

# Caregivers' Perspectives on the Impact of Choral Participation and the Communication Abilities for Individuals with Dementia

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## Introduction

Dementia impacts the lives of approximately 50 million people globally and that amount is projected to triple by 2050<sup>1,3,4,5</sup>. For individuals with dementia, involvement in group musical activities has been shown to have positive impacts on social interaction and cognitive abilities, especially memory and retention<sup>2,6</sup>.

## Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate caregivers' perspectives regarding the impact that regularly attending choir rehearsals has on quality of life and communication abilities of the individual with dementia.

## Methods

This study was approved by the Minnesota Institutional Review Board before distribution.

## Participants:

- Participants included 5 caregivers of individuals with dementia who were members of a community choir.

## Survey:

- A paper-based, 20 question survey adapted from the Quality of Life in Late-Stage Dementia (QUALID) scale, was used to examine caregivers' perspectives about the individual's communication abilities after participation in weekly choral rehearsals.

## Procedures:

- An invitation to participate, consent form, and paper survey were provided to the participants.
- Participants were asked to complete and return the survey within one week.

## Results

Table 1

Questions associated with communication abilities

Question (n = number of respondents)	Response Choice	(n)
Initiate a conversation with familiar people was (3)	Greatly Decreased	0
	Moderately Decreased	0
	Stayed the Same	3
	Moderately Increased	2
	Greatly Increased	0
Maintain conversation with familiar person was (3)	Greatly Decreased	0
	Moderately Decreased	0
	Stayed the Same	4
	Moderately Increased	1
	Greatly Increased	0
Use appropriate body language (for example, looking at the conversation partner) during a conversation was (3)	Greatly Decreased	0
	Moderately Decreased	0
	Stayed the Same	3
	Moderately Increased	1
	Greatly Increased	1
Use appropriate listening skills when in a conversation (e.g. paying attention to the partner) (3)	Greatly Decreased	0
	Moderately Decreased	0
	Stayed the Same	3
	Moderately Increased	2
	Greatly Increased	0
Use appropriate speaking skills when in a conversation (e.g. words chosen, speech loudness) (3)	Greatly Decreased	0
	Moderately Decreased	0
	Stayed the Same	5
	Moderately Increased	0
	Greatly Increased	0
Communicate in a way that was easy for partners to understand (3)	Greatly Decreased	0
	Moderately Decreased	0
	Stayed the Same	3
	Moderately Increased	2
	Greatly Increased	0

Figure 1. Caregiver's Relationship to Individual with dementia

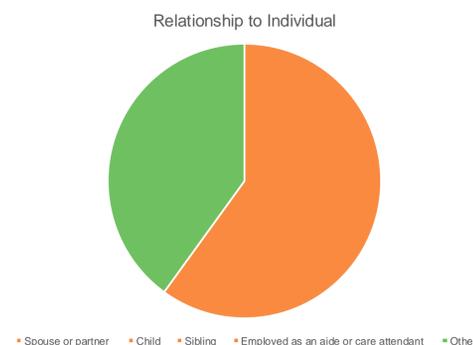


Table 2

Questions associated with social interactions

Question (n = number of respondents)	Response Choice	(n)
Interact with familiar people was (3)	Greatly Decreased	0
	Moderately Decreased	0
	Stayed the Same	4
	Moderately Increased	1
	Greatly Increased	0
Complete daily routines independently (getting dressed, getting in the car, etc.) was (3)	Greatly Decreased	0
	Moderately Decreased	0
	Stayed the Same	5
	Moderately Increased	0
	Greatly Increased	0
Recall names of familiar people was (3)	Greatly Decreased	0
	Moderately Decreased	0
	Stayed the Same	4
	Moderately Increased	1
	Greatly Increased	0
Recognize familiar people (3)	Greatly Decreased	0
	Moderately Decreased	0
	Stayed the Same	3
	Moderately Increased	2
	Greatly Increased	0

Table 3

Questions associated with emotional abilities

Question (n = number of respondents)	Response Choice	(n)
Appeared happy (3)	Greatly Decreased	0
	Moderately Decreased	0
	Stayed the Same	1
	Moderately Increased	3
	Greatly Increased	1
Appeared agitated or upset (3)	Greatly Decreased	1
	Moderately Decreased	2
	Stayed the Same	2
	Moderately Increased	0
	Greatly Increased	0
Appeared sad (3)	Greatly Decreased	0
	Moderately Decreased	2
	Stayed the Same	3
	Moderately Increased	0
	Greatly Increased	0
Appeared calm (3)	Greatly Decreased	0
	Moderately Decreased	0
	Stayed the Same	3
	Moderately Increased	2
	Greatly Increased	0

## Conclusion and Future Directions

Conclusions from this study indicate perceptions that choir involvement caused communication abilities and social interactions to remain stable for individuals with dementia. Emotional aspects indicate that the musical involvement decreased appearances of agitation and sadness and increased appearances of happiness and calmness.

Limitations of this study included:

- Use of a small sample size causing challenges to generalization of results to other caregivers.
- The survey gathered subjective perceptions of the caregivers.
- The perceptions were limited to one week of reflection
- Severity of dementia diagnosis varied

Future directions include expanding the sample size of caregivers, combining both subjective and objective data, and exploring genre and relevance of music to the individual.

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