

STUDYING PRACTICE QUANTITATIVELY

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Background

The 7-day recall questionnaire has been shown to provide reliable data within the field of exercise psychology, where participants have been asked to reflect on the amount of moderate and vigorous physical activity done within a one-week period. It was hypothesised that such a tool would be valuable for studying the quantity (and eventually the quality) of musicians' practice.

Aims

This paper assesses the reliability and validity of the 7-day recall questionnaire for studying musicians' practice.

Method

In this questionnaire, musicians are asked to reflect on the number of hours spent practising for each day of the preceding week and to indicate whether the total amount of practice for that week is comparable to that of other weeks within the previous month. This information can be obtained for certain types of practice (e.g. physical practice or mental rehearsal) and for work on specific pieces. This study examines the responses of 30 music conservatoire students on the questionnaire (completed each week for four months), as well as on practice diary entries completed over the same period as part of the students' assessment on an undergraduate course unit.

Results

This paper will be a report of work currently in progress. Comparisons will be made between emergent data from the 7-day recall questionnaire and practice diaries entries corresponding to that 7-day period. Relationships between the questionnaire data and measures of performance quality and state anxiety (obtained in an exam performance of two selected pieces) will also be explored.

Conclusions

It is anticipated that the validation of this methodological tool will open up new avenues of study within practice, where direct observation can often interfere with the activity itself and where practice diaries can have variable completion rates.