

博士論文（要約）

**Potential use of arts activities as a community-based health
resource in super-aged societies: Qualitative research**

（超高齢社会における芸術活動の地域保健資源としての有用性
：質的研究）

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Abstract

Background: Arts interventions, including choir activities, are one of the effective social activities as health promotion for the aging population. However, Japan is still lagging in implementing programs for arts in healthcare compared with European countries despite recording the highest aging rate of older people in the world. This study explored how community choir activities influenced older people's health by analyzing subjective choir experience of each choir participant who lived in urban community settings in Japan.

Methods: This research incorporated a case study strategy followed by an exploratory qualitative approach. I recruited one choir group as a representative of community arts activities. The choir has been active since 1983 and is located in Bunkyo-ward, Tokyo. I completed 84 hours of observations, 5 focus group discussions, and 22 in-depth interviews. I utilized a thematic analysis for data analysis with sensitive consideration of trustworthiness of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Green & Thorogood, 2018). I conducted the line-by-line coding and implemented pattern coding and theoretical coding accordingly. I initiated the analysis with a research team and the results were reviewed by the research participants.

Results: The results presented three domains, eight themes, and twenty-nine subthemes. Three domains were as followed: *condition and challenges among the choir members; subjective experience*

of choir activities related to health and wellbeing of the choir members; and unique characteristics of choir activities impacting on health and wellbeing of the choir members. Emerged eight themes were followed: identity-related struggles, physical decline, and psycho-social condition: influence on societal health, influence on psychological health, influence on physical health: aesthetic experience and joy of expressive creativity.

Conclusion: This research revealed that participation in the choir's activities supported the choir members, and it became a health asset because the choir activities sustained their health and wellbeing especially during adverse life experiences spanning over 30 years. Based on the results, choir participation has the possibility of functioning as health promotion activities, and it is recommended to consider choir activities as one of the valuable health promotion activities for older people in urban settings in Japan.

Thesis overview

The world's population is aging rapidly, particularly in Japan and other industrialized countries. The involvement of health, private, and voluntary sectors is essential to provide, support and achieve wellbeing of old people. Wellbeing is widely recognized as the ultimate goal of life. Wellbeing is determined by a positive environment, healthy human-relationships, and effective self-realization. That is, adding health interventions that produce positive emotions would have the potential to achieve overall wellbeing, and arts have the potential answer to fulfill the role of happiness-relevant activities. In the context of the aging society, arts implementation in healthcare had effects on improving mental-health-related quality of life, mood, behavior changes, which conventional medical treatment could not address. Integrating arts and cultural activities is one of the solutions for establishing sustainable geriatric healthcare as exemplified by social prescribing implemented in western countries. Japan, in comparison, gives limited attention to arts activities as health promotion activities compare to other western countries. In particular, the recognition of arts activities as health promotional activities is low in Japan. To address these challenges, this research focused on choir activities as the representation of community-based arts activities. I set research objective to explore the impact of community-based choir activities on the health and wellbeing of old Japanese people.

This research incorporated a case study strategy followed by an exploratory qualitative approach according to the tradition of ethnography research, which included participatory observation, focus group discussions, and in-depth interviews. I selected Bunkyo ward in Tokyo, Japan. For

recruitment, I used a purposive sampling strategy to recruit target choir groups. I generated the data through ethnographic observation and interviews by directly engaging in the field for six months and becoming a member of the choir. I employed thematic analysis to interpret the data collected.

The research revealed three domains from the choir: condition and challenges among the choir members; subjective experience of choir activities related to health and wellbeing of the choir members; and unique characteristics of choir activities impacting on health and wellbeing of the choir members. Domain 2 represented that the choir activities supported societal-, physical-, and psychological health of the choir participants. As the members' involvement in the choir increased, the members created tight bonding through their shared interest in music within the choir. As positive impact on physical health, the choir activities stimulated physical ability and cognitive functions while the choir members actively engaged in the choir practices. Furthermore, the choir activities created an opportunity for finding a purpose in life as the choir performed on stage. Importantly, the choir functioned as a place for emotional supports.

Domain 3 described unique characteristics of the choir activity that cannot be seen in other social group activities. The emotional choir experience that stimulated a sense of aesthetics of the choir members. What was more, throughout the active and passive engagements of musical expression, the choir members experienced a sense of liberation within musical self-expression.

The results showed the positive benefits of the choir on its members. Three factors associating with the health and wellbeing of the choir members were emerged from the data: influence on societal health, influence on psychological health, influence on physical health. These factors were correlated with three dimensions of the determinant of older people's wellbeing: societal wellbeing, physical wellbeing, and psychological wellbeing. Addition to three factors described above, the creative experience and the aesthetic experience of the choir activities stimulated positive emotions from the members while they actively engaged in the choir culture, music, choreography with their premises-being open to new experience. Overall choir activities influenced on improving members' health and wellbeing. That is, the community choirs can be considered as a potential valuable health promotion activity for older people in urban community settings in Japan.

The research aimed to explore the potential use of community-based choirs as community-health resource in a super-aging society. The choir had the function of a social connection where the members connected and interacted with each other regardless of age, background, and health status. In response to the discussion, I suggest Japanese community integrated care system paying more attention to existing community choirs nationwide. is worth recognizing active choirs in each community as potential health resources. Ultimately, community health can reform the health promotion implications for older people.