are two ingredients required:

(a) Hedonia, which refers to positive affect or pleasure resulting from a moral aspect of a life lived well (Berridge & Kringelbach, 2011), and

(b) Eudaimonia, referring to a sense of valuableness, meaningfulness, or engagement (Berridge & Kringelbach, 2011; Groarke & Hogan, 2015), and functioning with optimal effectiveness (Winefield, Gill, Taylor, & Pilkington, 2012).

A hedonically happy individual with positive affect may automatically experience life as valuable and meaningful (Berridge & Kringelbach, 2011), resulting in psychological well-being, which is a combination of feeling good and functioning effectively (Winefield et al., 2012). Psychosocially healthy individuals also like themselves, feel good about themselves, accept their mistakes, and take care of themselves. They have empathy for others and enrich the lives of others, control their anger, hate, tension, and anxiety, are optimistic and meet the demands of life, can work alone and feel comfortable with other people, value diversity, and appreciate and respect nature (Cheprasov, 2017; Donatelle & Thompson, 2010).

2.2 A brief history of the psychosocial benefits of music

In Africa, the value of music goes back a long way. According to Peters (2003), the shaman (witchdoctor, sangoma, or medicine men and women) used special songs, rhythms, musical instruments, dances, and dramas in conjunction with religious rituals or magic to heal people. Therefore, there was a very strong belief that music has healing powers. Peters (2003) gives a few more examples of this. The Bible shows how the Hebrews recognised the healing power of music. When King Saul was troubled by the evil spirit (1 Samuel 16: 14-23), David would play his harp to calm and refresh him. In ancient Egypt, they so believed in music being therapeutic that the priests were expected to become both musicians and physicians. Music was considered the “physic of the soul”. Priests used hymns to cure illness and suffering. Ancient Indians and Chinese also used music to help them become one with the universe and achieve healthiness of the body, mind, and soul as well as inner awareness. This belief is in line with how the ancient

Romans saw music. The Greek god Apollo was the god of both music and medicine. Greeks believed that music could bring the person back into the state of harmony, calm and uplift emotions, and produce excitement and enthusiasm. Realising that certain sounds of music produced healing effects, Pythagoras developed what is considered the foundation of today's tonal system that later proved to be successful in treating mentally ill patients (Peters, 2003).

2.3 The relationship between Music and Health

Many studies have been done regarding how making or listening to music contributes to health or well-being. According to MacDonald and Wilson (2014), there are four characteristics that underlie these findings. The first is linking the conscious with the unconscious. This activity is seen to be having the potential to link conscious with unconscious processes. The individual may be able to recognise own unconscious conflicts and repressed emotions and see the relationship between these and the conscious state. The second is gratification due to creativity. In music therapy, the attention of absorption that the individual undergoes is a creative improvisation process that allows the client to be absorbed in creativity and provide experiences associated with gratification. Thirdly, creative interaction increases confidence. The non-verbal social and creative interaction experienced by individuals in music therapy allow for a joint engagement with the therapist while freely creating and producing preferable music and increasing confidence and social interaction. The last is the expression of emotions. Through music, difficult or repressed emotions may be expressed and communicated without having to articulate these verbally.

The relationship between music and health may be further illustrated by Figure 1, a conceptual framework for music, health, and well-being (Kreutz, MacDonald, & Mitchel, 2012). According to Kreutz et al. (2012), music therapy is when the therapist uses music as a primary means to establish and maintain a therapeutic relationship between him or her and the client to produce a positive benefit for the client. This involves using music intentionally to achieve therapeutic goals and address physical, emotional, cognitive, and social needs of individuals or groups (Brown, 2011). People who also benefit positively are those exposed to music education. Such people develop necessary skills but also receive secondary psychological benefits, making

this subsection overlap with music therapy. Community music entails informal organised music interventions that take place in the community. For example, music interventions in a psychiatric hospital aimed at patients developing a motor skill. However, due to the enjoyable and rewarding nature of the activity, patients may receive secondary non-musical benefits, illustrating how community music overlaps with both music education and music therapy. The last subsection is everyday uses of music. People listen to music in real-world informal settings while doing house chores or driving. Although these contexts are not explicitly clinical or therapeutic, they may positively affect health and well-being.

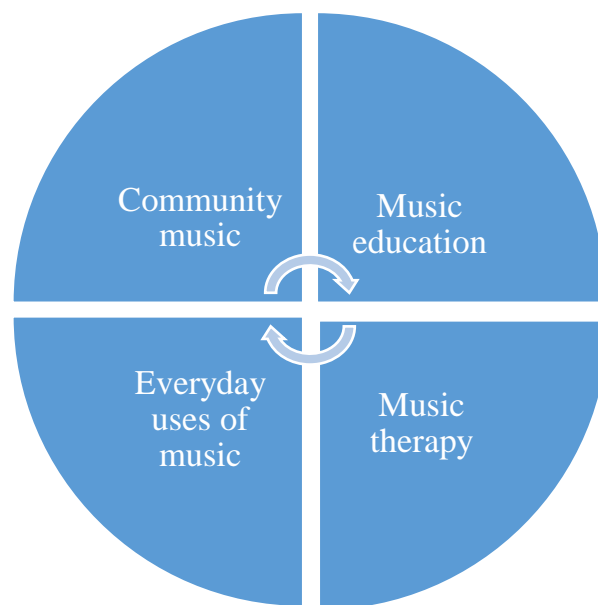


Figure 1 Conceptual framework for music, health, and well-being (MacDonald, 2013, p.2)

Nordoff-Robbins postulates that every client has an inborn potential of music that makes it possible for them to fully develop their potential as a human being (Kim, 2004). This self-actualising potential allows clients to overcome emotional, physical, and cognitive difficulties through their innate creativity. Therefore, without any background or formal training in musical instruments, clients improvise and co-create music with their therapists to help them overcome their difficulties (Kim, 2004). According to Cooper (2010), this improvisational music therapy is used to help both children and adults to be attentive to self and others, to have self-expression, to have more insight, and to develop personal and interpersonal freedom.

Although music therapy is a more structured and established profession that should be practised by skilled professionals with a purpose to achieve therapeutic goals, one cannot underestimate the experiences and the perceptions of people regarding the power of music and how it affects them outside the professional setting. Hence, the purpose of this study is not to give music therapy to participants but to listen to their experiences and perceptions of the perceived psychological effects on their psychosocial well-being.

2.4 The Psychology of music

“Music touches us emotionally, where words alone can’t”: Johnny Depp (Inspiring Quotes for Teachers and Parents, 2015, p.1)

People are exposed to music most of the time, even when they do not choose to be. This may be while dining at a restaurant, walking in the mall, in the elevator, in church, in a taxi, or at home. Music can calm people down. It can also make people go wild, and it can create a very tranquil atmosphere. It can ruin or lighten up the mood at a party depending on its volume, pitch, type, or tempo. Although many people know that music can be fun, not everyone realises what its deeper effects are. The effects of music have definitely stood the test of time. According to Rickard (2014), it is a powerful means of evoking powerful positive emotions, irrespective of one’s culture. Listening to pleasurable music, especially during peak moments of the song, stimulates the release of dopamine in the striatum of the brain.

2.4.1 Music and the brain

According to Harper-Scott and Samson (2009), in order to understand how the mind works in relation to music, it is important to understand cognition, which is a key concept in psychology. Cognition refers to “all processes by which the sensory input is transformed, reduced, elaborated, stored, recovered, and used” (p. 67). When one perceives or imagines something, one assigns meaning to whatever is perceived, which later becomes one’s frame of reference. In terms of music, whether one is consciously or unconsciously listening to music, one’s mind is always busy processing the musical stimuli around one. Cognition is related to

affect in a sense that cognitive evaluations of music also elicit emotions or moods in the music listener (Hargreaves, 2012).

According to Lamme (2012), while listening to music, a complex process occurs in different parts of the brain. Depending on the genre of music being listened to, certain structures of the brain may be activated to trigger the nervous system, which regulates blood pressure and heart rate. Such structures may also activate the entire limbic system that is responsible for one's emotional life and formation of memories (Jäncke, 2008). The rewarding effect experienced due to the activation of the limbic system is usually equated to the effect of drinking water after a long period of thirst. However, there are many other parts of the brain that are activated when playing or listening to music. Figure 2 below shows these different parts of the brain from which just a few will be highlighted.

When one plays or listens to music, the sound of a tone is directed by the thalamus, which is the receiving centre for sensation, through a sequence of waves into the inner ear and right through to the primary auditory cortex, situated in the superior temporal lobe, where different properties of music are processed in different parts of the brain (Frühholz, Grandjean & Trost, 2014; Lamme, 2012). The amygdala, which is situated in the limbic system on either side of the thalamus, is responsible for expression of emotions. It, therefore, recognises basic emotions expressed by faces, vocalisations, and music (Koelsch, 2012). As soon as music is experienced as pleasurable, the nucleus accumbens is activated, evoking feelings of chill, shivers, or goose bumps, which may be seen as a marker of peak emotional responses (Damasio & Habibi, 2014; Koelsch, 2012; Lamme, 2012). The hippocampus, situated deep in the temporal lobe, is responsible for learning, memory, and spatial orientation. It is also associated with music memories and experiences, as well as with music-evoked tenderness, peacefulness, joy, or sadness (Koelsch, 2012).

Music and the brain

Playing and listening to music works several areas of the brain

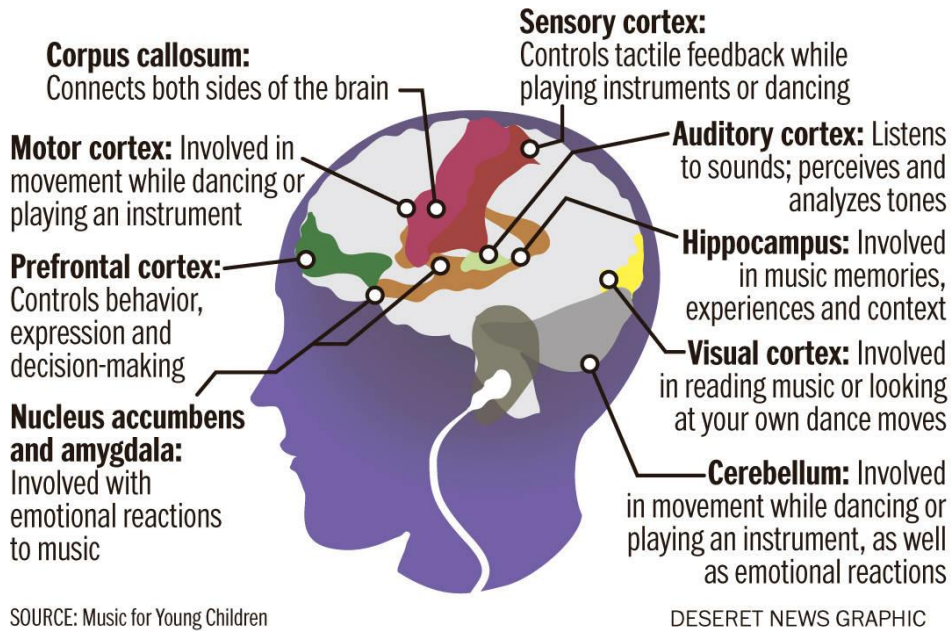


Figure 2: Music and the brain. (*A folk ton of music*, 2015, p. 1).

2.5 Choral Music

The question of whether choral music forms and expresses the identity of the choral singer and that of the choral music lover and its psychological effects have drawn a lot of interest across the globe, resulting in many studies being conducted around the issue. This study will identify various contributions that have already been made in existing literature and highlight shortcomings that open opportunities for further research.

2.5.1 Choral music in Africa

Choral music in South Africa was popular during the apartheid era as a tool for liberation and emancipation. Prior to the democratic South Africa, music as an art was colonised and therefore recognised only by those of the politically and economically dominant language groups. Music of indigenous South Africans was not recognised to be of artistic excellence and was therefore not seen as a National Asset. As a result, the new South African government

promoted the concept of African Renaissance as a way to make the arts of previously disadvantaged South African groups be perceived as equally important (Mugovhani, 2012).

African choral music is mostly used for spiritual worship and historical memory. African choral music is further on characterised by idioms and folk stories that express African identity (Okigbo, 2010). It, therefore, focuses on celebrating and embracing African culture and tradition, educating African people about their origins, and the importance of preserving their identity through awareness of their culture and tradition. Apart from identity, African choral music also reflects themes such as legend, communal life, history, social harmony, and the culture of belonging that may be psychologically beneficial to people for personal worth, well-being, and self-actualisation (Mugovhani, 2010). Themes from such songs were subsequently reflected in most of the choral pieces composed by South African choral composers. It also became common practice during the liberation struggle era for communities to sing liberation songs while marching. Some of the most popular struggle songs are “Senzeni na?” (What have we done?), which was used as a peaceful demonstration tool against White oppression, and “Naants’ indod’ emnyama Verwoerd” (Here is the black folk Verwoerd). According to Msila (2013), the song was warning Verwoerd (the Prime Minister of South Africa during the apartheid era) against the might of the Black people. It was made popular by Port Elizabeth United Artists Choir and was a composition of Vuyisile Mini, an ANC activist who became popularly known as “father of liberation song”. There was also the Vukani Mawethu Choir that was formed in 1986 by the late ANC cultural organiser, James Madhlope Phillips, with the intention to sing out against racism and injustice. The choir made a significant contribution to the realisation of democratic elections in South Africa (‘Vukani Mawethu choir: Freedom songs of southern Africa, Gospel, spirituals, labour and civil rights songs’, n.d).

According to Mugovhani (2010), the most notable pioneers of choral music in South Africa are Tiyo Soga (1829-1871), Rev. John Knox Bokwe (1855-1922), and Enoch Makhayi Sontonga (1873-1905). These composers tried to preserve heritage through fables, praise songs, legends, and genealogies. Sontonga became popular for his hymn, “Nkosi sikelel’ iAfrica”, which was adopted as the national anthem of Zambia and Tanzania and later as the national anthem of South Africa. The future resistance against apartheid was clearly made easier by the intellectual

groundwork laid by these composers in how they resisted White minority rule (Okigbo, 2010). There were other composers who followed in the footsteps of these great men. These include Joshua Mohapeloa, whose songs were influenced by the folk music of the Sotho people. His themes pertained to nature, legends, history, and communal life. His composition, “U ea kae” reflects typical African melody and rhythm with high to a low pitch. According to Mugovhani (2010), Tholakele Caluza’s compositions were also influenced by the traditional African texture of call-and-response technique in singing as seen in his composition, “Umaconsana”, where the female voices present the call and the male voices respond, reflecting the antiphony found in African folk songs. This technique is also seen in Mohapeloa’s “U ea kae” and Joshua Moerane’s contemporary compositions. Mzilikazi Khumalo’s compositions are also characterised by African call-and-response techniques and African melody and rhythm. His song, “Izibongo zikaShaka”, is influenced by typical African Zulu dance, Zulu speech rhythms, and Zulu folk music. Theriso Tsambo’s composition, “Antutulele”, was influenced by how an African Tswana woman rocks the baby to sleep. The rhythm reflects typical Tswana folk songs (‘Blake interviews theriso tsambo 2007’, 2007). There are many other composers who tried to revive indigenous African choral culture. The list is inexhaustible and includes the late L. M. B. Chonco, S. B. P. Mnomiya, H.K. Pule, H. M. Mjana, C. T. Ngqobe, the late Bongani Cola, and F. H. Sumbana.

It has become clear that most of the choral compositions reflect African dance, rhythm, idioms, and stories. According to the African worldview, dance and folk stories are believed to have a beneficial psychosocial effect on African people (Mwiti, 2014).

Currently, the Department of Basic Education in South Africa is embarking on reviving choral music in the schools. The purpose for this initiative is to promote unity and diversity, national reconciliation, positive values, a new South African national identity, social transformation, and social cohesion (Department of Arts and Culture, 2009).

2.5.2 Choral Music and Psychosocial Well-being

2.5.2.1 Physical contributions of choral music

Music requires people to move or dance, and this is a health benefit that may result in the healthy mind of an individual. It is common practice for singers to learn to sing using the diaphragm in order to produce good sound, sustain notes, and sing longer phrases (Cariani, 2009; Kreutz et al., 2012; Rickard, 2014). Being able to breathe in this way increases lung capacity, releases endorphins, and improves the immune response of the singer (Paddock, 2010). This exercise also increases oxytocin and results in improved mood and well-being (Baker, Ballantyne, Brander, & Dingle, 2012). Chapman and Garozzo (2016) identify the following physical benefits of singing: The amount of oxygen released during singing is increased due to deep breaths. This also contributes to more alertness as more oxygen enters the brain. There is an improvement of muscle tone in the face, throat, neck, and jaw, which promotes a youthful appearance due to facial expressions made during singing. There is also an improvement of the muscle tone in the larynx, which also helps to calm snoring, which improves sleeping, and counters insomnia, which in turn increases one's well-being and health. Controlling the outflow of air during singing stabilises the larynx, and improves muscle tone of the rib cage, the back, and abdominals. Singing also stimulates the thyroid gland, which helps to balance metabolism, enhances awareness of the body while giving a "molecular massage" and promoting detoxification.

A study done on adults with health problems related to breathing in Canada showed that during singing, lung functioning increased, and breathing improved due to required breathing control (Gick, 2011). It is, however, important to note that although singing comes with its own health benefits due to effective breathing, singing outside one's comfortable pitch range may leave a singer with vocal fatigue (Kirsh, Khosla, Phero, Van Leer, & Xie, 2013). According to Horowitz (2013), research has revealed that people with depression, cancer, hypertension, Parkinson's disease, and dementia effectively recovered from their problems as a result of the calming and stimulating effects of music and dance. According to Batt-Rawden (2010), listening to music contributes to reduction of stress hormone levels, anxiety, pain, heart rates, lowered

pulse, and blood pressure rates. Patients with brain damage also showed an improvement in psychomotor impairments following Nordoff-Robbins music therapy approach (MacDonald & Wilson, 2014).

2.5.2.2 Psychological contributions of choral music

Quite a number of studies on the psychological effects of choral music have also been done. Many of them were qualitative studies with participants who voluntarily sang in a choir. Music plays a crucial role in distracting people from aspects of their lives that are distressing, from a painful stimulus, or a very emotional event (Cariani, 2009; Kreutz et al., 2012; Rickard, 2014). In studies conducted in Germany, Australia, and England, choristers reported that being part of a choir improved how they perceived themselves. It increased their confidence and helped them to cope with family and relationship problems, bereavement, and alleviated their levels of anxiety or depression. They also reported that choral music helped them to cope with major life changes and recovery from illness (Baker et al., 2012; Clift et al., 2010; Clift & Hancox, 2012; Judd & Pooley, 2013). Studies by Gick (2011) and Judd and Pooley (2013) add that singing in a choir is a joyful activity that enhances life satisfaction, improves mood, lowers stress, and promotes well-being. According to Clift et al. (2010) and Camic, Clift, Livesey, and Morrison (2012), choristers report positive emotional experience and relaxation, which reduces stress. Being part of the choir makes them feel happier, and it improves their mood. Furthermore, Doerr, Ditzen, Linnemann, Nater, and Strahler (2015), indicate that listening to music in everyday life reduces stress, especially when the purpose of listening is purely for relaxation.

In a study done in the USA, Mendes (2015) found that singing facilitates memory retrieval and helps people with dementia to reconnect with the self and to other people. This is because singing in a group encourages social engagement, communication, improved mood, and enhanced relationships, which are imperative to the well-being of a person with dementia.

According to Rolvsjord and Solli (2014), listening to music made psychotic participants feel more vitalised, uplifted, joyful, hopeful, and motivated, and enabled them to participate more actively in their everyday lives. This is important in light of the fact that psychotic illness,

in general, is characterised by apathy, lack of motivation, and emotional flatness. The participants reported that although music therapy did not take away all their worries and problems, it, however, helped to bring more wellness into their life despite the challenges caused by their illness. Chapman and Garozzo (2016) see singing as a natural painkiller in that singers can immerse themselves in singing and surrender their difficult emotions in order to free themselves.

2.5.2.3 Emotional contributions of choral music

Music makes people introspect and examine their lives (Cariani, 2009; Kreutz et al., 2012; Rickard, 2014). It makes people immediately reflect on questions such as, “How do I feel right now?” and this enables them to choose further the kind of music that suits them at a particular moment in time. The authors also point out that music can be viewed as an important channel for communication that allows emotions and ideas to be expressed, communicated, and shared, both locally and globally. A study done by Gabrielsson and Juslin (1996), on the other hand, also revealed that music can be used as an effective way of expression and communication, but goes further to point out that the communication chain moves from the composer, through the score, the performer, the sounding music, and then the listener. Gabrielsson and Juslin (1996) also suggest that there are many ways in which emotions may be aroused as a result of listening to music. Therefore, emotional engagement in music may enable people to experience various emotional nuances and to express degrees of intensity of emotions that may translate to their general emotional life (Luck, Saarikallio, & Vuoskoski, 2014). This involves mobilising empathy toward others and enabling individuals to take on the perspective of the other (Clarke, DeNora, & Vuoskoski, 2015).

Happiness is expressed by a fast tempo, moderate variations in timing, and a moderate to loud sound level (Gabrielsson & Juslin, 1996; Luck et al., 2014). Sadness, on the other hand, is expressed by a slow tempo, large deviations in timing, and a low or moderate sound level. A fast tempo, loud sound level, and sharpened contrasts between long and short tones express anger, while a highly irregular tempo, very large deviations in timing, low sound level, and staccato articulation represent fear. Tenderness is expressed by a slow tempo, large deviations in timing, a

low sound level, and legato articulation. Solemnity, on the other hand, is expressed by a moderate to slow tempo, small deviations in timing, and a moderate or low sound level. A good example of this is a piece by Setswana songwriter Thoriso Tsambo. The title of the song, translated from Setswana, is “A prayer for AIDS”. The song is about a prayer of AIDS to God the Almighty, Healer, and Comforter. (“Thapelelo ya AIDS”- Tsambo, T. L. (Musica database, 2017). It is a good example of how music can express emotions (Cariana, 2009), especially solemnity and sadness. The song has a moderate tempo right from the beginning. Although the sound level is high as opposed to low, this may be attributed to the fact that it is a prayer, done in a loud manner usually practised by Setswana speakers during prayer. There is, however, variation in sound level as the song progresses. It can also be assumed that the style of the composer will elicit sad emotions to the singer and listener.

2.5.2.4 Cognitive contributions of choral music

According to Cariani (2009), music is engaging, interesting, and entertaining. When one plays or listens to music, different levels of processing in the brain are involved which can influence the plasticity of the brain in specific ways and therefore result in changes of the motor system (Cariani, 2009; Kreutz et al., 2012; Rickard, 2014). When it comes to choir singing, this, as in other genres of music, makes absolute sense as it does not only involve singing but also dancing or some form of choreography while singing, which requires concentration and coordination. Choir singing, therefore, challenges attention and concentration as the singers are required to sing from memory and combine rhythm with action (Paddock, 2010). According to Baker et al. (2012), group singing helps to improve singers’ executive functioning, as they are required to construct routine and structure in their lives. Many choristers have tight schedules, which require them to do home chores after work. Having a consistent activity to attend every week helps with planning routines effectively while looking forward to a singing activity that they like. In addition to this, Chapman and Garozzo (2016) found that singing also moves singers out of their comfort zone and daily routines, and challenges them to achieve something. Learning a song is a challenging and structured activity with a distinct start and an end, which requires the ability to listen attentively and to be disciplined. A successful end product motivates the singers further and boosts their self-esteem. Singing also improves the skill of multi-tasking, as singers

have to sing the correct word at the correct pitch, at the correct time, with the right level of volume, and with the most appropriate voice quality.

2.5.2.5 Social contributions of choral music

By its very nature, music is a social activity enhancing social connection and cohesiveness (Cariani, 2009; Kreutz et al., 2012; Rickard, 2014). It facilitates group bonding, the signification of rituals (weddings, funerals), and identity formation (nationalism, tribalism). In studies done in Finland, Sweden, and South Africa, singers commented that belonging to a choir makes them feel confident, comfortable, accepted, and united. They feel free to make mistakes without being judged (Barrett, 2007; Durrant, 2005). Instead, Chang, Cruwys, Dingle, Haslam, and Haslam (2016) found that singing together facilitates cooperation, shared perspectives, and joint intentions because of having to work together as a unit in order to produce a beautiful piece of music, which is made possible by breathing and rendering pitch and rhythm in a coordinated fashion. Singing in a choir creates an opportunity to make friends, find and give support, conform, individuate, mate, and express frustrations and emotions about life problems (Cariana, 2009). Such social factors play an important role in the health of human beings (Chanda & Levitin, 2013). Many songs that are sung in choirs cover these areas of life as well (Paddock, 2010). There is also a sense of acceptance and belonging within a choir and singers feel they are reconnected with local community due to increased social interaction within the choir as well as within the community (Baker et al., 2012; Camic et al., 2012; Gick, 2011; Norton, 2015). Singing songs from other cultures increases the singers' awareness of diversity and connects them to others' experiences of life (Chapman & Garozzo, 2016).

2.5.2.6 Spiritual contributions of choral music

Singing is a form of meditation that brings people closer to each other and helps them understand and tolerate others' different religions and races (Chapman & Garozzo, 2016). This is as a result of musical activities that are performed together, in which members of the choir depend on each other for an effective production of a musical piece. An example of such is a "call-and-response" worship song that requires different members to make an effort to work

together and complement each other with their voices, a process which makes music to contribute to socially coordinated work, worship, and celebration (Clarke et al., 2015). Music also provides people with solace in the absence of social support and helps them attain a deeper meaning of life (Cariani, 2009; Kreutz et al., 2012; Rickard, 2014).

2.5.3 Choral Music and Identity Formation

"The history of a people is found in its songs": George Jellinek. (George Jellinek & The Vocal Scene, 2010, p.1)

2.5.3.1 Social Identity Theory

Social identity is a person's self-concept derived from group membership. Henry Tajfel, the founder of Social Identity Theory, states that belonging to a group develops a person's pride and self-esteem and gives a sense of social identity (McLeod, 2008). According to McLeod (2008), Social Identity Theory postulates that people increase their self-image by enhancing the status of the group they belong to (in-group) and discriminating against the group they do not belong to (out-group). Categorising people as in-group or out-group means that one categorises people to understand the social environment, and one understands him or herself by knowing what categories he or she belongs to. The cognitive process of categorising oneself as a group member is dependent on stereotyping, social influence, in-group conformity, and prejudice (Jetten & Postmes, 2006). People develop a category of the self that reflects knowledge of their distinct group memberships, or social identities. Once people have assigned themselves to a certain group, they adopt the identity of the group they belong to. For example, a person who categorises him or herself as a chorister of a certain choir will start to develop the identity of a chorister. After assigning themselves to a certain group, people will now compare their group with other groups in order to maintain their self-esteem. According to Scheepers and Derks (2016), people strive for a positive social identity because this serves basic human needs for certainty, self-esteem, and meaning in life. A positive social identity refers to the kind of group membership that is positively identified from other groups through in-group bias. People define themselves as belonging to a group in relation to self-interdependence. They perceive themselves in terms of the groups they belong to (family, relatives, geographic district) and coherence

between individual aims and collective aims. In collectivistic cultures, behaviour is guided by norms, obligations, and duties (Brown & Capozza, 2000).

2.5.3.2 Setswana identity and brief history

According to Pilane (2002), the people identified as Setswana speakers are known as Batswana, and they live according to the Batswana cultural laws and customs. Originally, the Batswana were known as Basutho or Bantu people, but today, Batswana is accepted as a common name, meaning "the little offshoots" (from -tswa) and "those who are alike" from-tshwaana"(p.11). The origin of the Batswana people can be traced to the Cave of Lowe or to a bed of reeds at Ntswana-tsatsi (where the sun rises). Tswana groups are known for being able to welcome foreign peoples, to turn strangers into 'their' people, and to do so without compromising the integrity of their own institutions (Tswana | South African History Online, n.d.).

The Batswana in South Africa live in Gauteng, North West, and Northern Cape provinces in areas such as Rustenburg, Pretoria, Ventersdorp, Lichtenburg, Mafikeng, Vryburg, Kuruman, and Taung. The Batswana are divided into geographical groupings such as Tlhaping, Rolong, Hurutshe, Kwena, Kgatla, and so forth (Pilane, 2002). It is important to note that the Batswana are distributed all over South Africa, but most of them are found in the Northern Cape, and North West Provinces of South Africa and in Botswana (Pilane, 2002). However, the composition of Tswana communities was later complicated by centuries of interaction with neighbouring ethnolinguistic groups (Volz, 2011). According to Smith (n.d.), cattle keeping has been the source of status and wealth for Tswana people. Many Batswana still have high regard for cattle keeping, especially in Botswana. The introduction of Western technology, business, media, tourism, and consumer goods came with changes that improved education, health facilities, and living standards. Important aspects of Setswana identity such as traditional dance and music, cattle keeping, and traditional medicine have persisted (Smith, n.d.), especially traditional dance which is very popular today.

The dawn of apartheid in the 1940s marked more changes for all Black South Africans. In 1953 the South African Government introduced homelands; the Tswana in South Africa were declared citizens of Bophuthatswana homeland, under the leadership of Chief Lucas Mangope (Tswana | South African History Online, n.d.). In 1977, Bophuthatswana was granted nominal independence by South Africa, but no other nation recognised it. Mangope was ousted just before the April 1994 elections, and the homeland was officially dismantled after the elections (Tswana | South African History Online, n.d.).

2.5.3.3 Setswana choral practices and history

Setswana choral music can be traced to an ancient culture of the Tswana/ San. This culture of dance performance has not been touched since the dawn of time. Performers wear traditional animal skins, relay themes of nature and imitate animals through dance, clapping, and song (Traditional music and dance performances suitable for corporate entertainment or performance events | Drum Cafe, n.d.).

According to Denbow and Thebe (2006), Setswana traditional song and dance instils a spirit of togetherness and belonging while at the same time is a means through which to express feelings of joy and grief. In the past, songs and “steps” also accompanied communal work groups when women pounded grain together in heavy wooden mortars or joined together in work parties to help one another ready their fields for planting. Today, the Batswana take pride in the variety of contemporary dance forms and music that have been inherited from the past. Music and dance, in particular, choral music and traditional dance, are performed at daily activities and ceremonies such as funerals and weddings. It is customary that during events such as funerals, weddings, and births, the community would get together and express their emotions through song (Van As, 2009). Choral music and traditional dance are also currently taught in schools where teachers regularly organise music and dance competitions (Smith, n.d.).

2.5.3.4 Choral music and identity

The role that music plays in the formation of identities cannot be underestimated. Music is regarded as an important recreational activity, and it is key to how people orient themselves in their lives and their music tastes are often employed as a ‘badge of identity’ or way of signalling key aspects of their personality to the world (Cariani, 2009; Kreutz et al., 2012; Rickard, 2014). Although a study by Mugovhani (2007) has indicated that the majority of Venda choral music does not evoke indigenous traditional music and that it does not sound African, the study, however, acknowledges that Venda composers have nonetheless managed to lay a foundation for choral music as an art. Other studies, on the other hand, also done in South Africa, have shown that Black pioneers of choral music tried to transform European choral music in order to preserve African cultural integrity through the use of African melody and rhythm in their writings (Mugovhani, 2010; Okigbo, 2010). Listening to the compositions of the likes of H.K Pule, T.C Ngqobe, and Mzilikazi Khumalo, one can clearly feel the African melody and rhythm in their music. Cultural heritage and patriotism are so valued in South Africa that a need has been identified to teach choral music to school children from early childhood education through basic education and higher education to enhance music creativity and nation Building (Woodward, 2007). A much later study revealed that this hands-on approach to music in South Africa positively contributes to nation building where students successfully manage to build friendships, strengthen networks, and tolerate diversity (Joseph, 2012). A good example of such an achievement of unity is the 2010 FIFA world cup where the rainbow nation was united by culture and music.

In other studies, done in Kenya, choral music composers use idioms as a way to express their people’s identity. A good example of such is the works of T.K Njooora, whose compositions use themes from the idiom of Kikuyo folk songs, and his music reflects such idioms through rhythm and melody (Njogu, 2008). Agawu (2003) and Akrofi and Smit (2007), show that African music is communal and allows authentic expression of emotion and identity. Identity cannot be formed by an individual in isolation. It is formed as a result of interaction and observation of others. Therefore, music, with its communal nature, allows for this identity to be formed and authentically expressed.

In agreement with studies done in Kenya and South Africa, studies done in other European countries also reveal that choral music is a tool for expressing patriotism, and that it enhanced singers' sense of national and cultural identity (Durrant, 2005; Forbes, 2006). According to Camic et al. (2012) and Rolvsjord and Solli (2014), group singing was experienced as having a close connection to identity and a sense of having an inner core. It was therefore seen to be expressing social identity. Music therapy was also experienced as important in helping participants to regain contact with a sense of self, identity, and aliveness.

Summary

Chapter 2 aimed to set the context and gain an in-depth understanding of the role of music, particularly choral music, in the expression of identity as well as its psychological effects on psychosocial well-being. People affiliate and remain committed to choirs despite the lack of financial benefits from the choirs they sing for, despite time and financial demands from the choirs, and despite the socio-economic conditions they are exposed to. A point of interest here remains to understand what motivates people to affiliate with choirs and to remain committed despite the above conditions. The literature demonstrates that there is a link between music and psychosocial health and that this relationship can be traced as far back as the times of ancient Egypt, the Greek god Apollo, and Pythagoras. Literature also reveals that choral music, in particular, has a rewarding effect with a positive impact on the choristers' physical, psychological, emotional, cognitive, social, and spiritual well-being. Furthermore, the literature demonstrates that choral music plays an important role in the formation of identity, cultural heritage, patriotism, as well as awareness of cultural diversity.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The aim of this chapter is to highlight the study's research framework, approach and research design, sampling method and size, methods of data collection, method of analysis, and ethical considerations. In light of the above literature, the study aims follow the methodology in this chapter, to better understand the participants' experiences regarding how their identity is expressed through choral music and song as well as their views regarding the psychological effects of this genre of music.

3.1 Meta-theoretical framework

This study adopts a social constructionist framework that knowledge and truth are constructed rather than discovered by the mind. Through daily interactions in social life, people construct how they perceive the world. What is therefore regarded as truth is the product of social interactions among people rather than of objective observation (Burr, 1995). Although reality is socially constructed, this reality is the subjective experience of people's everyday life, and of how they understand the world. It is not the objective reality of the natural world (Andrews, 2012). This subjective reality is acquired by being given an identity and a place in society; a process that shows how one's identity is not formed from inside a person but from the external environment through social interaction with significant others. In everyday life, as people socially interact with one another, their repeated patterns of interaction determine and construct future behaviours and interactions. According to Burr (1995), the subjective experience of the world is made possible by language, which facilitates thoughts and concepts, and therefore structuring the way the world is experienced. This is because these thoughts and concepts already exist in people's culture and are acquired through the use of language and reproduced by anyone sharing a particular culture and language.

This study, therefore, focuses on the choristers' experiences of their psychosocial well-being as constructed through social interaction within the context of singing in the choir. The relevance of social constructivist approach lies in its assistance in exploring their meanings, which are influenced by their social interactions and discourses. The social constructionist framework also enables the researcher's flexibility and openness regarding his own emotional experiences of choir singing. The researcher can bring his own experiences and enter into dialogue with participants while being aware of his social and cultural context as well as his personal biases (Jomeen, Lambert, & McSherry, 2010). The purpose of the research was therefore not to gather facts, but rather to initiate dialogue, interest, and understanding.

3.2 A qualitative research approach

A qualitative research approach was adopted in this study to understand better the participants' experiences regarding how their identity is expressed through choral music and song as well as their perceptions regarding the psychosocial contributions of this genre of music.

Qualitative research yields an opportunity for quality responses and attempts to study things in their natural settings in order to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people attach to them (Biggam, 2008). The researcher, therefore, explored information from the perspective of participants and was concerned with the assessment of the participants' behaviour, attitude, and opinions (Kothari, 2009). Since qualitative research allows the researcher to remain inseparable from the participants' experiences, it enabled the researcher to understand the complexities of multiple realities perceived by the participants. Multiple realities in qualitative research make it difficult for findings of the study to be applicable in other settings and the purpose of qualitative research is not necessarily to generalise findings (Sarma, 2015).

3.3 Research design: Thematic analysis

For the purpose of this study, thematic analysis was employed. Thematic analysis is a method of identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data in order to give it a rich description (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The qualitative method employed therefore facilitated the

identification and interpretation of meaningful themes within the data, in relation to the research question. It was done in the following phases: Familiarisation with the data, generating initial codes, and searching for themes. While analysing and interpreting meaningful themes, the researcher engaged in the process of reflexivity, as thematic analysis creates room for the role of researcher and his subjective influence.

Both deductive and inductive techniques were used, as the themes were driven by the data as well as the researcher's theoretical framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3.4 Participant selection

Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research is not concerned with the effective generalisation of findings. Rather, its focus is on a better understanding of people's behaviour, perceptions, and attitude. Therefore, non-probability sampling was used where the participants were selected deliberately (Kothari, 2009). Participants for the present study were, therefore, selected through purposive sampling because of their personal experience or knowledge of the topic under study (Cleary, Hayter, & Horsfall, 2014). Four participants (two choristers and two conductors who are choristers at other choirs) were deliberately selected in Mafikeng, North West Province. The participants are two Black men and two Black women between the ages of 28 and 42. Two of the participants were telephonically invited in advance to take part in the interview, while the other two were approached in person at a choral concert where individual appointments were made upon their agreement to take part. Individual in-depth interviews were used to explore the research topic in depth. There was no rush for the interviews as they were spread out over two days.

3.5 Data collection

According to Cramer, Loughborough, and Howitt (2014), the secret to effective qualitative data collection lies in the richness of the data collected. Interviews are one way of ensuring the acquisition of this richness. Due to their various commitments, the participants of this study were envisaged to find it a challenge to come together at the same time and place. Therefore, in-depth

interviews were used. In-depth interviews are characterised by a highly-specialised form of conversation which differs from normal conversation due to its nature of being determined by the rules of research (Cramer et al., 2014). Each participant was interviewed independently at a quiet venue of his or her choice for a period of 30 to 60 minutes. Data were collected verbatim in Setswana, which is the participants' home language. It was then transcribed into written form to conduct the analysis.

3.6 Data analysis: Thematic analysis

Phase 1: Familiarisation with the data

This phase entails the researcher being immersed in the data by actively getting involved with it. This involves the repeated reading of the data in search of patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This was done by noting down initial thoughts and ideas from the data. Furthermore, the verbal data from the interviews were then transcribed into written form. While repeatedly reading the data and listening to the recordings, the researcher was being immersed with the data and became more familiar with it (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Cramer et al., 2014).

Phase 2: Generating initial codes

After reading and familiarising himself with the data, the researcher then used codes to identify features of the data that appeared interesting or important by systematically working through the data. These codes identified features of the data that the researcher considered relevant to the research question. The purpose of the initial coding process is not to identify broader themes, but to capture the essence of the text (Cramer et al., 2014). This was done by writing notes on the text using coloured pens to identify potential patterns, and the whole data set was given equal attention so that full consideration could be given to repeated patterns within the data.

Phase 3: Searching for themes

After the data were initially coded, broader themes were identified by sorting different codes into potential themes. These themes combined different codes that may have been very similar within the data to explain larger sections of the data. For this purpose, tables were used as visual representations (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to help the researcher visualise and consider the links and relationships between themes. These initial codes were then sorted as main themes and sub-themes.

Phase 4: Review of the themes

This stage helps the researcher guard against using themes even when there is little data to support the themes due to the diversity of the themes as well as their unfitness to some of the data. The themes that had already been identified were therefore regarded as tentative until tested against the original data (Cramer et al., 2014). In order to refine these themes, the coded data were once more scrutinised to ensure that the themes formed a coherent pattern and that this pattern was in relation to the data set as a whole. This ensured the themes accurately reflected what was evident in the data set as a whole (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Once it was clear that the various themes fitted together, analysis moved to the next phase.

Phase 5: Theme definition and labelling

In this stage, the themes were labelled by identifying what each theme was all about. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), each theme needs to be analysed to identify the story it tells and how this fits in with the broader story. Some themes were identified to be suitable as sub-themes within a theme. Names were identified to convey an immediate indication of the essence of the theme and the story each theme told.

Phase 6: Report writing

In this stage, a report was written that told the story the researcher wanted to tell. According to Cramer et al. (2014), this story needs to be in line with the research question of the study and

that report writing is, therefore, another opportunity to analyse and reflect on the data. For this purpose, the report involved choosing examples of transcripts to illustrate elements of the themes. These extracts identified issues within the theme and presented a clear reflection of the point being made.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

In doing any research, it is important to consider ethical issues in order to avoid human exploitation, harm, and legal confrontation. For this purpose, permission to do this study was sought from the Department of Psychology of the University of South Africa. Other ethical issues that were considered are as follows.

3.7.1 Informed consent

Informed consent implies that participants are given enough information about the purpose of the study and the procedures that will be followed (Goodwin, 2004). Participants of this study were therefore given adequate information that would allow them to freely make a decision whether to participate or not. De Vos, Fouche, and Strydom (2005) emphasise that the participants must be legally and psychologically competent and that their decision must be thoroughly reasoned. Once they were satisfied and comfortable with the information, an informed consent form was given to them to sign.

3.7.2 Confidentiality

Confidentiality implies that the identities of the participants will not be known by anyone other than the researcher (Goodwin, 2004). Participants in this study were therefore assured of their confidentiality and their right to decide the extent to which they wished to reveal their perceptions and attitude toward the study.

3.7.3 Deception

Deception means withholding or misrepresenting participants' information in order to make others believe what is not true (De Vos et al., 2005). Participants were informed that the information they give would not be misrepresented to achieve a different purpose other than that of which they were aware, that is the study is for academic purposes, and their names would not appear in the published dissertation.

3.7.4 Avoiding Harm

Participants may be physically and emotionally harmed by the nature of the questions posed during the investigation. The researcher needs to take measures to protect participants against any form of harm (De Vos et al., 2005). To avoid harm, participants were therefore informed beforehand about the potential impact of the study. Should the participants be emotionally impacted by the questions posed, they were informed of the opportunity to be referred to the Lifeline Centre in Mafikeng CBD for counselling.

3.7.5 Right to withdraw

Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study should they feel uncomfortable about the questions posed to them at any stage of the study.

3.7.6 Reflexivity

Reflexivity is perceived as an important process in qualitative research whereby the researcher reflects continuously on how his or her actions, values and perceptions impact the research setting and can affect data collection and analysis (Jomeen et al., 2010). Coming from a music background and having many years' experience in choral music, the researcher was aware that his own experience, ethnicity, and role as a researcher influenced the participants' responses, analysis, and interpretation of the collected data. To lessen the effect of these variables, the

researcher adopted a reflexive stance by continuously reflecting upon his own views, beliefs, and experiences, and considering how these could affect the research (Jomeen et al., 2010).

Summary

The chapter aimed to highlight the study's research framework, approach and research design, sampling method and size, methods of data collection, method of analysis, and ethical considerations. It employed a social constructionist meta-theoretical framework and adopted a qualitative research approach and in-depth interviews in order to understand better the participants' experiences regarding how their identity is expressed through choral music and song as well as their perceptions regarding the psychosocial contributions of this genre of music. Thematic analysis was used to interpret and draw relevant themes from the collected data, and ethical considerations were employed to respect and protect the participants' rights to confidentiality and voluntary participation.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

In this chapter, the trends and patterns yielded by the participants' accounts of how they experience their psychosocial well-being and identity in relation to choral music and song are discussed. A brief introduction of each participant is provided, followed by their themes as extrapolated from their transcripts. Each theme is supported by quotations from each individual's verbatim narration.

4.1 Research themes: Participant One

Participant One is a 40-year old woman living in Lomanyaneng village. She is a single mother of three children. At the time of the interview, she was not working. She began singing at primary school level and has 18 years' experience of singing in choirs. The following themes were extrapolated from her transcripts:

- A. So much time? What's in it for me?
- B. Unforeseen circumstances and socio-economic conditions
- C. Expression of emotions and emotional connectedness
- D. Heritage
- E. Healing
- F. A world of happiness
- G. A sense of pride, purpose, and responsibility
- H. Keeping fit enhances sustained breathing
- I. New relationships and belonging
- J. Perseverance in the face of difficulties
- K. Being socially responsible, not being idle
- L. Discipline

A. So much time? What's in it for me?

Participant One's theme on "time" reflects her thinking about how singing can be so time-consuming that it can affect one's performance in other important areas of life such as schoolwork. A lack of balance between schoolwork and singing may result in poor performance at school, which may further result in one needing to take a break from singing to pay more attention to school work.

"I took a break from singing at high school when I thought I did not balance my school work with music. My academic performance had gone low due to my focus on music, so I took a break from singing for about a year."

The theme also reflects the concern around church choirs not having incentives or rewards and developmental programmes to groom soloists. Participant One makes an example about Sibongile Khumalo, a popular South African jazz and choral singer, who has managed to succeed in her music career due to professional guidance. In order for more choristers to succeed like this, Participant One sees the need for professional choirs to visit church choirs to identify musical talent that needs to be nurtured.

"I wish church choirs could be noticed and taken seriously and that there are incentives for soloists and rewards as well as being groomed. It is important to be groomed because people like Sibongile Khumalo is where she is now because of how she was groomed. Choral music can take us far if we are noticed from church choirs. Big professional choirs need to visit churches to inspire young people to love choral music."

B. Unforeseen circumstances and socio-economic conditions

Participant One reflects the notion that sometimes things in life may seem to be going well, when all of a sudden; unexpected circumstances arise.

“I sang in a big choir, Mmabatho Choral of the then Bophuthatswana. I was a soloist there. Things did not go according to plan.”

The theme also reflects the participant’s feeling of hopelessness that can be brought about by these unforeseen circumstances, especially at the time when one is on the verge of achieving a dream.

“I had also to go for an audition at T.M choral, and unfortunately it was the time of the coup, and then that was the end of me.” (the coup refers to the failed invasion of the then Bophuthatswana by People’s Progressive Party and a disgruntled faction of the Bophuthatswana Defence Force in 1988).

The theme also reflects the challenge that is faced by choristers with regards to their socio-economic conditions. Participant One indicates that she had to persevere due to her love of choral music regardless of this challenge.

“I wanted to leave the choir one day because my daughter also sings in the choir and there were trips which required money, and it was challenging. But we survive because of the love for music.”

C. Expression of emotions and emotional connectedness

Participant One believes that the meaning of the song is in the song itself. She believes that songs play an important role in expressing emotions of the composers. The conductor’s correct interpretation of the song is, therefore, an important step toward the accurate expression of the emotions underlying the song.

“Composers usually express their emotions through songs. Before we can sing a song, the conductor interprets the meaning of the song to us and what emotions should be expressed by the song. You cannot just sing the song without understanding the meaning of the song. You need to be able to tell the other person about the meaning of the song you are singing.”

The theme also shows how working together with the other choristers and the conductor by following the conductor's cues during performance contributes to the ultimate enjoyment by both the choristers and the audience, as well as to their emotional connectedness.

"I focus on the conductor, and I make sure that my voice resonates with other parts like Soprano and alto. When I sing solo, I feel like I am in another world while focusing on the conductor. When I sing well I also see the reaction of the audience and that I have also taken them to another world."

D. Heritage

This theme from Participant One reflects the important role that songs play in educating people about not only their Setswana heritage but also about the heritage of their country, including its politics.

"There are many songs that talk about our Setswana heritage, and they explain it. For example, they speak about our country and things that happen here. They talk about politics that happened before and now."

E. Healing

According to Participant One, both listening to choral music and singing in a choir have healing effects. Choral music alleviates stress.

"I think music heals me you know. When I have stress I listen to music, I play my favourite choral music CD's, and I sing along with all my heart, and then I get better and relieved."

The theme also reflects how healing is made possible by belonging to a choir. A choir is able to give support to a choir member who is experiencing life challenges like bereavement. This support, which is done through singing, facilitates healing.

“When I lost my mother, I realised that it was important that I had joined this choir as they came to support me. And when they sang at my home I also joined in, and it made me feel better.”

F. A world of happiness

This theme from Participant One reflects that singing in a choir, especially solo singing, makes her happy. The happiness comes as a result of singing well and seeing the satisfaction of the audience who react by cheering and congratulating her after the performance.

“When I sing solo, I feel like I am in another world while focusing on the conductor. When I sing well I also see the reaction of the audience and that I have also taken them to another world. That makes me happy to see the support especially congratulated after the performance. It makes me proud when people cheer me.”

G. A sense of pride, purpose, and responsibility

This theme reflects that singing in a choir, especially singing on stage to big crowds, encourages choir members to perform at their utmost best. It also leaves choir members with a sense of purpose and responsibility as they play an important role in setting and maintaining the standard of the choir and consequently the satisfaction of the audience.

“I am also encouraged when I see big crowds coming to listen to us, and I feel I must not disappoint them. It makes me proud to also contribute to putting our choir on a higher level...like now, I am ill but I told myself I had to come to the choir because of the love I have for music and I did not want to disappoint the conductor.”

Adding on to a sense of purpose and responsibility, the theme also reflects how difficult it is for a talented chorister to sit with the congregation in church while being aware that their voice is needed in the choir.

“I love music with all my heart. When I sat in church looking at the church choir singing, and knowing that I have a voice, made me decide to join the choir. It didn’t feel okay to sit with the congregation when I knew I had a voice, and so I just felt that I didn’t fit in the congregation.”

H. Keeping fit enhances sustained breathing

This theme suggests that being a member of a choir is not only about singing, but also about exercising and keeping fit. The theme reflects that these exercises, in turn, help in sustained breathing while singing long phrases; a skill which would not otherwise be done effectively if the chorister did not exercise.

“We also do exercises and learn to breathe effectively in order to sustain long phrases. So, this really helps because it’s not often you find someone who sings choral music having a big belly bulge. This is because of the core exercises that we do. So, we run as well. We Black people are not used to running for fun, so here we run and open up the chest because we need that sweet voice.”

I. New relationships and belonging

Participant One perceives singing in the choir as an opportunity to meet new people and build new relationships as well as to belong. The theme reflects the atmosphere of a family that draws choir members to the choir even during the times when circumstances call for them to quit.

“We treat each other as sisters and brothers, and it’s very nice. If I had no such relationships, I could have given up singing a long time ago. Here we meet different people and build new relationships.”

The theme also suggests that singing in a choir makes other choristers appreciate each other’s voices, and that this makes them feel that they belong and are needed.

“I sing Soprano and people always like to sit close to me because they say they like my voice. They always ask me why I do not sing solo. If I do not come to the choir practice for some time, many ask me why I am not coming and tell me they need that voice. It is good to know you have people who encourage you in life.”

J. Perseverance in the face of difficulties

This theme by Participant One reflects how singing in the choir keeps the mind of the chorister focused on positive things in life rather than on life challenges. It enhances the choristers’ abilities to persevere in the face of difficulties such as unemployment and illness.

“Sometimes you have challenges, but you then say this is not the place for me. Like I said I am unemployed, so I think coming here will keep my mind busy and I will be all right. I am coming to sing, and I will feel well. Even though I am ill, but I need this. If you are a parent, you think of something to have income, so I do have some jobs that I do here and there. I wanted to leave the choir one day because my daughter also sings in the choir and there were trips which required money, and it was challenging. But we survive because of the love for music.”

K. Being socially responsible, not being idle

This theme from Participant One shows that “idle hands are the devil’s workshop”. Singing in the choir keeps choristers busy and prevents them from possibly being involved in other socially unacceptable behaviour.

“Music puts you where you belong. It prevents me from doing other things that are not socially acceptable.”

L. Discipline

Through this theme, Participant One conveys how choirs, through their committees, ensure discipline of choir members by establishing strict measures to enable regular choir practice attendance, proper singing, and generally, an honest commitment to the choir.

“Committees helped us to respect ourselves and take music very seriously. They helped us to learn things that we did not know about music. If there is no discipline in the choir, how can we respect each other? How can we learn music? It doesn’t make sense if there is no discipline. Because it’s not everybody who knows music. There are a lot of things that need to be done that the committee can help with.”

In summary, Participant Ones’ themes perceive singing in the choir as a time-consuming activity which is also not without other challenges such as singers’ poor socio-economic conditions and other unforeseen circumstances. Quite apart from these challenges, the themes also reflect psychosocial contributions such as expression of emotions, happiness, healing, belonging, a sense of purpose and social responsibility, discipline, perseverance, and national heritage.

4.2 Research themes: Participant Two

Participant Two is a 32-year old gentleman who studied engineering. He is currently a church choir conductor, studying level 7 music through Mmabana and Trinity College, and has conducted for 13 years. He reported that he works as a retailer. He says he wants to compose choral music because it is the mother of all genres of music but is not well recognised. He also says that many of the religious hymns are without identified composers, and that very few Setswana composers are documented. He indicated that he, therefore, wants to be part of the realisation of being documented as a Setswana composer. The themes yielded by his transcript are as follows:

- A. Expression of emotions
- B. Uncovering hidden talents
- C. Change and self-acceptance: An inspirational and encouraging influence on the community
- D. So much time? What's in it for me?
- E. Connection with God
- F. Connecting people with different voices and from different backgrounds
- G. Stress relief and emotional processing (A therapeutic value)
- H. Empathy and learning to listen
- I. Mental alertness and focus
- J. Social competence: performing in front of crowd
- K. Cultural pride
- L. Effective breathing reduces stress
- M. Mastery

A. Expression of emotions

Participant Two's theme reflects the power of choral music to facilitate people's expression of emotions. The theme shows how the interpretation of a choral song can express emotions that can easily be observed by others and consequently have certain effects on them.

"When I finished Matric I went to Vaal University of Technology where one guy invited me to come and join the choir. When I got there, all newcomers were asked to introduce themselves and teach the choir a chorus as a way of helping one to fit in. There was this Gospel song that I learned from Molopo Choral, Modimo re boka wena. I don't know what this song did to me...sometimes I want cry seriously. Sometimes I smile. I always get out of that mood immediately after the performance, and I usually ask people after church, how it was. How their experience was."

B. Uncovering hidden talents

This theme suggests that that singing in a choir is an opportunity to uncover hidden talents.

“The committee of the choir noticed something about me. My way of interpreting the song and how it should be sung made the committee immediately ask me to stand in for the conductor who was away for some time... when the main conductor came back, he heard stories of what I was doing with the choir, and he passed the baton on to me, so I was the main conductor. My first competition was when the choir went to the finals, and that was the first time the choir brought home trophies that time and everyone was like “who is this guy”. So, all this made me realise that this was something that I needed to follow as I did all this without sufficient music background.”

C. Change and self-acceptance: An inspirational and encouraging influence on the community

This theme from Participant Two reflects that when a choral song is well interpreted and properly sung, it has the potential to reach the audience and to leave them with courage they never thought they would have. This theme also shows that choral music has an important role to play in society, by addressing societal challenges as well as providing a platform for people to overcome barriers and stigmas defined by society.

“One day I went with this choir to an event where an HIV policy was being launched. When asked to sing a song, we sang the same song, “Modimo re boka wena.” Before the lady who was launching the policy gave her speech, I do not know to what extent this song touched her, but she had the courage to disclose that she was HIV positive. Then she sang her own chorus and looked at our choir and specifically asked us to join her in singing. I wondered why she chose our choir specifically over all the others who were present.”

Participant Two's perception of music is that it helps people accept their challenging situations in life and that in the process, it heals.

"Music plays a role of acceptance in people, that I am like this and I have to accept and be like this. People accept that a certain situation has happened and that music helps them to heal."

D. So much time?...What's in it for me?

Here, Participant Two highlights a challenge that is posed by singing in choirs. The amount of time that choristers and conductors invest in perfecting a skill with no financial benefits makes them think twice and weigh their options between singing for the love of music and putting music aside in order to focus on building a career that has financial rewards.

"So, all this made me realise that this was something that I needed to follow as I did all this without sufficient music background. I only did this through guidance from other people. I was very scared though and wondered if this was the right direction for me to follow. I worried that I was only starting tertiary and have no base of any qualification. I also thought that I had not heard of anyone say I have this mansion or this nice car because of choral music. Then I slowed down a little bit and deviated from the choirs in order to focus on my studies."

The theme also suggests that the unity that is built within the choir makes it possible for the choir to reach out to the community to make a difference in peoples' lives by supporting small businesses

"One thing I like about choral music is that it is not about money. We do everything as a group. Even though it changes, it won't change overnight. Putco Mafana has once said choral music also can uplift small businesses. For example, you take a choir of 60 people who need a uniform, and they ask a lady of a small business to do uniform for them. The lady is now going to be able to feed her family. This really motivates me because it shows that this makes a difference. If I am in the choir, I make a difference in the community. When we are happy spiritually, we are happy physically."

E. Connection with God

This theme indicates the role that singing in the choir plays in making it possible for choristers to connect with God: a process that is emotional and scary to the conductor witnessing the transformation of the choristers due to his interpretation of the song.

“Sometimes I want to cry, and sometimes I am scared. This is due to the connection that I see the choristers having with God. Why am I scared? It’s because this connection is due to my interpretation of the song. I am directing them to sing this way. Every time I conduct in church, people close their eyes, and some raise their hands, and I ask myself what’s happening. Like X as a chorister would also close her eyes and pray right there and then, and I can’t do anything to stop her. I am scared if I stop her it’s not fair because it’s my ideas. One thing I learned from this music is that it’s not the hand that receives, but that gives. I touch somebody and put them somewhere.”

F. Connecting people with different voices and from different backgrounds

This theme reflects the unifying role that is played by being part of the choir, most especially the role played by the conductor who serves to unite people from different backgrounds who come to the choir each time with different emotions informed by their various circumstances. A very important aspect here is that in order to achieve the level of a choir in its real sense, choristers need to sympathise with each other in order to be one.

“People join the choir coming from different backgrounds with different challenges. One thing as a conductor is that you get into each and everyone’s space. You connect all those dots to form a chain that will make you say I have got a choir. Remember everyone brings their own different voices. One comes from work with a different voice after being kicked by the boss. And the other one is happy. You have those whom when they are sad, they expect people to sympathise with them or to be hurt like them.”

G. Stress relief and emotional processing (A therapeutic value)

This theme is connected to the previous one in a sense that Participant Two's perception is that once the choristers have been united through their voices and emotions, they experience relief from their stress.

"So, another challenge is that you take all these people coming with different emotions with whatever stress they bring and you connect them. And after some moments you see that the stress is minimal."

The theme also suggests that when people have panic attacks and depressive episodes, music can be therapeutic and help to calm them down and reduce their stress levels.

"When people are stressed, they have panic attack attacks, but music calms them down and lowers their stress levels. For example, in my personal experience, I remember that at tertiary I was stressed because I could not get what other people got. There was a time when I attended an interview to go to America, and I could not get a VISA, and I didn't know why. I nearly jumped from my flat from the 21st floor because I was so stressed that people I stayed with also went to other job interviews and got in and I couldn't. This lowered my self-esteem, and I lost focus on everything. But that song Modimo re boka wena calmed me down and I thought to myself at least I got this far."

H. Empathy and learning to listen

Participant Two perceives choral music as an opportunity that teaches him not only to strive to unite singers but also to listen to their personal problems and show empathy to them.

"So, choral music taught me that I should listen. You need different people to become as one, and you cannot just shout at them without understanding their problems. You need to listen in order to understand. A better leader starts by listening. It will teach you problem solving. It will teach you to read people and analyse that this person has difficulties today. It will help you to

connect with the people and go back to where they are emotionally and try to understand where they are coming from.”

I. Mental alertness and focus

Here, Participant Two perceives vocal and mental exercises to go beyond just exercise. These exercises teach one’s mind to focus and to attend to the task at hand. This ability can also be translated into other important areas of life such as a school where one can apply the same technique to enhance performance in school subjects.

“We have vocal and mental exercises. Mental exercises help you to focus. I always told school children that if you can take a song and put it into your mind and know it in five minutes, then you can apply that with Mathematics because you teach your mind that it should work like this.”

J. Social competence, performing in front of crowd

Choral music also teaches choristers to enable their mind to connect with their bodies. Being able to focus on the task at hand helps the choristers deal effectively with stage fright.

“A fit mind that focuses also makes the body to be fit. People who have stage fright are being taught during rehearsals to focus and use their minds. It teaches them that their body can handle this, their heart and their mind can handle this.”

K. Cultural pride

Participant Two’s theme reflects the power that Setswana songs have in differentiating between various Setswana tribes through the manner in which the songs have been written. This includes the words and rhythmic patterns used by the composers. The style of writing further serves to give a sense of identity to Batswana of different tribes.

“Most of the Tswana songs can differentiate Batswana from for example Bakgatla ba Kgafela or Barong Bo Ratshidi. The songs follow rhythmic patterns that reflect different tribes. The way in which composers write, use, and pronounce words can tell from which Batswana tribe the song originated. The song Seretse Khama gives a sense of who a Motswana is through its message and its rhythmic patterns.”

L. Effective breathing reduces stress

Participant Two perceives singing in the choir as an opportunity to learn the skill of effective breathing through the physical exercises that are done within the choir. Choristers learn to breathe effectively; a process which has a benefit of reducing stress.

“We also have exercises that we do physically to keep fit. Remember it’s not only about the voice box. It’s about the power generated by the body. We breathe in, and it can help you especially when you are stressed. You need to know how to breathe properly. And it’s a skill; it’s not just about breathing like this. It takes time to learn that skill.”

M. Mastery

The last theme from Participant Two suggests that singing in the choir teaches choristers to perfect a skill. Choristers have an opportunity to learn to breathe effectively and to learn to sing even if they did not like singing before.

“There are people that I know struggled to use the skill of breathing, but today they are doing it so well. Some did not like music and today after mastering this skill, makes me happy to see that.”

To summarise Participant Two’s themes, singing as an activity helps choristers and conductors to express their emotions better. Choir singers are able to connect with God, to connect emotionally with each other, listen and empathise with each other, and to accept themselves as they are. They also uncover hidden talents and master singing and performance

skills, social competence, mental alertness and focus, and effective breathing. Over and above this, the themes also reflect that singers benefit from the reduction of stress, emotional processing, and having a sense of cultural pride.

4.3 Research themes: Participant Three

Participant Three is a 42-year old gentleman who works as a product promoter. He has been singing for 10 years as both a church choir and community chorister. He also has experience as a conductor of a church choir. His transcript yielded the following themes:

- A. Developing self-confidence
- B. Physical fitness
- C. Self-esteem and a sense of pride
- D. Moral growth and development
- E. Upliftment and inspiration
- F. Cultural diversity and Setswana identity expression
- G. Poor leadership and leaving the choir
- H. Discipline
- I. Missing the choir
- J. New relationships

A. Developing self-confidence

Participant Three starts by reflecting on how he struggled and was overcome by fear to acquire the desired singing skill when he joined the choir. The theme shows that although the choir is a platform for perfecting the skill, there is also support and encouragement from the individual choristers who had already mastered the skill.

“Initially it was really not easy to sing with them. There was a time when I just kept quiet while they were singing because I really did not want to spoil those people’s singing. They were singing so beautifully that I felt my blood getting cold. But what was profound to me was that

those singing next to me said to me that I should not keep quiet because I can also sing like them. They encouraged me to sing saying that when they started the choir they felt just like me, but then they later acquired the skill. They told me that I will also acquire this skill soon and if I have a mistake, they will correct me. When I finally managed to apply this skill, it made me wonder if this was really me especially when I thought about where I had started and where I was then.”

B. Physical fitness

This theme by Participant Three suggests that being a member of a choir is not only about singing, but also about exercising and keeping fit. The theme reflects that these exercises, in turn, open up the chest and help with sustained breathing while singing long phrases; a skill that would not otherwise be done effectively if the chorister did not exercise.

“There were a lot of things done differently. Things like exercising. We used to exercise physically. We used to also exercise our voices and did a lot of breathing exercises to open up our chest so that when singing, one can be able to sing a phrase with one breath. That’s when I started realising that choral music is nice. Some people may ask what time they will exercise if they go to the choir. They don’t know that they can exercise at the choir in order to acquire the required level of performance. These will help you with long phrases while singing as well as with opening up the chest.”

C. Self-esteem and a sense of pride

This theme suggests that singing in a choir provides choristers who have never been exposed to stage performance an opportunity to perform to big audiences including those with live TV coverage. This experience enhances self-esteem of choristers. It also enhances a sense of pride when the audience recognises choristers after the performance.

“When I finally managed to apply this skill, it made me wonder if this was really me especially when I thought about where I had started and where I was then. And what this taught me is that

in life I must not belittle myself. It's just like in soccer. If a person is used to play soccer in a small village and suddenly goes to play at a professional level in big stadiums, they will experience some pressure because this is not what they are used to. When we went to choir competitions at Standard Bank Arena and sang in front of a big audience, where there was live TV coverage, I wondered if this was really me. I couldn't believe that I was also going to finally appear on TV where the whole nation would watch me. So, this new experience helped my self-esteem and made me not to belittle myself. And this experience made me feel very proud especially when people recognise you after the performance, and somehow if you are not recognised, you feel disappointed and will really want people to show that they were impressed about your performance."

D. Moral growth and development

Participants Three perceives singing in a choir as a platform to learn from older members of the choir. This theme reflects the choir as an environment where choristers learn to respect each other and to respect their relationships outside the choir.

"I remember when I started singing I had a girlfriend and my challenge was that she was worried that music would make me meet other girls and forget about her. But our conductor at Molopo Choral was a real parent who would motivate us and discourage us from having relationships that could break our relationships outside the choir. So, she was really building us into being better people."

E. Upliftment and inspiration

Here, Participant Three indicates that singing in a choir is an uplifting process in a sense that it uplifts his emotions when he is usually sad from work or from home.

"Another thing is that sometimes when I come back from work I would be sad because of whatever happened at work. Sometimes I had problems from my home, but when I got to the choir and started singing, the singing would uplift me."

The theme also further suggests that some choral composers compose songs that are not only uplifting emotionally and spiritually, but also carry very important Gospel messages, as the songs are based on the Bible. Such Gospel messages, which serve to build individuals and families, are also found in songs written in Latin or other foreign languages.

“There are also other songs that have messages that are uplifting emotionally and spiritually. Choral music is very uplifting. For example, there is a composer called City Nqobe. Most of his compositions were words from the Bible, and they were very uplifting. There is also another song by the name of Toro. This is a very beautiful choral piece based on words from the Bible, and it is very uplifting. So, these well-composed songs are not like folk songs. They have a very important message to tell. There are other songs written in Latin or other foreign languages. When these songs are interpreted, you realise that they are very uplifting and can build you as a person and as a family member.”

F. Cultural diversity and Setswana identity expression

This theme by Participant Three reflects the importance of choral songs in educating people about cultural diversity. The theme indicates that although choral composers use their songs to educate people about Setswana culture, there are also those that educate about God and other cultures. This, according to Participant Three, helps to facilitate knowledge of various cultures and their similarities with the local culture.

“There are songs that express our identity. Even songs that are from other foreign countries, when they are interpreted, I have often realised that they would reflect the same culture as that in South African culture. We are not supposed to only focus on our culture. We need to also learn from other cultures so that we can see what is similar to us. There are other local composers who composed songs like Seretse Khama which tell us about a Botswana President. Other composers locally have songs that speak about culture and about God. We need to learn from such composers and from the songs that they have composed. We need more composers like this to educate people about our Setswana culture.... They will also learn a lot through messages that are included in the songs, and they will also learn about their culture and other cultures.

They will not only learn about their own culture but also learn about international cultures like Italy.”

G. Poor leadership and leaving the choir

This theme indicates that choirs have their own challenges as well. Participant Three perceives poor leadership by conductors as a reason why people, especially men, leave choirs or do not join choirs.

“At the church choir, we struggled to get enough voices especially men voices. But one day there was a conductor who was in charge of the church choir and made the choristers to leave the church choir because of how he treated the choristers...We spoke with the committee, and they said we needed to look for more choristers. That’s when I asked, ‘How can we look for choristers when the conductor was making them leave?’”

The theme also suggests that choir committees that do not show true leadership can also contribute to even the departure of choir members who really love the choir and have previously shown commitment and sacrifice toward the choir.

“When the main conductor also left, there was another conductor who was supposed to be my assistant conductor, but the way things were, I wondered whether he was a conductor or the assistant because he was giving me instructions. This made me approach the committee and asked the chairperson whether I was the conductor or the assistant conductor. The committee responded by saying it was not right to ask like that. I repeated my question and they also responded the same way again. Then I said okay, and I decided to let sleeping dogs lie. This made me realise that our committee was not firm until I decided to leave the choir until I could see what was happening.”

H. Discipline

Through this theme, Participant Three conveys how choirs, through their committees, ensure discipline of choir members as well as proper singing of all the voices.

“Committees according to me help in the running of the choir...I realised that committees consisted of choir trainers and voice leaders who would make sure that each part sang according to the required skill so that the voices are resonated with each other and that they are pure. These voice leaders also helped in the disciplining of the choristers.”

I. Missing the choir

This theme indicates that even when choir members decide to leave the choir due to other reasons, they may also later feel the need to come back to the choir to contribute in the success of the choir. However, there are unforeseen circumstances, like illness, that can prevent the intention of the chorister to rejoin the choir.

“Sometimes when I go to church I listen to the church choir singing, I become sad. Mostly I have been absent due to illness, but when I get a chance to go and realise that the church choir is not organised, I become very sad. I feel as if I can cry. Some of the choristers also ask me why I have left them and why I am not coming back to help them.”

J. New relationships

The last theme by Participant Three indicates that singing in a choir is an opportunity to build new relationships. Such new relationships may be inspired by a chorister's popularity in the community due to singing in the choir.

“Choirs build a lot of relationships. I met a lot of people through choral music. Some people respect me because of this music.”

In summary, Participant Three's themes reflect that singing in a choir benefits singers through the development of self-confidence, self-esteem, physical fitness, moral growth and development, upliftment and inspiration, discipline, the formation of new relationships, a sense of pride, and cultural diversity and Setswana identity expression. The themes also show that poor leadership contributes to choristers leaving the choir, which they also miss at a later stage.

4.4 Research themes: Participant Four

Participant Four is a 28-year old lady from Lerwaneng village. She started singing at school and at church and has nine years' experience in singing with a four-year break. She reported that she did not know that she could sing until she met many people at the youth choir who inspired her to start singing. She said she loves make-up and massage but that colleges are very expensive, and she cannot afford them. She currently works at a high school on a part-time basis and does catering when invited by other caterers to assist. The following are themes extrapolated from her transcript:

- A. Belonging and community
- B. Fellowship and upliftment
- C. Connection with God
- D. Problem sharing and solving
- E. Setswana heritage
- F. Self-confidence and overcoming stage fright
- G. Mental concentration combined with physical attention
- H. Motivation and encouragement
- I. Breathing and fitness
- J. A disciplined and healthy lifestyle
- K. Emotional processing and stress relief: a healing influence
- L. Discrimination against younger members
- M. Missing the choir
- N. Financial challenges
- O. Affairs and Gossip

P. Choir singing is time-consuming

A. Belonging and community

Participant Four perceives singing in the church and youth choir as an opportunity where she could feel at home and feel free to do anything she wanted. The theme reflects that this feeling of belonging enhanced commitment to the choir and respect for the elderly members of the choir and the conductor as Participant Four would feel bad if she missed a choir event or practice.

“If I didn’t go to a church choir event or practice I would really feel bad about it, especially the church choir and the youth choir. This is because I was really free there and could do anything I wanted. There were also older people that I respected, and the conductor was very strict. Older people gave good advice. Whenever I was feeling down from home after fighting with a family member or friend, I would meet an older person at the church choir who is fun to be with and talk to her, and it would be a mother and daughter thing. Immediately when I entered the church gate I would already feel better knowing that she is going to say something that would make me feel better even before I sing. So, I was free to talk, and I was free to sing.”

The theme also shows that the relationships formed at the choir usually continue even outside the choir. Members of the choir continue feeling they belong with other members of the choir even if they are not part of the choir anymore.

I am not singing in the church choir anymore but I still have good relationships with people that I met in the choir. Even today, when I have problems I am still free to talk to anyone in the church choir after church. So, the relationship I had with the choir members ever since I joined, is still there. I knew that at the church choir I had a father, a mother, and a friend. I believed that I had a family at home but had another family in the church choir. So, it was really a family.”

B. Fellowship and upliftment

This theme reflects Participant Four's perception of a church choir as space where there is a conducive atmosphere that spiritually uplifted her by just being among older people who were fun to be with.

"The church choir had older people who were fun to be with and just being in the choir spiritually uplifted me. Older people in the church choir also used to uplift me by encouraging me. They used to tell me that I could really sing."

C. Connection with God

This theme by Participant Four depicts the choir as not only a space to sing but also to pray, read the Gospel, and therefore connect with God. This prayerful life and spirit of connection with God that is experienced at the choir by this participant also translates into everyday life, enabling her to live a life of prayer, even at home.

"Yes, at the church choir we met old people and there are times when I would be feeling down, and we would start the practice with a prayer. It taught me that in everything I do in life, I must start inviting God. So, it was not only about singing but about other things. For example, sometimes we started with a phrase from the Bible and discussed and debated about it. When I got home I would then look for that scripture, read it until I understood it. By so doing I then realised that the Bible is also important. I then made it a habit of reading the scripture on my own so that when I got to the church choir I could know some of the scripture being discussed and debate with facts. This really spiritually uplifted me to an extent that I spent most of my free time at church enjoying everything about God."

D. Problem sharing and solving

This theme suggests that a choir provides a conducive atmosphere where a person can form good and trustworthy relationships with other choir members. Such relationships create a space for people to share their life challenges with others in the choir.

“There were certain things that I could not discuss my life with any member of my family, but I was free to talk about my problems with members of the choir, even embarrassing youth challenges.”

E. Setswana heritage

Participant Four reports that traditional songs that she sang in the choir increased her heritage knowledge and contributed to her interest in Setswana culture and traditional dance.

“We used to sing a lot of songs but there would always be traditional songs. These songs built me. That taught us not to forget where we come from and not to forget my tradition. That is why today I am able to do a Tswana traditional dance. It’s just that I am lazy now but I can dance it. The songs teach us that our tradition is still there and that we must not forget it.”

F. Self-confidence and overcoming stage fright

This theme shows that sometimes working or singing under a great deal of pressure can enhance skill perfection. Participant Four refers to pressure from stage fright and high calibre audiences as factors that facilitate her hard work and good preparation prior to the performance.

“I have stage fright and would practice very well knowing that I would not perform like I practised due to stage fright. Sometimes it would be better when the audience is not that big but sometimes there would be important people in the audience who can really sing, and this used to put pressure on me. That is why during rehearsals I would practice very hard, and this would make me feel very emotional.”

G. Mental concentration combined with physical attention

This theme indicates that different kinds of choral music songs require different cognitive responses. Participant Four perceives folk songs as activity-based songs that require attention and concentration on the choreography, while formal songs, on the other hand, are more physically and mentally challenging, and therefore require a lot more attention and concentration.

“Folk songs make us concentrate more on doing the steps, but other more formal songs require a lot of concentration. They require mental and physical involvement and everything.”

H. Motivation and encouragement

Participant Four's perception of choral singing is that it creates an opportunity for motivation and encouragement. This happens after a stage performance when the audience compliments her about her beautiful voice and gives her feedback on how she has gradually become relaxed during the performance. Participant Four says this encourages and inspires her to do better in singing.

“It is also motivating after the performance to hear people compliment you about your voice saying, ‘I didn’t know you had such a beautiful voice, where have you been hiding this voice?’ It encourages and inspires me to do better. The audience usually gave me important feedback telling me that when we started singing I was nervous and relaxed as the performance went on. They would also encourage me to smile while singing because I usually did not smile while singing.”

I. Breathing and fitness

This theme by Participant Four suggests that the choir is not only about singing but that it is also about maintaining a healthy lifestyle. This is made possible by the exercises that the choir

members do before singing, which help them breathe better, sing longer phrases, and generally sing better.

“The exercises help choristers to sing better, to be able to sing long phrases in one breath. It helps them to maintain a healthy lifestyle.”

J. A disciplined and healthy lifestyle

In this theme, Participant Four reflects the role that singing in a choir plays in the discipline of choir members. The culture of exercise that the choir members learn at the choir translates even outside the life of a choir into their everyday life. Choristers learn to see the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle outside the choir by exercising regularly and maintaining a healthy diet. This kind of discipline helps the choir members improve their singing and have good voices.

“Your mind also contributes because you don’t only start doing these things on Monday because you have a performance on Thursday. You need to do it daily by exercising and knowing what to eat and drink. It does not mean that you must not drink certain things at all but to limit. People with good voices maintain a healthy lifestyle every day. They know that if they eat atchar, it has too much fat and it’s going to spoil their voices. They know that if they drink something every weekend or during the week, they know that they spoil their voices.”

This theme also reflects how choirs, through their committees, ensure the discipline of choir members by establishing strict measures to enable regular choir practice attendance, proper singing, and generally, an honest commitment to the choir.

“The committees ensured that choristers attended the practice regularly and that they sang properly and that I am truly committed to the choir. Also, to ensure that I did not join the choir only because of other people.”

K. Emotional processing and stress relief: a healing influence

This theme suggests that singing enhances the expression of emotions, which results in healing. Participant Four says that when she sings with passion in moments when she is experiencing stress, she is able to cry and feel better.

“I agree with people who say music heals. When I sing with passion, and when I sing while I have stress or I am sad, the more I sing, the more I cry. And when I cry I feel that I am healing. Even at home, I used to take a music copy and sing when I have stress. Sometimes when someone was stressing me, I would take a music copy and right there and then, sing out loud without listening to them. After that, I would feel healed.”

The theme further reveals the participant’s perception that the choir is a source of support during the time of bereavement. During such a time, the choir visits the home of the bereaved to console the family, and in particular the bereaved choir member, through consoling words and songs, which results in healing.

I remember when my mother died, during the week when I was really sad to an extent that I felt that the world was coming to an end, seeing the choir coming to support me and talk to me healed me because sometimes two or three words that are said to console, usually remain for a long time. And as I said that music really heals me and when I cry I heal more. When the choir sang, I felt that it was really helping me.”

L. Discrimination against younger members

This theme by Participant Four reflects a disadvantage of being in a choir where there is a mixture of old and young people. This poses a challenge as older members of the choir shout at the younger members and do not pay attention to their suggestions.

“With the church choir, I felt that if you are a young person, whatever that you say, people don’t listen to you and they only listen to older people. Some would shout at us. I also felt that there were too many adults and there was no age balance.”

M. Missing the choir

This theme indicates that choir members may decide to leave the choir due to other reasons, but later regret having left and felt the need to come back to the choir to contribute in the success of the choir. However, the longer the period spent without singing in the choir, the more difficult it becomes to catch up to the required standards.

“I miss how we used to sing. When I see the choir perform, especially when they have practised well, then I see that I really miss music. But because of laziness and the other things that I am now committed to, I will not have the time to go back. Sometimes I wish I was not exposed to other things which I prioritised because now they set me back with my voice. I can still sing, but now I am scared of Solfa notation.”

N. Financial challenges

This theme is a reflection of socio-economic conditions as a challenge to Participant Four. This shows that the passing on of a breadwinner may negatively affect the commitment of a choir member to the choir. Participant Four says that when her mother passed on, she felt she was left with no other choice but to terminate her membership with the choir so as not to become a burden to other members of the choir who financially supported her at choir events.

“Another thing was that ever since my mother died, I struggled with finances. Before this, I knew that she would pay for any church choir trip that I wanted to take part in. So I thought there were too many trips and many things that required money. So instead of me remaining there being like a question mark and causing the choir members to pay R400 instead of R350 in order to cover up for my sake, I felt that although this was support, I was going to be a burden

unnecessarily. There were other adults who were offering to help me money when it came to choir matters because they said my mother really wanted me to sing in the choir.”

O. Affairs and Gossip

Participant Four suggests that in her community, there is generally a decline in the interest in choral music because of the culture of gossip and extra-marital affairs that prevail within choirs. Her concern is that other people affiliate with choirs for selfish reasons as opposed to a commitment to sing and being supportive of other members.

“But where I stay, the interest in choral music has declined because of people dating and gossiping in the choirs. Other people go to the choirs only because of other things. Like other have a crush on a certain person and they join the choir because they want to be close to that person. Another thing is that other choristers, instead of being supportive to those who struggle to sing by helping them, they gossip about them saying they wonder why such a person is there.”

P. Choir singing is time-consuming

Participant Four’s last theme reflects how the amount of time spent at choir is a challenge for choir members. Many choir members are married, and the amount of time spent at choir creates trust issues with their spouses. Parents of younger choir members are also not satisfied with the amount of time their children spend at choir as this impacts their schoolwork.

“Other people are married, and choir practices go until late at night. Sometimes this may cause trust issues. Others have transport issues and arrive home late. Parents also complain about the time spent at the choirs because they worry about school work.”

Participant Four’s themes perceive singing in a choir as a benefit to singers in that they feel a connection with God. They also feel that they are uplifted and united in fellowship with each other, and have a sense of belonging and community responsibility. In addition, the themes reflect that choristers develop self-confidence, motivation, effective breathing and fitness

through exercise, a disciplined and a healthy lifestyle, mental concentration and physical attention, and have a space for problem-solving and sharing, as well as emotional processing and stress relief. On the contrary, the themes also reflect challenges faced by the choir such as time constraints, affairs and gossip, financial challenges, discrimination against younger members, and leaving and missing the choir.

Summary

Chapter 4 discusses the main trends and patterns found in each of the four participants' accounts of their perceptions of how choral music and song expresses their identity and the psychological effects on their psychosocial well-being. All the themes are listed in Appendix C. The integrated meta-themes are discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The process of thematic analysis that was applied to the transcripts elicited key themes and sub-themes that were evident in the data. The understanding of all participants' perceptions were made possible by these themes. In the previous chapter, the results focused on the individual participants' perceptions of how choral music and song expresses their identity and the psychological effects there are on their psychosocial well-being. In this chapter, integrated key themes are discussed in comparison to one another and are linked to the relevant theoretical literature.

5.1 Theme 1: Physical contributions

THEME 1	
PHYSICAL CONTRIBUTIONS	
Participant One	Keeping fit enhances sustained breathing
Participant Three	Physical fitness
Participant Four	Breathing and fitness

Participant One, Two, and Three reflect the perception that there are physical contributions that come with singing in the choir. Such contributions are made possible by exercises like running. These exercises help to open up the choristers' chests, allowing them to learn **sustained breathing**. This is consistent with the findings of a study done by Paddock (2010), that being able to control breathing further allows the choristers to sing longer phrases, to produce sweet voices, and to obtain the required level of performance. Singers usually learn to sing using the diaphragm in order to produce good sound, sustain notes, and sing longer phrases. Being able to breathe in this way increases lung capacity, releases endorphins, and improves the immune response of the singer, thereby contributing to **physical fitness**.

Generally, singing in a choir helps choristers maintain a healthy lifestyle. Instead of worrying about missing the gym due to the time spent in the choir, these participants perceive the choir as an excellent opportunity for exercise. To Participant One, a choir instils the culture of running in choristers. This participant suggests that Black people do not usually run for fun and that running at a choir practice is a fun activity that enables singers to sing better in turn. Exercise increases oxytocin production and results in improved mood and well-being (Baker et al., 2012). Participant Three suggests that running and breathing exercises help to maintain a flat belly as it is unusual for choristers to have a big belly bulge.

5.2 Theme 2: Emotional contributions

THEME 2	
EMOTIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS	
Participant One	A world of happiness Healing Expression of emotions
Participant Two	Stress relief & emotional processing Expression of emotions
Participant Three	Self-esteem
Participant Four	Emotional processing & stress relief: a healing influence

Theme 2 reflects various emotional contributions that come as a result of singing in a choir. Composers of choral music **express their emotions** through the songs they write. These songs, in turn, elicit relevant emotions from the choristers who sing them. Therefore, in order for the relevant emotions to be expressed, it is the conductor's role to effectively interpret the song in such a way that the choristers will understand its meaning and the emotions attached to it. This crucial role of the conductor is emphasised by Participant One and Two. Participant Two further provides an example of how a song, when interpreted effectively, can express one's emotions. He uses a Setswana Gospel song, "*Modimo re boka wena*" (*God we praise you*), which is popular among choirs, to show that the manner in which the choir he was conducting sang this song at an event, was influenced by his way of interpreting it as a conductor. The participant's words that, "I don't know what this song did to me", reflect the impact the song had on him, as

well as the emotions he expressed while conducting the song, which earned him the position to stand in for the conductor. This is consistent with a study by Luck et al. (2014), that emotional engagement in music may enable people to experience various emotional nuances and to express degrees of intensity of emotions that may translate to their general emotional life. Participant One indicates that it is, however, not the responsibility of the conductor alone, but of the singers as well. When choristers work together with one another and with the conductor by following the conductor's cues during the performance, this contributes to the **emotional connectedness** among them, as well as to the ultimate enjoyment by both the choristers and the audience. Participant One further perceives singing in the choir, especially singing solo, as a process of circular causality between the choristers and the audience, which results in **a world of happiness**. Singing well on stage makes the audience happy, and the reaction of the audience to this feeling of happiness is cheering the choir and the soloist, and congratulating them on the performance. This, in turn, results in the choir and the soloist also experiencing feelings of happiness. This is in line with Clift et al. (2010) and Camic et al. (2012), who discovered that being part of the choir makes choristers feel happier and improves their mood.

Music plays a crucial role in distracting one from distressing aspects of one's life. Some of the participants in this study also reported that singing in the choir allows them an opportunity for **emotional processing and stress relief** during their times of hardships (Cariani, 2009; Kreutz et al., 2012; Rickard, 2014). Choristers come from different backgrounds with different problems including panic attacks, but singing creates unity among them and reduces their stress levels. Participant Two shared an experience to illustrate this. When life did not turn out according to his wishes while he was still in tertiary education, he lost hope and self-esteem, which left him suicidal. However, his participation in choral music, especially singing his favourite song calmed him down, reduced his stress levels, and gave him hope in life. Participant Four indicated that singing with passion while experiencing stress helps with the expression of emotions, which in turn results in stress relief.

Participant One and Four further report that both listening to music and singing with passion while experiencing stress has **healing** effects, especially during bereavement. When a chorister has lost a loved one, the choir visits the bereaved family to offer condolences and

support the fellow chorister through prayer and singing. Such experiences make the bereaved chorister and their family accept their challenges, make them feel relieved from stress, give them a sense of hope, and enhance healing. This is consistent with findings of a previous studies where choristers reported that choral music helped them cope with major life changes and recovery from illness (Baker et al., 2012; Clift et al., 2010; Clift & Hancox, 2012; Judd & Pooley, 2013).

The stage performance that comes with singing in a choir in front of many choral music lovers builds **self-esteem** in choral singers. Some of these performances have live TV coverage, and singers who have never appeared on TV before, get an opportunity to be seen on national television. Being recognised by strangers after the performance and on a day-to-day basis also gives them a sense of pride. In other studies conducted in Germany, Australia, and England, choristers reported that being part of a choir improved how they perceived themselves (Baker et al., 2012; Clift et al., 2010; Clift & Hancox, 2012; Judd & Pooley, 2013).

5.3 Theme 3: Cognitive contributions

THEME 3	
COGNITIVE CONTRIBUTIONS	
Participant One	A sense of pride, purpose, and responsibility Being socially responsible, not being idle
Participant Two	Change and self-acceptance Mental alertness and focus
Participant Three	Moral growth and development
Participant Four	Mental concentration combined with physical alertness Motivation and encouragement

Chapman and Garozzo (2016) found that singing moves singers out of their comfort zone and daily routines, and challenges them to achieve something. They further said that learning a song is a challenging and structured activity with a distinct start and an end product, which requires the ability to listen attentively and be disciplined. These findings are consistent with the participants' experiences in the current study. Participant One indicates that singing on stage to

big crowds encourages them to perform at their utmost best and leaves them with **a sense of pride, purpose, and responsibility** as they play an important role in setting and maintaining the standard of the choir and subsequently in the satisfaction of the audience. Participant Two indicated that by listening to well interpreted and performed songs, the audience also benefits from the message they receive from the songs and may have the courage to overcome barriers and stigmas defined by society, such as disclosing an HIV status. In addition to this, Participant One indicates that singing in the choir keeps the mind of the chorister focused on positive things in life rather than on life challenges. It enhances the chorister's abilities to persevere in the face of difficulties such as unemployment and illness. Choral music, therefore, has an important role to play in society, by addressing societal challenges as well as providing a platform for people to overcome barriers and stigmas defined by society. This process fosters **change and self-acceptance** in choristers.

The findings also suggest that singing in the choir enhances **mental concentration and physical alertness** as singing and exercise helps the mind to focus and attend to the task at hand. Participant Four believes different kinds of choral music songs require different cognitive responses. Folk songs are activity-based songs that require attention and concentration on the choreography, while formal songs, on the other hand, are more physically and mentally challenging, and therefore require a lot more attention and concentration. Findings of previous research have also revealed that choir singing does not only involve singing but also some form of choreography while singing, which requires concentration and coordination. Choir singing, therefore, challenges attention and concentration as the singers are required to sing from memory and combine rhythm with action (Paddock, 2010). This enhances singers' **mental alertness and focus**. Participant Two indicates that focusing on the task at hand while performing on stage also helps choristers deal effectively with stage fright and that this skill can also be translated into other important areas of life such as school, where one can apply the same technique to enhance performance in school subjects.

Participant Four considers choral singing to create an opportunity for **motivation and encouragement**, which is consistent with previous findings by Chapman and Garozzo (2016), that a successful end product motivates the singers further and boosts their self-esteem.

Participant Four indicates that after a stage performance, it is motivating to be complimented by the audience about good performance and beautiful singing. This kind of feedback from the audience is a source of motivation that inspires better singing.

Participant One and Three consider being part of the choir as an opportunity for **moral growth and development**, where choristers learn from older members of the choir. The choir is perceived as an environment where choristers learn to respect each other and to respect their relationships at home. It also keeps choristers busy and prevents them from possibly being involved in other socially unacceptable behaviour outside the choir, thereby teaching choristers to be **socially responsible, and not being idle**. In addition, choristers are able to plan and organise their daily routines to accommodate a healthy lifestyle, including healthy eating habits, exercise, and choir practice. Effectively organising their daily schedules helps choristers improve their voices and the quality of their stage performance. According to Baker et al. (2012), group singing helps to improve singers' executive functioning, as they are required to construct routine and structure in their lives.

5.4 Theme 4: Social contributions

THEME 4	
SOCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS	
Participant One	New relationships Belonging
Participant Two	Connecting people with different voices from different backgrounds
Participant Three	New relationships
Participant Four	Belonging and community New relationships

Previous findings indicate that singing in a choir creates an opportunity to make friends, find and give support, and express frustrations and emotions about life problems. Many songs that are sung in choirs cover these areas of life as well (Paddock, 2010). These are in line with the findings of the current study, where participants reveal that singing in the choir creates an opportunity to meet new people and build **new relationships**. A choir provides a conducive

atmosphere where a person can form good and trustworthy relationships with other choir members. Such relationships create a space for people to share their life challenges with others in the choir. Participant One expands further by indicating that the choir has the atmosphere of a family, which draws choir members to the choir even during times when circumstances call for them to quit. Participant Four perceives the choir not only as a space to build relationships within the choir, but also attributes some relationships outside the choir to have been inspired by the chorister's popularity in the **community** due to singing in the choir. Participant Four considers singing in the church and youth choir as making her feel at home and feel free to do anything she wants. In studies done in Finland, Sweden, and South Africa, singers also commented that belonging to a choir makes them feel confident, comfortable, accepted, and united. They feel free to make mistakes without being judged (Barrett, 2007; Durrant, 2005). The choir enhances a feeling of **belonging** that further enhances commitment to the choir and respect of the elderly choir members as well as the conductor. The feeling of belonging continues outside the choir, as members of the choir still feel connected with other choir members even if they are not part of the choir anymore. Participant One indicates that this atmosphere of a family and belonging draws choir members to the choir even during the times when circumstances call for them to quit.

Participant Two considers the choir to play an important role in **connecting people with different voices from different backgrounds** and perceives his role as a conductor to be important in this regard by connecting singers from different backgrounds who come to the choir each time with different emotions informed by their various circumstances. Chang, Cruwys, Dingle, Haslam, and Haslam (2016), found that singing together facilitates cooperation, shared perspectives, and joint intentions because of having to work together as a unit in order to produce a beautiful piece of music, which is made possible by breathing and rendering pitch and rhythm in a coordinated fashion. Participant Two further indicates that in order to achieve the level of a choir in its real sense, choristers need to sympathise with each other in order to be one and that the unity that is built within the choir is not aimed at achieving any monetary gain. This would make it possible for the choir to reach out to the community and make a difference in people's lives. It was previously found that there is also a sense of acceptance and belonging to a choir, and singers feel they are reconnected with local community due to increased social interaction

within the choir as well as within the community (Baker et al., 2012; Gick, 2011; Camic et al. 2012; Norton, 2015).

5.5 Theme 5: Spiritual contributions

THEME 5	
SPIRITUAL CONTRIBUTIONS	
Participant Two	Connection with God
Participant Three	Upliftment and inspiration
Participant Four	Connection with God Fellowship and upliftment

This theme reflects singing as an activity that is **uplifting and inspiring** for the choral singer. Participant Three indicates that when he is emotionally burdened by individual problems, singing makes him feel better emotionally and spiritually. Some of the choral songs, composed both locally and internationally, are inspired by the Bible and therefore carry important spiritual messages that have a potential of building the listener. Participant Four on the other hand, rather than perceiving singing as uplifting, perceives belonging to the choir, and the **fellowship** experienced, as uplifting as choir members are fun to be around and are supportive and encouraging. Chapman and Garozzo (2016), also see singing as a form of meditation which brings people closer to each other.

Participant Two and four identify the role that singing in the choir plays in making it possible for choristers to connect with God. Participant Two, in his position as a conductor, experiences such a process as being emotional and scary due to witnessing the **connection of choristers to God** as well as their transformation, while Participant Four considers it as a space to pray and read the Gospel as this is done every time before starting practice. This participant perceives this practice as a way of connecting with God even outside the choir due to the likelihood of continuing praying and reading the Bible at home. According to Joseph (2015), engagement with music in church settings opens avenues of communication not only between people but also between people and the divine.

5.6 Theme 6: Identity

THEME 6	
IDENTITY	
Participant One	Heritage
Participant Two	Cultural pride
Participant Three	Cultural diversity and Setswana identity expression
Participant Four	Setswana heritage

Consistent with McLeod (2008), who states that belonging to a group develops a person's pride and self-esteem and gives a sense of social identity, participants' findings reflect the important role that songs play in educating choristers about their **Setswana heritage**, as Setswana songs are powerful in differentiating between various Setswana tribes through the manner in which the songs have been written. This includes the words and rhythmic patterns used by the composers. The style of writing further serves to give a sense of identity and pride to Batswana of different tribes. According to Okigbo (2010), African choral music is characterised by idioms and folk stories that express African identity and focuses on celebrating and embracing African culture and tradition, educating African people about their origins, and the importance of preserving their identity through awareness of their culture and tradition. Further on, Participant Four reveals that traditional songs being sung at the choir increase her heritage knowledge and contribute to her interest in Setswana culture and traditional dance, while Participant One and Three reveal that the songs do not only teach about **Setswana identity expression** but also teach **cultural diversity** focusing on the heritage of their country in general as well as international culture. Singing songs from other cultures increases the singers' awareness of diversity and connects them to others' experiences of life (Chapman & Garozzo, 2016). This approach to music in South Africa positively contributes to nation building where students successfully manage to build friendships, strengthen networks, and tolerate diversity (Joseph, 2012).

5.7 Theme 7: Professionalism

THEME 7	
PROFESSIONALISM	
Participant One	Discipline
Participant Two	Social competence: performing in front of crowd
Participant Three	Discipline Self-confidence
Participant Four	Disciplined & healthy lifestyle Self-confidence & overcoming stage fright

According to Chapman and Garozzo (2016), learning a song is a challenging and structured activity with a distinct start and an end product which requires the ability to listen attentively and to be disciplined. Participants in this current study also revealed that singing in a choir teaches certain skills that amount to professionalism.

Participant One, three, and four revealed how choirs, through their committees, ensure **discipline** of choir members by establishing strict measures to enable regular choir practice attendance, proper singing, and generally, an honest commitment to the choir. In a study by Hallam (2010), students reported that active involvement in music helped them develop life skills such as discipline and concentration. Participant Four further reveals that the culture of exercise that the choir members learn at the choir translates even outside the life of a choir into their everyday life. Choristers learn to see the importance of maintaining a **healthy lifestyle** outside the choir by exercising regularly and maintaining a healthy diet. This kind of discipline helps the choir members to improve their singing and have good voices.

Participants also reveal that singing in the choir teaches choristers to perfect a skill through discipline (Hallam, 2010). Participant Two reveals that choral music teaches social **competence and performing in front of a crowd**. It teaches their minds to connect with their bodies, and to deal effectively deal with stage fright by focusing on the task at hand. The same participant also indicates that choristers have an opportunity to learn to breathe effectively and to learn to sing and perfect this skill even if they did not like singing before. Participant Three, on the other hand, reflects on how he struggled and was overcome with fear to acquire the desired

singing skill when he joined the choir. He, therefore, perceives the choir as a platform to develop **self-confidence** for perfecting the skill as there is also support and encouragement from the individual choristers who had already mastered the skill. Participant Four attributes **self-confidence and overcoming stage fright** to working or singing under a lot of pressure. With this, she refers to pressure from stage fright and high calibre audience as factors that facilitate her hard work and good preparation prior to the performance.

5.8 Theme 8: Challenges

THEME 8	
CHALLENGES	
Participant One	So much time, what's in it for me? Unforeseen circumstances & socio-economic conditions
Participant Two	So much time, what's in it for me?
Participant Three	Poor leadership & leaving the choir Missing the choir
Participant Four	Choir singing is time-consuming Affairs & gossip Discrimination against younger members Socio-economic conditions

Singing involves additional costs and can be time-consuming ("Cite a Website - Cite this for me", 2017). This is consistent with the current study as Participant One reveals that choir singing can be so time-consuming that it can affect one's performance on other important areas of life such as schoolwork to the extent of wondering, **"so, much time, what's in it for me?"** Lack of balance between schoolwork and singing may result in low performance at school, which may further result in one needing to take a break from singing so as to pay more attention to school work. In line with Participant One, Participant Two also highlights a challenge that is faced by choristers and conductors as they invest in perfecting a skill with no monetary gain. Not having heard of anyone who is financially successful due to a career in choral music makes them think twice and weigh their options between singing for the love of music and putting music aside in order to focus on building a career that has financial rewards. Participant Four also has

concerns about how **time-consuming** singing in the choir is due to the length of time spent in a choir. The participant perceives this as a challenge to choir members as many of them are married and the amount of time spent in the choir creates trust issues with their spouses. She also reflects concerns regarding the challenge faced by parents of younger choir members who are not satisfied with the amount of time their children spend in the choir as this impacts on their schoolwork.

Participant One reflects that sometimes **unforeseen circumstances** become a challenge, especially at the time when one is just on the verge of achieving a dream. The participant is also concerned about **socio-economic conditions** that come with feelings of hopelessness that can be brought about by these conditions. She also reveals how, despite these conditions, she could not quit the choir because of her love for choral music. Participant Four also indicates that the passing on of a breadwinner may negatively affect the commitment of a choir member to the choir, and says that when her mother passed on, she felt she was left with no other choice but to terminate her membership to the choir so as not to become a burden to other members of the choir who financially supported her toward choir events that required financial commitment. In addition to Participant One, Participant Three is of the opinion that unforeseen circumstances like illnesses can prevent the intention of the chorister to rejoin the choir after a break even when they may **miss the choir** and feel the need to come back to the choir to contribute in the success of the choir.

Participant Three indicates that there is often **poor leadership** within the choirs, and how the conductors and choir committees struggle to maintain effective leadership for the progress of the choir. He reveals that poor leadership by conductors and committees is a reason why people, especially men, **leave choirs** or do not join choirs.

5.8.1 Age differences, love affairs, and gossip

Participant Four reveals that being in a choir where there is a mixture of old and young people is a challenge as older members of the choir **discriminate against younger members** by shouting at them and not taking their suggestions seriously. She is also concerned with the

decline in the interest in choral music in her community. Participant Four suggests that in her community due to the culture of **gossip and affairs** that prevails within choirs. Her concern is that other people affiliate with choirs for their own selfish reasons as opposed to a commitment to sing and being supportive of other members.

Summary

In this chapter, the various key themes of the individual participants' perceptions of how choral music and song expresses their identity and what psychological effects there are on their psychosocial well-being are discussed. These key themes are integrated and discussed in comparison to one another and linked to the relevant theoretical literature.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

In this concluding chapter, a summary of the findings and how they relate to the literature in Chapter 2 is provided. In addition, a discussion of limitations of the study as well as its recommendations for future research are provided

6.1. Review of the rationale, aim, and methodology of the study

Many studies have been done in Africa and have shown that choral music contributes to the African cultural integrity and identity of people. The studies, however, are limited research in showing the psychological effects of choral music. Studies that have shown the psychological effects of choral music have been done in the West and may have applicability to Africa. Quite a number of people affiliate with choral choirs irrespective of their socio-economic conditions and the time and commitment demands associated with being part of the choir. It was, therefore, the purpose of this study to investigate how choral music and song express Setswana-speakers' identity and what psychological effects there are on their psychosocial well-being including the physical, mental, social, and spiritual dimensions.

The study employed a qualitative research design which aimed to render an in-depth understanding of the research question. A non-random purposive sample method was used to recruit four participants, comprising of two young adult Black male choristers, and two female choristers, all four participants having had the experience of singing in church choirs. Two of the participants also have experience in conducting choirs. Semi-structured interviews were used to elicit and gain information from the participants. Following the interviews, thematic analysis was used to analyse the data in relation to the research question.

6.2. Findings

The findings reveal that choral music and song express Setswana-speakers' identity and that there are psychological benefits on their psychosocial well-being including the physical, emotional, mental, social, and spiritual dimensions.

With regards to physical contributions, participants perceive singing in a choir as an excellent opportunity for exercise and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Exercises like running help open up the choristers' chests, thereby improving physical fitness and allowing them to learn to control their breath and develop sustained breathing. This is consistent with the findings of a study done by Paddock (2010), that being able to control breathing further allows the choristers to sing longer phrases, to produce sweet voices, and to acquire the required level of performance. Singers usually learn to sing using the diaphragm in order to produce good sound, sustain notes, and sing longer phrases. Exercise also increases oxytocin and results in improved mood and well-being (Baker, Ballantyne, Brander & Dingle, 2012).

The findings also show that there are emotional contributions to singing to choir singing. Choral composers write songs to express their emotions, and when choir conductors interpret their songs effectively, choristers also identify with what the songs say, allowing them to express the intensity of emotions they would not otherwise express under normal circumstances (Luck et al., 2014). There is also emotional connectedness between choristers and the conductor when the choristers work together with one another and with the conductor by following the conductor's cues during the performance. This contributes to the ultimate enjoyment of both the choristers and the audience. There is some circular causality between choristers on stage and the audience when the choir sings well, and the audience reacts by cheering the choir. This results in both the choristers and the audience experiencing happiness and improvement in their mood, which translates into the day-to-day life (Clift et al., 2010; Clift, Camic, Livesey, & Morrison, 2012).

Singing with passion in the choir allows choristers space for emotional processing (Cariani, 2009; Kreutz et al., 2012; Rickard, 2014). Singing distracts them from distressful circumstances of life, calms them down, reduces stress, and gives hope for the future. Listening

to music and singing with passion while experiencing stress has healing effects, especially during bereavement. When a chorister has lost a loved one, the choir visits the bereaved family to offer condolences and support the fellow chorister through prayer and singing. Such experiences make the bereaved chorister and their family accept their challenges, make them feel relieved from stress, give them a sense of hope, and also enhance healing (Clift et al., 2010; Clift & Hancox, 2012; Baker et al., 2012; Judd & Pooley, 2013). Singing on stage in front of big audiences, especially when there is live TV coverage, increases choristers' self-esteem and gives them a sense of pride (Clift et al., 2010; Clift & Hancox, 2012; Baker et al., 2012; Judd & Pooley, 2013).

With regards to cognitive contributions, singing on stage to big crowds, encourages choristers to perform at their utmost best and gives them a sense of pride, purpose, and responsibility in setting and maintaining the standard of the choir (Chapman & Garozzo, 2016), and subsequently in the satisfaction of the audience. It also keeps the mind of the chorister focused on more positive things in life rather than on life challenges, and enhances their abilities to persevere in the face of difficulties. Singing in the choir, therefore, is a process that fosters change and self-acceptance in choristers, and it provides a platform for them to overcome barriers and stigmas defined by society, such as unemployment and illness. The findings also reveal that singing in the choir enhances mental alertness and focus as singing and exercise help the mind to focus and to attend to the task at hand. Activity-based songs like folk songs require mental alertness and focus on the choreography, while formal songs, on the other hand, are more physically and mentally challenging and therefore require a lot more mental alertness and focus (Paddock, 2010). This, therefore, improves choristers' mental concentration and physical alertness. When choristers start to learn difficult songs from scratch and see a successful end product, this motivates and encourages them, and further boosts their self-esteem. The complimentary feedback that they receive from the audience is also a source of motivation that inspires them (Chapman & Garozzo, 2016).

Choir singing is perceived as an opportunity for moral growth and development where choristers learn from older members of the choir. It is a space where choristers learn to respect each other and to respect their relationships at home. It also keeps choristers busy and prevents

them from possibly being involved in other socially unacceptable behaviour outside the choir, thereby teaching choristers to be socially responsible, and not being idle. In addition, choristers are able to plan and organise their daily routines to accommodate a healthy lifestyle, including healthy eating habits, exercise, and choir practice. Effectively organising their daily schedules helps choristers improve their voices and the quality of their stage performance. According to Baker et al. (2012), group singing helps to improve singers' executive functioning as they are required to construct routine and structure in their lives.

Findings also revealed social contributions. Singing in a choir creates an opportunity to meet new people and build new relationships which allow them to share frustrations about life challenges (Paddock, 2010). It is a conducive atmosphere where choristers form good and trustworthy relationships with other choir members, an atmosphere that draws choir members to the choir even during the times when circumstances call for them to quit. Not only does choir singing contribute to building relationships within the choir, but also contributes to further relationships which are built beyond the choir, in the community, due to the chorister's popularity in the community. The choir enhances a feeling of belonging which further enhances commitment to the choir. Choristers feel confident, comfortable, accepted, and free to make mistakes without being judged (Barrett, 2007; Durrant, 2005).

Choir singing plays an important role in connecting people with different voices from different backgrounds. The role as a conductor is seen to be important in this regard by connecting singers from different backgrounds who come to the choir each time with different emotions informed by their various circumstances. Chang et al. (2016), found that singing together facilitates cooperation, shared perspectives, and joint intentions because of having to work together as a unit in order to produce a beautiful piece of music, which is made possible by breathing and rendering pitch and rhythm in a coordinated fashion. Choir singing, therefore, teaches choristers to work together for a common cause. The unity that is built within the choir is also not aimed at achieving any monetary gain, but rather makes it possible for the choir to reach out into the community to make a difference in people's lives. This increased social interaction helps them connect with the local community (Baker et al., 2012; Camic et al., 2012; Gick, 2011; Norton, 2015).

Singing also has spiritual contributions. Choristers indicated that singing in the choir makes them experience **fellowship** with one another as singing brings them closer to each other. This belonging to the choir and the fellowship experienced is perceived as uplifting as choir members are fun to be around and are supportive and encouraging. Chapman and Garozzo (2016), also see singing as a form of meditation, which brings people closer to each other. Singing is also **uplifting and inspiring**. It makes choristers feel better emotionally and spiritually when they are experiencing low moods. They attribute this to songs that are inspired by messages from the Bible that have the potential of building the singer and the listener (Chapman & Garozzo, 2016). The choir is also perceived as a space to **connect with God** due to the emotional state the singers find themselves at in relation to God. Choirs have the culture of praying and reading the Gospel before starting practice. This culture is perceived to translate outside the choir due to the likelihood of continuing praying and reading the Bible at home.

Over and above these contributions, choir singing also contributes to identity formation as well as to professionalism. Findings reflect that choral songs educate choristers about their Setswana heritage as Setswana songs are powerful in differentiating between various Setswana tribes through the words and rhythmic patterns used by the composers. The style of writing further serves to give a sense of identity and pride to Batswana of different tribes (Chapman & Garozzo, 2016; Okigbo, 2010). Traditional dance and songs sung in the choir increase heritage knowledge and contribute to Setswana identity expression and cultural diversity between various Setswana tribes as well as between other cultures nationally and internationally through the manner in which the songs have been written. Singing songs from other cultures increases the singers' awareness of diversity and connects them to others' experiences of life (Chapman & Garozzo, 2016). This approach to music in South Africa positively contributes to nation building where students successfully manage to build friendships, strengthen networks, and tolerate diversity (Joseph, 2012).

With regards to professionalism, singing in a choir affords choristers an opportunity to learn the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle outside the choir by exercising regularly and maintaining a healthy diet to improve their singing and have good voices (Chapman & Garozzo, 2016). Through existing committees and their strict measure, choristers learn discipline

and to commit to regular choir practice attendance and proper singing. This culture also translates outside the life of a choir into their everyday life. In a study by Hallam (2010), students reported that active involvement in music helped them develop life skills such as discipline and concentration. Choral music teaches social competence and the ability to perform in front of a crowd. It teaches the minds of choristers to connect with their bodies and to deal effectively with stage fright by focusing on the task at hand. Through support and encouragement of other members of the choir, choristers develop self-confidence and learn to master the skill required for good singing. Self-confidence also contributes to a singer's ability to overcome stage fright.

The study also revealed challenges that are faced by choristers. Singing in a choir may involve additional costs and can be so time-consuming that it can affect one's performance in other important areas of life. ("Cite a Website - Cite this for me", 2017). This is a challenge for choir members as many of them are married and the amount of time spent at choir creates trust issues with their spouses. Other challenges include unforeseen circumstances, socio-economic conditions, poor leadership, discrimination against younger members, affairs, and gossip. Such challenges are seen to be contributing to many singers leaving the choir and later missing it with the wish of coming back to contribute to the success of the choir.

6.3. Limitations and recommendations for future research

Although the participants in this study have many years' experience of singing in the choirs, three of these participants were on a break from singing during the time of the interviews. This may have influenced their views, and this may also account for challenges such as time constraints highlighted in the study. All the participants interviewed in this study knew the researcher personally, and this may have consequently also influenced their views, knowing the researcher's previous involvement in choral music. Furthermore, the perceptions of the participants in this study do not necessarily represent the views of all the choral singers currently involved with choirs as the study only focused on the perceptions of four Setswana-speaking participants. It may, therefore, be recommended that future studies involve investigating how

choral music and song express South African choral singers' identity irrespective of their cultural background, and what psychological effects there are on their psychosocial well-being.

Summary

In this chapter, a summary of the findings of the study and how they relate to the literature in Chapter 2 was provided. The findings revealed that choral music and song express Setswana-speaker's identity and that there are psychological effects on the singers' psychosocial well-being, including their physical, emotional, mental, social, and spiritual dimensions. In addition, a discussion of limitations of the study as well as its recommendations for future research were also provided.

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APPENDIX A:

Information letter to participant

Dear Potential Participant,

I am currently completing a research study in part fulfilment of my Master's Degree in Clinical Psychology at the University of South Africa (UNISA).

The research which I am conducting aims to explore the expression of Setswana-speakers' identity as well as the psychological effects on the psychosocial well-being of the choristers.

All participants in this study will remain anonymous and no personal or identifiable information will be divulged to a third party except my supervisor who will be tracking the progress of my work. In order to collect information, you will be required to take part in an in-depth interview lasting for 30 to 60 minutes. This interview will be recorded. To ensure confidentiality, the voice recordings will be kept in a secure place and transcriptions will be labelled using pseudonyms. The time for interviews will be discussed with you for your convenience. During the interview, you have the right not to answer any question which makes you feel uncomfortable. You also have the right to withdraw from the study at any stage during the research process, without any negative consequences.

No information that risks your personal identity will be included in the final research report. Participation in this is completely voluntary and therefore you are not forced to participate in this study in any way. You may raise any questions, concerns, or queries with the researcher at any stage before, during, or after the interviews. Should you still want to continue with the research, kindly fill in the informed consent form attached.

Kind Regards,

Lobone Raditladi (Researcher)

Mr DJ Kruger (Supervisor)

Chair of Department of Psychology Ethics Committee

APPENDIX B:

Informed consent

Dear Participant, please read the following carefully:

I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by Lobone Arthur Raditladi from the University of South Africa. I understand that the study is designed to gather information about the expression of Setswana-speakers' identity as well as the psychological effects on the psychosocial well-being of the choristers.

1. My participation in this project is voluntary. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.
2. I understand that if I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.
3. Participation involves taking part in an in-depth interview of 30 to 60 minutes. I understand that the interview will be recorded with a voice recording device and that the transcriptions will be labelled using pseudonyms to protect my identity and privacy.
4. I understand that the researcher will not identify me by name in any reports using information obtained from this interview, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure.
5. I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction.

Your signature below indicates that you understand and consent to the above conditions.

Kind Regards,

Lobone Raditladi (Researcher)

Signature of Participant: _____

Name of Participant: _____ Date: _____

Mr DJ Kruger (Supervisor)

Chair of Department of Psychology Ethics Committee

APPENDIX C: CODING AND ANALYSIS

Level 1 coding

Challenges.....	1, 31
Cognitive effects.....	passim
Emotional effects.....	passim
Emotional Effects.....	6
Identity.....	3, 15, 26, 39
New relationships.....	5, 16, 33
Physical benefits.....	5
Physical effects.....	18, 21, 41
Professionalism.....	passim
Relationships.....	passim
Spirituality.....	11, 23, 35, 37
Time.....	1, 10, 45

Level 2 coding

Affairs	45
Age differences	44
Attention & Concentration	14, 39
Cohesion	13, 18
Connection with God	11, 37
Courage	9
Cultural diversity	26
Discipline	41, 42
Empathy	14
Evangelization	23, 37
Fellowship	11, 35
Finances	44
Gossip	45
Happiness	4
Judgement	6, 23
Long rehearsals	45
Poor leadership	29, 44
Pride	15
Self-esteem	21
Skill perfection	19, 21, 33, 39
Stress relief	13, 14, 42
Trust	38

THEMES

Physical effects	Identity	Emotional effects	Cognitive effects	Professionalism	Social benefits	Spiritual effects	Challenges
Keeping fit/breathe control- P1, P3, P4	Cultural Pride-P2	Empathy-P2	Courage/Responsibility-P1, P2	Discipline-P1,P4	Cohesion-P2	Connection with God-P2, P4	Time-P1,P2
	Cultural diversity-P1	Happiness-P1	Att & Conc-P2, P4	Skill perfection-P2, P3,P4	Trust	Evangelization-P3	Affairs-P4
	Heritage-P1, P4	Self-esteem-P3	Judgement-P1, P3		New rel-P1, P2, P3	Fellowship-P2	Age differences-P4
		Stress relief-P1, P2	Perseverance-P1		Belonging-P1, P4		Socio-eco-P4
		Upliftment-P3, P4	Motivation-P4		Trust-P4		Gossip-P4
		Expression of emotions-P1, P2					Poor leadership-P3
		Healing-P1,P2, P4					Unfo-circum-P1,P3
Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4				
TIME	EXPRESSION OF EMOTIONS	FITNESS/BREATHING	BELONGING				
UNFORSEEN CIRCUMSTANCES	COURAGE	SELF-ESTEEM/PRIDE	FELLOWSHIP/UPLIFT				
EXPRESSION OF EMOTIONS	TIME						
HERITAGE	CONNECTION WITH GOD	JUDGEMENT	CONNECTION WITH GOD				
HEALING	FELLOWSHIP	UPLIFTMENT/EVANGELIZ					
HAPPINESS	HEALING		TRUST				

COURAGE/ RESPONSIBILITY	COHESION	CULTURAL DIVERSITY	HERITAGE				
KEEPING FIT/BREATH CONTROL	STRESS RELIEF	POOR LEADERSHIP	PRESSURE/ SKILL PERFECTION				
PERSEVERANCE	EMPATHY	UNFORESEEN CIRCUMSTANCES	MOTIVATION/ENC				
NEW RELATIONSHIPS	ATT & CONC	NEW RELATIONSHIPS	ATT & CONC				
REL/BELONGING	CULTURAL PRIDE	SUPPORT/EN COURAGE/SKILL PERFECTION	BREATH CONTROL				
DISCIPLINE	NEW RELATIONSHIPS		DISCIPLINE				
JUDGEMENT	BREATHING/ STRESS RELIEF		HEALING/ STRESS REL				
	SKILL PERFECTION						
			AGE DIFFERENCES				
			SOCIO-ECO				
			AFFAIRS/G OSSIP				
			TIME				