

Evolution Of Stage Fright In Musicians: A Comparative Analysis Between Traditional And Alternative Therapies

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Abstract

A systematic analysis of the production and dissemination of studies related to stage fright in musicians, as well as traditional and alternative therapies, was carried out using the PRISMA method (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses). The goal of the study was to recognize the most outstanding characteristics of the publications registered in the Scopus and WoS databases, and to assess their impact on the research of The Suggested Variables. In Summary, 49 Publications Were Recognized. After An Improvement Of The Results Through Keywords On Both Platforms, The Results Were Refined On Both Platforms (Stage Fear, Musicians, Traditional Therapies, Alternative Therapies), 13 Documents Were Chosen, Discarding Duplicates And Those That Did Not Meet The Inclusion Requirements. The Chosen Research Was Analyzed With The Aim Of Understanding The Main Characteristics Of Studies On Stage Fright In musicians and its influence on the scientific community, contrasting the results achieved through conventional and alternative therapies. The research focused on studies published between 2018 and 2023, highlighting that the works in Scopus covered different fields of study, such as clinical psychology and medicine, while those found in WoS demonstrated greater relevance to the particular purpose of the study.

Keywords: Stage Fright, Musicians, Traditional Therapies, Alternative Therapies.

1. Introduction

Stage fright in musicians is a frequent and widely analyzed phenomenon in the field of music psychology and performance. It is distinguished by a strong anxiety that musicians feel before or during a live performance, which can have a significant impact on their performance (LARGO, 2012). It is a psychological reaction to the demand to perform in front of an audience, and can be expressed in physical symptoms (such as tremors, sweating, or nausea) and mental symptoms (such as negative thoughts, insecurity, or fear).

From a psychological point of view, stage fright could be interpreted as a manifestation of social anxiety, in which the musician is afraid of being criticized or not meeting expectations (Guardeño, 2019). Despite being a natural reaction to stress, its intensity fluctuates, and certain musicians are able to manage it more effectively than others. In severe situations, it can lead to avoiding public performances or even impact the career of a professional musician.

One of the distinguishing features of stage fright in musicians is that it is not always linked to skill or experience. Musicians with high training or years of experience may also suffer from stage fright for fear, which highlights the complexity of this condition.

Regarding its treatment, several methods have been used, including conventional therapies and alternative options. For example, Cognitive Behavioral Therapies (CBT) may be the most widely used treatment with the most empirical evidence in the management of stage fright. This therapy focuses on modifying negative and distorted thoughts that cause anxiety, as well as altering behaviors that intensify the fear response (Fullana, Fernandez, Bulbena, & Toro, 2012). Prominent strategies in CBT include:

- **Cognitive restructuring:** The therapist collaborates with the musician to detect negative or altered automatic thoughts, such as "I will be wrong" or "everyone will perceive my faults," and replaces them with more realistic and balanced ideas.
- **Gradual exposure:** This involves gradually exposing the musician to situations that cause fear (such as playing in front of a small group, then in front of a larger audience), which makes it easier for them to desensitize themselves to the anxiety-provoking stimulus.
- **Training in coping techniques:** Methods to manage instant anxiety, such as gradual muscle relaxation or diaphragmatic breathing, are instructed, which helps to reduce the physical reaction to stress.

In alternative methods to reduce stage fright in musicians, various techniques have become relevant, such as mindfulness, yoga, meditation, acupuncture and body therapies, among others. Mindfulness involves offering a holistic perspective on anxiety management and mindfulness (Querstret, Morison, Dickinson, Cropley, & John, 2020). This approach, which focuses on concentration and acceptance of thoughts and emotions without judging them, has proven to be a powerful tool for reducing anxiety. Artists who practice mindfulness learn to embrace the symptoms of stage fright, such as nervousness or palpitations, without allowing those symptoms to control them. This decreases the emotional response to the tension of appearing in public. Musicians exercise focusing on the breath or sounds in their environment, allowing anxious thoughts to come and go without catching them. The above is just a sample of the therapies, both traditional and alternative, that musicians can apply to reduce stage fright in their performances, or at least to avoid being physically and emotionally impacted in the presence of an audience, so, understand the contribution of the scientific community in the analysis of these treatments and their consequences in the lives of music experts, is relevant and relevant in protecting their physical and mental health.

2. General objective

To examine, from a bibliographic and bibliometric approach, the generation of studies on the variables Stage Fright, Musicians, Traditional Therapies and Alternative Therapies, disseminated in highly relevant journals indexed in the Scopus and Wos database during the period 2018-2031.

3. Methodology

This research is qualitative in nature, according to Hernández, et al., (2015), qualitative approaches refer to studies that carry out the process of collecting data to examine and Interpret The Findings Obtained In Such Research. To Do This, She Carried Out The Search For Information In The Scopus And Wos Databases Using The Keywords Stage Fear, Musicians, Traditional Therapies, Alternative Therapies.

3.1 Research design

The structure of this research was based on a Systematic Review, which follows a set of guidelines to examine the data obtained, which are organized in a process that begins with coding and ends with the representation of theories (Strauss & Corbin, 2016). In addition, the text adopts a descriptive narrative perspective, as it aspires to investigate the influence of the levels of the variable; and it is systematic since, after examining the academic content of scientific publications, theories related to knowledge management were examined and interpreted (Hernández, Baptista, & Fernández, 2015).

The findings of this search, as illustrated in Figure 1, were processed using the PRISMA method to determine the material for documentary analysis. It was estimated that the publications covered from 2017 to 2021, regardless of the country of origin, field of study or type of publication, covering journal articles, reviews, book chapters, books and others.

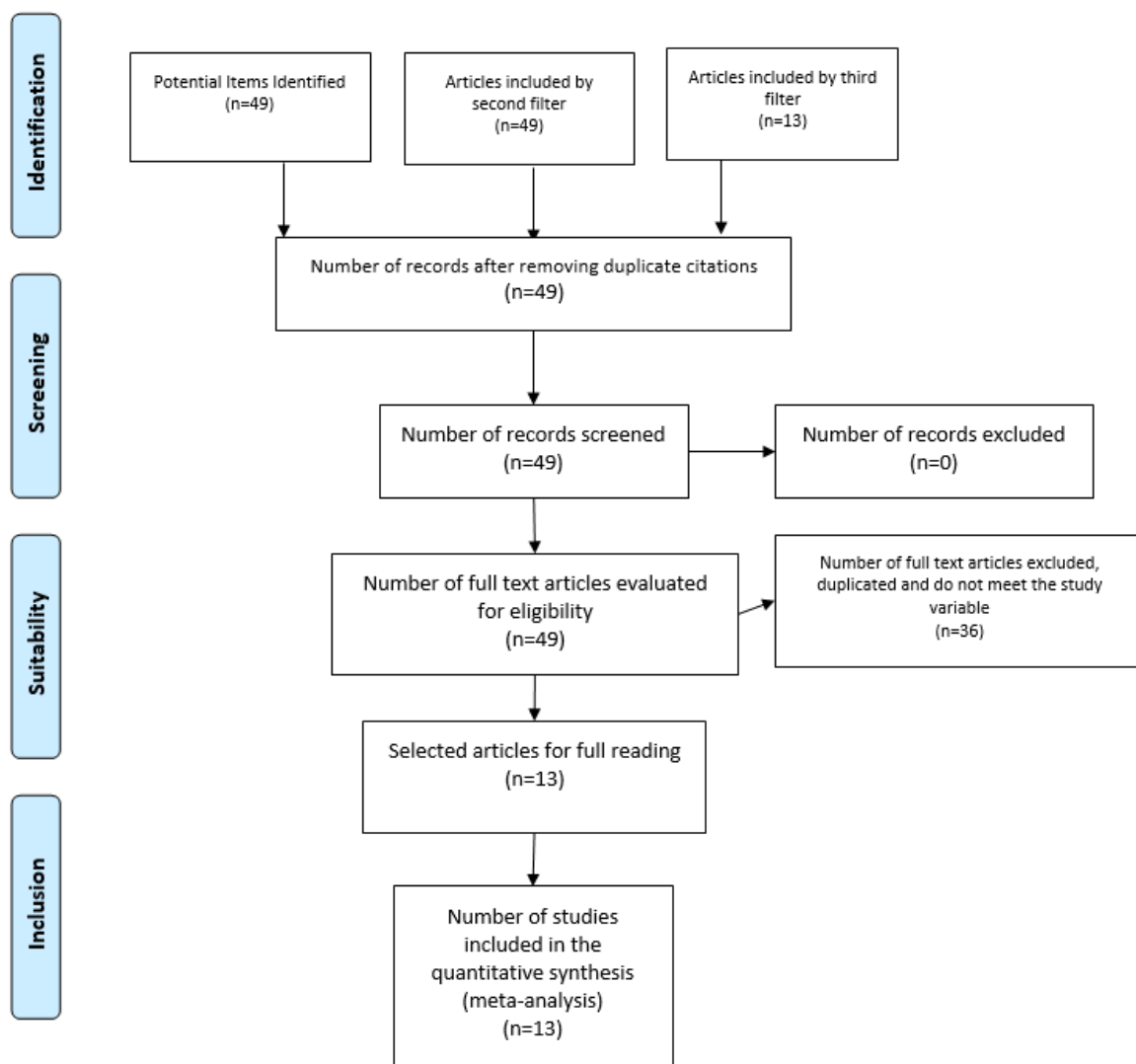


Figure 1. Diagram of the systematic review process carried out using the PRISMA method. (Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff, Altman, & Group, 2009)

Source: Authors; Based on the proposal of the Prisma Group (Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff, Altman, & Group, 2009)

4. Results

Table 1 presents the findings after applying the search filters associated with the methodology suggested for this study, after determining the relevance of each of the works cited.

No.	RESEARCH TITLE	AUTHOR/YEAR	COUNTRY	TYPE OF STUDY	INDEXING
1	Empathy Pathways: A View from Music Therapy	Santos, A.D. (2022)	SOUTH AFRICA	QUALITATIVE	SCOPUS
2	Music in the human experience: An introduction to music psychology	Hodges, D. A. (2019).	UNITED STATES	QUALITATIVE	SCOPUS
3	Psychology for Musicians: Understanding and Acquiring the Skills, Second Edition	Lehmann, A. C., Sloboda, J. A., & Woody, R. H. (2007)	UNITED STATES	QUALITATIVE	SCOPUS
4	Anxiety in musicians: On and off stage	Nicholson, D. R., Cody, M. W., & Beck, J. G. (2015).	UNITED STATES	QUALITATIVE	WOS
5	Apollo's curse: neurological causes of motor impairments in musicians	Altenmüller, E., Ioannou, C. I., & Lee, A. (2015).	GERMANY	QUANTITATIVE	WOS
6	Music performance anxiety: a critical review of etiological aspects, perceived causes, coping strategies and treatment	Burin, A. B., & Osório, F. L. (2017).	BRAZIL	QUALITATIVE	WOS

7	How can I keep from singing? The effects of COVID-19 on the emotional wellbeing of community singers during early stage lockdown in the United States	Youngblood, F. K., Bosse, J., & Whitley, C. T. (2021).	GRACIA, SPAIN	QUALITATIVE	WOS
8	Music performance anxiety and its relationship with social phobia and dimensions of perfectionism	Dobos, B., Piko, B. F., & Kenny, D. T. (2019).	HUNGARY	QUANTITATIVE/QUALITATIVE	WOS
9	DEVELOPMENT OF PERSONAL SKILLS ORIENTED TO IMPROVING SAXOPHONISTIC INTERPRETATION IN PUBLIC: REVIEW OF DIFFERENT SOURCES	Valor, RL (2022)	SPAIN	QUALITATIVE	WOS
10	Development of a Performance Anxiety Scale for Music Students	Barros, S; França, A; Marinho, H; Pereira, A (2024)	PORTUGAL, BRAZIL.	QUALITATIVE	WOS
11	Simulating and stimulating performance: introducing distributed simulation to enhance musical learning and performance	Williamon, A., Aufegger, L., & Eiholzer, H. (2014)	UNITED KINGDOM, SWITZERLAND	QUALITATIVE	WOS

12	The desire to learn music: a psychoanalytic approach	Cunha, M. D. M. (2021).	BRAZIL	QUALITATIVE	WOS
13	How can I keep from singing? The effects of COVID-19 on the emotional wellbeing of community singers during early stage lockdown in the United States	Youngblood, F. K., Bosse, J., & Whitley, C. T. (2021).	UNITED STATES	QUALITATIVE	WOS

Table 1. List of articles analyzed
Source: Own elaboration

The body of research examined includes different aspects of music psychology and the challenges faced by musicians in terms of anxiety, empathy and performance, using both a qualitative and quantitative perspective. Santos (2022) and Hodges (2019) provide qualitative approaches to empathy in music therapy and the impact of music on human experience, respectively, while Lehmann, Sloboda, and Woody (2007) investigate the advancement of psychological competencies in musicians. Stage anxiety is a major issue, treated from various perspectives: Nicholson, Cody, and Beck (2015) analyze anxiety both inside and outside the context, while Burin and Osório (2017) offer a critical analysis of etiological factors, perceived causes, and situational management tactics. Similarly, Dobos, Piko, and Kenny (2019) study the connection between scenario anxiety, social phobia, and perfectionism. Research such as that carried out by Altenmüller, Ioannou, and Lee (2015) provides a quantitative perspective on the neurological reasons for motor disabilities in musicians, while Barros, França, Marinho, and Pereira (2024) create a particular scale to assess anxiety in music students. In contrast, more recent studies such as those conducted by Youngblood, Bosse, and Whitley (2021) highlight the emotional effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on singers in the community. Improving performance skills is also a crucial issue, as evidenced by the Valor (2022) study on improving saxophone performance, in addition to the innovative approach of Williamon, Aufegger, and Eiholzer (2014), who implement distributed simulation to boost music learning. In summary, this research provides a multidimensional view of the challenges and progress in music psychology, placing special emphasis on anxiety and skill development, both from a therapeutic and educational approach.

It is relevant to highlight the contribution that these studies provide to the implementation of various therapies for the management of stage fright. Various research provides solid support for cognitive and behavioral therapies, one of the main conventional treatment strategies for

stage fright. For example, Nicholson, Cody, and Beck (2015), together with Burin and Osório (2017), discuss anxiety management in musicians, which could lead to clinical interventions based on cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). This research examines how musicians experience anxiety both on stage and off, offering crucial data about negative automatic thoughts and the relevance of progressive exposure to stressful situations, essential components of CBT. The study by Dobos, Piko, and Kenny (2019), which links stage anxiety to social phobia and perfectionism, also has significance for conventional therapies. This analysis underscores the relevance of recognizing musicians' distorted thoughts and inflexible convictions, allowing therapists to use methods such as cognitive restructuring to change negative thought patterns. Additionally, the anxiety scale formulated by Barros et al. (2024) is an effective instrument for the initial assessment and monitoring of anxiety in musicians, optimizing the accuracy of treatments. In contrast, Altenmüller, Ioannou, and Lee (2015) study the neurological reasons for motor difficulties in musicians, which could facilitate the implementation of pharmacological therapies or combined with methods such as gradual exposure to mitigate severe physical symptoms of stage fright. Neurophysiological research allows access to more individualized medical therapies. In these studies, alternative therapies also have significant support, particularly in methods such as mindfulness, meditation, and other mindfulness-based practices. Santos' (2022) study, which focuses on empathy through music therapy, is especially beneficial for the creation of alternative therapies focused on bonding and emotional control through music. Mindfulness, which has proven effective in reducing anxiety and enhancing concentration in the present, is in line with this type of therapeutic strategy. Likewise, the research by Youngblood, Bosse, and Whitley (2021) on the emotional effect of confinement on singers highlights the importance of therapeutic alternatives, techniques such as yoga or conscious breathing, with the aim of reducing the impacts of stress on musicians, particularly in circumstances of isolation or doubts. These therapies assist musicians in managing stage anxiety symptoms and accumulated stress through relaxation and general wellness methods. Finally, Williamon, Aufegger, and Eiholzer (2014) propose a revolutionary methodology through distributed simulation to enhance musical learning, which could be complemented with therapies based on conscious practice to reduce fear of the stage. Controlled simulation enables musicians to cope with high-pressure circumstances gradually and safely, similar to the principles of exposure in CBT, but implemented in a more creative and less clinical context.

It is crucial to underline that the aforementioned texts provide a solid foundation for both conventional therapies and alternative options in the management of stage fright in musicians. Both qualitative and quantitative research provides fundamental insights into the causes, symptoms, and management tactics of stage fright, offering valuable tools for the implementation of effective interventions ranging from cognitive behavioral therapy to alternative methods such as mindfulness and music therapy. In addition, these studies support the notion that a holistic approach, merging both therapies, could be the most effective in assisting musicians to overcome stage fright and enhance their performance.

5. Conclusions

To conclude, the management of stage fright in musicians demands a multidimensional approach that fuses both conventional therapies and options to holistically treat the psychological, physical and emotional elements that influence performance on stage. Conventional therapies, such as cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), have proven to be

highly effective in altering negative thought patterns and decreasing anxiety through cognitive reorganization and progressive exposure. In addition, the implementation of particular assessment instruments, such as anxiety scales, favours a more accurate intervention adapted to the needs of musicians, simplifying the personalisation of treatment.

In addition, alternative therapies such as mindfulness, meditation and music therapy are shown to be valuable alternatives to treat stage fright, particularly in the management of anxiety and the control of emotions. These strategies promote self-control, total concentration and integral well-being, which enables musicians to reduce their response to stress and enhance their performance in circumstances of high emotional danger. Research examining the effect of the pandemic on artists' health underscores the importance of incorporating relaxation and emotional care techniques into the complete management of stage fright.

Finally, technological advances, such as distributed simulation in music teaching, also provide an innovative vision to deal with stage fright. By establishing safe environments where musicians have the possibility of simulating performance circumstances, the process of desensitization to stress is promoted. In summary, both conventional and alternative therapies, supported by new technological tools, make up a comprehensive and adaptable intervention model, ideal for addressing the challenges that stage fright demands of musicians in their professional and artistic work.

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