

# Wellness Strengths and Deficiencies of University Music Students in Texas

Jewelie Lujan & Dr. Ann Fronckowiak

Texas A&M University-Kingsville, School of Music

## ABSTRACT

Socializing and relaxing are not easy activities for music majors. With countless hours of class, study, and practice, music students may lack free time for rejuvenating activities. Perfectionism, lack of time, and self-image are just a few of the issues music majors may have, and their mental health may be suffering (Conway et al., 2010; Koops & Kuebel, 2021). A survey by the American College Health Association (ACHA) has helped researchers (Zentner et al., 2022) view student wellness in college students. However, the National College Health Assessment does not feature any questions unique to college music students (ACHA, 2023). The purpose of this quantitative study is to determine if work hours outside of class vary for different music students and to gather evidence of college music students' wellness in Texas. Our pilot survey featured an optional demographic form and fifteen questions each in the social, emotional, and physical categories. The anonymous, online survey was open to all music majors in Texas, and snowball sampling was utilized. Data from the survey was analyzed using SurveyMonkey software and Microsoft Excel (2018). The average hours per week spent working outside of class does vary by major and primary instrument area. Music students have the greatest number of deficiencies in emotional wellness, some physical wellness deficiencies, and they have the greatest number of strengths in social wellness.

## INTRODUCTION



- While the wellness model believes an individual uses their strengths to heal illnesses and to maintain healthiness, the health model states that an ill patient receives treatment from a provider (Savvidou, 2021).
- Researchers have various methods of grouping wellness by dimensions. They are considered holistic; If a student is struggling in one dimension, it may impact all or some of the others (Zentner, Bradford, and Van Ingen, 2022).

## PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

The researchers have the following questions:

- Does the average hours per week spent outside the classroom vary by primary instrument area and major?
- What deficiencies in social, emotional, and physical wellness do Texas music majors have?
- What strengths in social, emotional, and physical wellness do Texas music majors have?

The researcher would like to advocate for wellness programs and increase **mental health awareness**, by providing evidence of wellness strengths and deficiencies.

## METHODS

- Participants (n=96) had to be enrolled at a 4-year university in Texas, undergraduate or graduate, and a music major. To reach students in Texas, snowball sampling was utilized.
- The optional demographic form consisted of some open ended questions, and it asked participants to refer to the Spring 2024 semester for those sections. The average number of credit hours for music students was **14**.
- Other open ended questions asked about the number of hours per week each music student practices, rehearses, studies, and works either music or non-music jobs. The total average of hours that music students work outside of class was about **35**.
- Data was organized by **primary instrument area** and by **major** in Microsoft Excel.

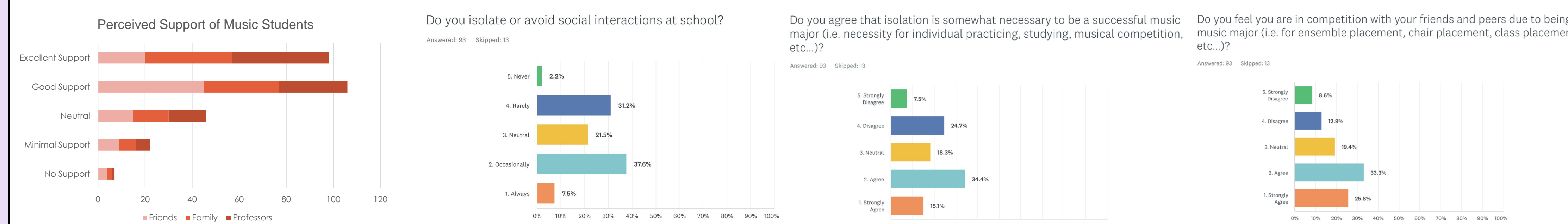
Primary Instrument Area	Participants	AVG Hours/Week
Other	(n=8)	44
Percussion	(n=8)	42
Brass	(n=26)	37
Vocal	(n=14)	34
Strings	(n=8)	32
Woodwinds	(n=32)	30

Major	Participants	AVG Hours/Week
Jazz Studies	(n=7)	43
Graduate Studies	(n=9)	41
Music Education	(n=51)	36
Music Performance	(n=11)	33
Music	(n=8)	31
Music Ed/Performance	(n=4)	31
Other	(n=6)	20

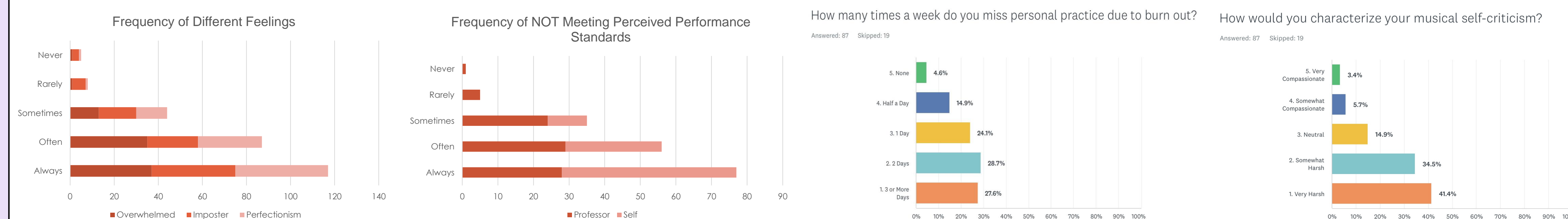
- The **Musicians' Wellness Survey (MWS)** is a **quantitative** pilot survey developed by the researcher which contains 45 questions on **social, emotional, and physical wellness**.
- There are a few extra questions about campus activities, resources, and familiarity with fine arts health and injury prevention.
- The survey utilizes a 5-point Likert scale. For most questions, answers of 1 can be considered unhealthy. Answers of 5 can be considered healthy, while 3 was listed as neutral for most questions.
- All parts of the survey were anonymous and completed online via SurveyMonkey. As per IRB approval, the survey did not require any question to be answered. The participant numbers vary for most questions, especially in the quantitative section.

## RESULTS

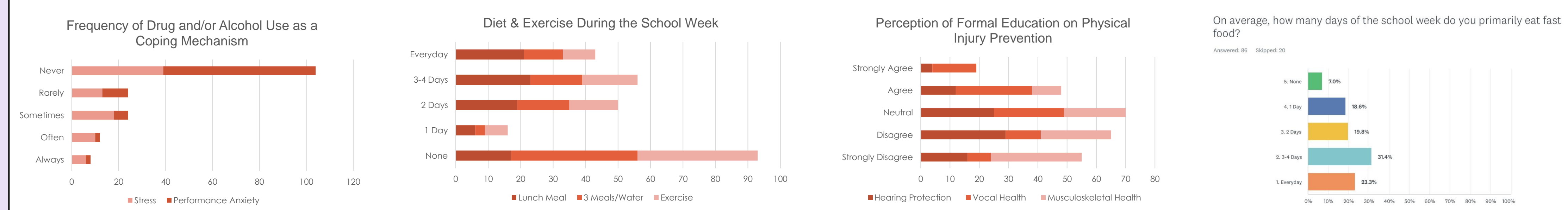
- Data from the **social wellness** category shows strengths in perceived support and deficiencies in isolation and competition.



- Data from the **emotional wellness** category shows deficiencies in mental health, burnout, imposter syndrome, and perfectionism.



- Data from the **physical wellness** category shows strengths in coping skills and deficiencies in nutrition, exercise, and injury prevention.



## ADDITIONAL RESULTS

- 63% of music students were registered for at least 1 zero-credit hour class in Spring 2024.
- 39% of music students were registered for at least 2 zero-credit hour classes in Spring 2024.

- 48% of music students are in 2 or more organizations:

# of Organizations	Participants
0-1	54
2-3	44
4 or more	6

- Music students have various commitments outside of classes that may hinder their ability to engage in wellness activities like exercise and rest.

## DISCUSSION

- The most **deficient** category was **emotional wellness**; Students are also struggling to keep up with **physical wellness**. These results tie into research that has found wellness dimensions to be holistic (Zentner et al., 2022).
- Physical activity (PA) could boost mental health, clarity, and reduce stress. However, symptoms of mental illness could impair one's ability to engage in PA (Johannes et al., 2024). Most music students are not getting the recommended 150 minutes of exercise (WHO, 2020).
- Open ended responses from Koops and Kuebel (2021) suggest that the rigors of music programs and countless hours of extra preparation left very little time to wind down, relax, and nourish the body.
- Music students have no problem turning to their support systems when they are in need, for fun, or to make music.
- Limitations** to the study include researcher bias, small sample size and generalizability, and the research was conducted over the summer.
- A revised MWS conducted during the semester could yield more reliable and generalizable results.

## REFERENCES

- American College Health Association. (2021). *National College Health Association Survey*. [https://www.acha.org/NCHA/About\\_NCHA/NCHA\\_Survey/NCHA\\_About\\_Survey.aspx?key=7e966753-2b47-4671-8cc7-ba7a529c9934](https://www.acha.org/NCHA/About_NCHA/NCHA_Survey/NCHA_About_Survey.aspx?key=7e966753-2b47-4671-8cc7-ba7a529c9934)
- Bernhard, H.C. (2007). A Survey of Burnout among University Music Majors. *College Student Journal*, 41.
- Conway, C., Eros, J., Pellegrino, K., & West, C. (2010). Instrumental Music Educators Students' Perceptions of Tensions Experienced During Their Undergraduate Degree. *Journal of Music Education*, 58(3), 260-275.
- Gilbert, D. (2021). A Comparison of Self-Reported Anxiety and Depression Among Undergraduate Music Majors and Non-Music Majors. *Journal of Music Teacher Education*, 30(3), 69-83.
- Koops, L.H., & Kuebel, C.R. (2021). Self-Reported Mental Health and mental illness among university music students in the United States. *Research Studies in Music Education*, 43(2), 129-143.
- Johannes, C., Roman, N., Onagbiye, S., Titus, S., & Leach, L. (2024). Physical Activity is Personal: A Mixed-Methods Study of Undergraduate Students at a South African University. *Physical Activity and Health*, 8(1), pp. 116-136. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5334/paah.367>
- Savvidou, P. (2021). *Teaching the Whole Musician*. Oxford University Press.
- Wristen, B.G. (2013). Depression and Anxiety in University Music Students. Update: *Applications of Research in Music Education*, 31(2), 20-27.
- WHO guidelines on physical activity and sedentary behavior. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2020. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO
- Zentner, K., Bradford, B., & van Ingen, B. (2022). Student Wellness in Higher Education: A Focus on Social, Physical, and Financial Wellness. *The International Journal of Learning in Higher Education*, 29(2), 87-110.

Special thanks to the McNair Scholars Program staff! I express my deepest gratitude to everyone who shared my survey online!