

# Singing in the pandemic: A small-scale study on musical experiences of university choristers in Hong Kong and the United Kingdom during the COVID-19 pandemic

Kari Ding

Music, The University of Edinburgh, UK

karikudcf@gmail.com

**Disciplinary background A.** In the discipline of singing physiology, mask-wearing, a commonly adapted practice in choirs during the COVID-19 pandemic, not only adds burden to breathing but also negatively affects resonance and articulation.

**Disciplinary background B.** In the field of musical psychology, singing as a choral group enhances both physical and emotional sense of belonging of singers.

## Abstract

The aim of the study is to identify any possible impacts of mask-wearing on the experience of singing in a choir.

From a scientific perspective, it is known that mask-wearing negatively impacts choristers by affecting their breathing, resonance and articulation. However, there are very limited studies asking if choristers really think so. It is also uncertain whether, if choristers feel the difficulties brought by mask-wearing, these difficulties will affect other aspects of their musical experience. To investigate this issue, a questionnaire was distributed to choristers singing in University choirs in both Hong Kong and the United Kingdom. They are invited to comment on their musical experience of singing with and without masks by giving number scores of a scale of 5. The collected data are processed in order to identify any statistical significance.

It is found that the concerned choristers' musical experiences was not significantly affected by mask-wearing. Despite the small sample size and the imbalance ratios regarding sex and nationality, it seems that sex and nationality do not significantly contribute to choristers' opinion on singing with masks. However, statistics hint that the the doubt of mask-wearing's anti-pandemic effect may be related to the physical challenges brought by mask-wearing.

Despite the findings mentioned above, it is realized that the sample size of the present study is small, and the gender and nationality of the participants are imbalanced. This implies that the statistical findings may be obtained by chance or be influenced by extreme data. Nevertheless, the present study should serve as an insight for future studies to explore more about the phenomenon of singing with masks.

**Interdisciplinary implications.** This study should have demonstrated how public health issues, which affect people's daily lives, can be correlated to music making which can be a routine for some people. Although the study is small-scale and quantitative, it effectively identifies various factors that can possibly impact choristers' musical experience under the current difficult situation of COVID-19 pandemic. Future studies can evaluate this attempt of a small-scale quantitative study so that they can better design the methodology to better investigate the correlation between public health factors and musical experience.

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