

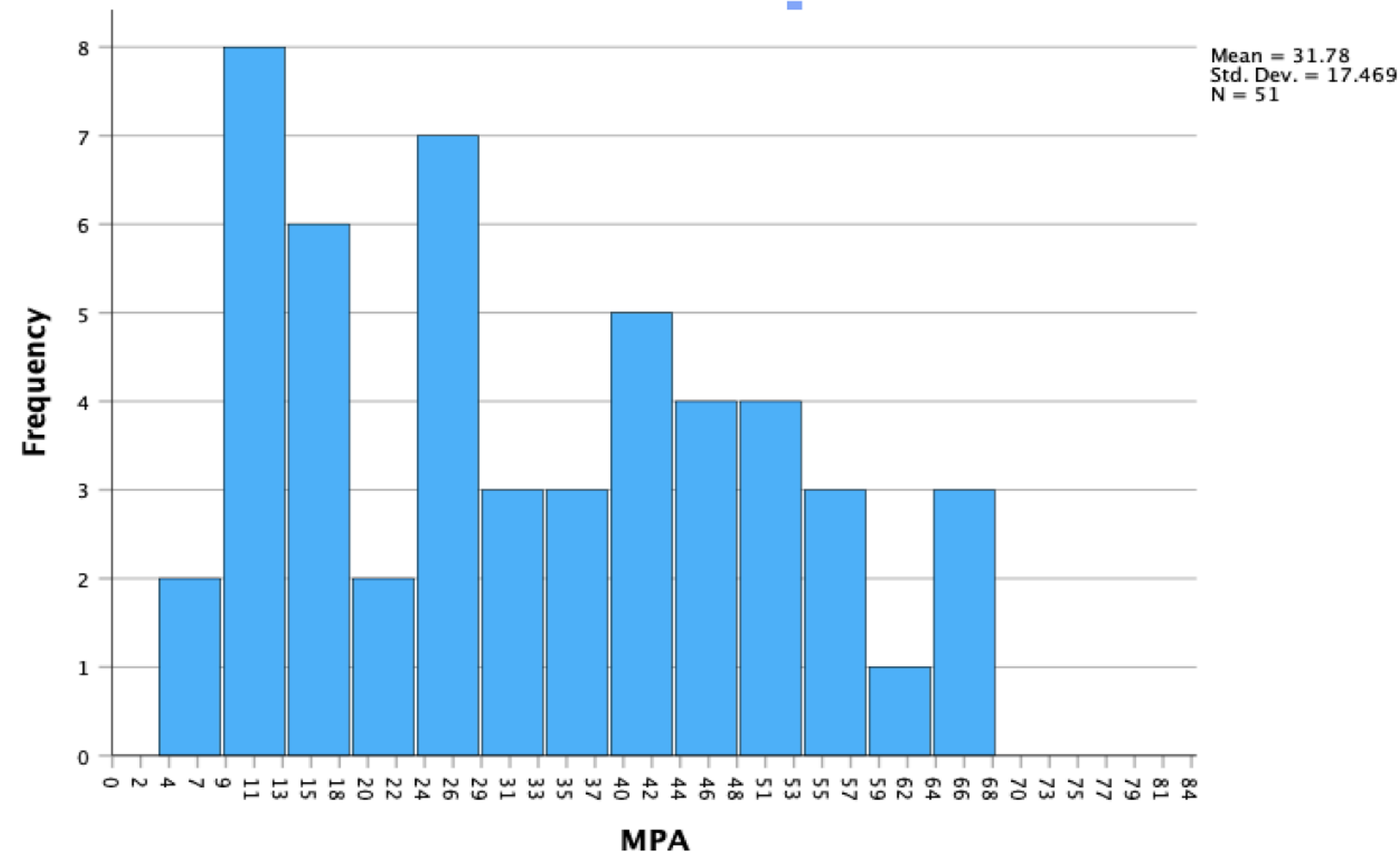
Examining the Prevalence and Experiences of Music Performance Anxiety in Young Adolescent Students

Dr. Katie O'Brien
School of Music, Georgia State University

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to gather quantitative and qualitative information about the prevalence and experience of music performance anxiety (MPA) in young adolescents in grades 6-8 in both vocal and instrumental ensembles at a private school in the southeastern United States to gain insights into what the beginnings of MPA might look like, and to inform pedagogy for this age group.

Methodology: This study followed an explanatory sequential design with three strands. First, to examine MPA's prevalence, and prevalence based on factors of age and type of ensemble, the study began by administering a validated survey to ($N = 51$) students, containing the Osborne-Kenny MPAAI-A scale (2005) and demographic information (e.g., grade, ensemble type). In Strand 2, these quantitative findings were further explored in semi-structured interviews ($n = 7$) to expound upon the students' experiences with MPA. In Strand 3, the quantitative and qualitative findings were integrated and interpreted.

Distribution of MPAAI-A Scores (N = 51)



Sample: Of the 51 students who were given the survey in their ensemble classes, 13 were in Orchestra (25.5%), 14 were in Chorus (27.5%) and 24 were in Band (47.1%). 13 students were in 6th grade (25.5%), 14 were in 7th grade (27.5%), and 24 were in 8th grade (41.1%). On average, students within each grade level reported 4 years of musical experience.

Findings:

- The majority of middle school students exhibited a low to moderate amount of MPA as measured by the MPAAI-A scale with an average score of 31.78, and a smaller subset experienced high levels. 6th grade had the highest average, 41.23 (7th - 28.29; 8th - 28.70).
- Ensemble type, age, and years of experience do seem to be factors to consider in predicting one's MPAAI-A levels, but none of these factors were statistically significant in the descriptive inferential model generated by this sample.
- Performance context seems to be the greatest determining factor, with students experiencing greater anxiety for judged performances and less anxiety with more co-performers.
- Physical manifestations of MPA are most easily recognized by students.
- Increased performance experience seems to ease student MPA to varying degrees.

Conclusions: There were large discrepancies between students' self-reported MPA in the survey and the interviews, particularly for male students. This, along with the quantitative and qualitative results taken individually, suggests that there is much individual variation in student MPA. Additionally, for many students, this study was their first time hearing about MPA, and interviews revealed that many had not learned management strategies in their ensemble classes. Therefore, results suggest that ensemble teachers address MPA in their pedagogy, destigmatizing the phenomenon and equipping students to persevere in their musical studies.

Suggestions for Educators:

- Talk about MPA and management; build individual relationships to provide individualized aid.
- Utilize the social power ensembles as a safe performing vehicle to build students' confidence; expose students to a variety of performing conditions.
- Targeted approach for 6th grade, males.