Mental health best practice in the UK music industry: investigating better relationships between managers and artists

# MENTAL HEALTH BEST PRACTICE IN THE UK MUSIC INDUSTRY: INVESTIGATING BETTER RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN MANAGERS AND ARTISTS

**Brenda Combs**

## M.A M.I.M.A.D Master of Arts in Music Industry Management and Artist Development

## B.A. Bachelor of Arts in Business Management

Dr. Daniel Pratt, Dr. Daniel Hagan, Dr. Moira Cachia, & Professor David Osbon

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# Keywords

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# Abstract

This qualitative study investigates the complex landscape of mental health within the United Kingdom's (UK) music management industry, scrutinising the awareness of selected music managers concerning mental health challenges, available resources, and their comprehension of fostering improved mental health for artists. Grounded in Human Resource Management (HRM) principles and guided by Critical Realism (CR), research dissects human relations practices employed by music managers, focusing on their grasp of mental health best practices. The Inquiry is particularly pivotal given the paradoxical nature of the music industry, a realm where discussions about mental health are not widespread, yet the prevalence of negative mental health outcomes and diminished well-being is high.

Research employed qualitative methodology to investigate how music managers implement HRM tools for the artists they manage. One-to-one semi-structured interviews were chosen as the main source for data collection. In the area of management research, a reflexive form of thematic analysis was adopted.

Findings from the study reveal a spectrum of approaches among music managers, highlighting the intricacies of managing artists mental health within the industry. Additionally, results reveal divergent perspectives on the involvement of trained mental health professionals, emphasising the challenges inherent in balancing artists well-being with the boundaries of managerial roles. The research uncovers a prevailing theme of personal mental health challenges faced by managers, highlighting the delicate equilibrium required in simultaneously supporting artists and safeguarding their own well-being. The data analysis culminates with an overview of managers optimism regarding ongoing transformations in the music management industry.

The application of HRM stands out as a potential catalyst for positive change. Through equipping managers with knowledge of available mental health resources, HRM holds the promise of reshaping power dynamics in the artist manager relationship and enhancing the overall dynamic of the industry. This multifaceted opportunity extends the potential for improved mental health support and a more harmonious and collaborative environment within the music management sector.

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# List of Abbreviations

AI: Artificial Intelligence
AMMHTK: Artist Manager Mental Health Tool Kit
A&R: Artist and Repertoire
AAM: Australian Artist Managers
BAPAM: British Association for Performing Arts Medicine
BPS: British Psychological Society
CDC: Centre for Disease and Control
CR: Critical Realism
GDPR: General Data Protection Regulation
HADS: Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale
HRM: Human Resource Management
HRT: Human Resource Theory
LCM: London College of Music
LGBTQ+: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer
MITC: The Music Industry Therapist Collective
MMF: Music Managers Forum
MU: Musician's Union
NHS: National Health Service
PDF: Portable Document Format
PTSD: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
SHRM: Strategic Human Resource Management
UK: United Kingdom
URDSC: University Research Degree Sub Committee
US.: United States
UWL: University of West London
VoIP: Voice over Internet Protocol
WHO: World Health Organisation

# Statement of Original Authorship

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for an award at this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Signature: _____Brenda Combs_____

Date: _____August 8th, 2025____

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 OVERVIEW

Over the past decade, research has emerged that provides a detailed portrait of modern musician's lives. The findings consistently reveal that musicians face significant mental health challenges, including elevated levels of depression, and anxiety emphasising an urgent need for targeted support within the industry (Berg et al., 2022; Gross and Musgrave, 2016; Araujo et al., 2019; Musicians Union, 2023; Record Union, 2019). This documented concern has prompted researchers to compare the well-being of musicians to that of the general population, particularly in relation to overall mental health and suicide rates. Globally, studies have consistently demonstrated that musicians experience significantly greater suicide rates compared to the general public (Asher and Kenny, 2016; Bjerkeset et al., 2014; Elmes and Riseley, 2024; Gross and Musgrave, 2023; Lamis and Musgrave, 2025). Research highlights the escalating work-related stressors faced by artists, specifically in the context of technological advancements influencing music creation and sharing (Allen, 2022; Anderson, 2014; Elberse, 2013).

Growing awareness of musician's mental health concerns has led to a focus on systemic factors affecting artist well-being, yet one critical area remains underexplored, the role of artist managers. As intermediaries between artists and the industry, managers play a central role in career development, work-life balance, and navigating industry pressures (Gilfillan and Morrow, 2016; Morrow, 2018). By integrating these current challenges facing musicians, including the complex artist manager relationship, this research examines how managers influence musician's mental well-being in today's music landscape, investigating what barriers exist to implementing mental health support within management practices.

The thesis adopts Critical Realism (CR) as its research paradigm. Originating from Roy Bhaskar's foundational work in 1975, CR has become a widely developed ontological perspective in qualitative research, showcasing its versatility in exploring phenomena ranging from individual cases to entire economies. The application of CR on artist manager relationships aligns with its core principles, recognising the dynamic interplay of influences within the social structure. Such a perspective guides a

comprehensive examination of the nuanced and emergent qualities inherent in the UK music industry's music management sector.

Human Resource Management (HRM) served as the theoretical framework for this research, guiding the design, data collection, reflexive thematic analysis. The theory is based on the perception that employees are human resources or human capital that must be managed strategically to achieve productivity and well-being outcomes (Compton et al., 2014). Human resource management implementation in creative sectors faces challenges from dynamic issues like casualised labour, technological innovation, and changing workforce dynamics, all of which affect recruitment, retention, performance management, and succession planning (Costello and Oliver, 2018; Artero and Manfredi, 2015; Deuze and Steward, 2010; Loretto and Vickerstaff, 2015; Menara et al., 2017).

The research explores both HRM's limitations and potential benefits for artist's (Burgess et al., 2021; Hennekam, 2022; Okechukwu, 2023; Opara et al., 2019). Given the absence of HRM frameworks specifically tailored to the creative industries, the study aims to address the unique challenges associated with HRM in the music sector (Costello and Oliver, 2018; Burgess et al., 2021; Hennekam, 2022; Okechukwu, 2023; Opara et al., 2019). Conducting semi-structured interviews and reflexive thematic analysis revealed how HRM practices like communication, power dynamics, work-life balance, psychological risk management, work culture and influential leadership impact musician's well-being.

To develop HRM principles specifically for creative relationships a comprehensive review of approximately forty studies, reports, conference papers, and academic texts enabled the creation of seven key HRM principles tailored to creative sectors: Social Interaction, Two-Way Communication, Motivation and Satisfaction, Employee Involvement, Work-Life Balance, Organisational Culture, and Leadership Style.

This research also examines how aware UK music managers are of the mental health resources and services available to their artists. It highlights the diverse approaches taken by artist managers in supporting their artist's well-being, revealing significant variations in management strategies. These differences informed the development of categorised artist management approaches, derived from qualitative data analysis. Drawing on this framework, the Artist Manager Mental Health Tool

kit (AMMHTK) was developed. This personalised tool kit is designed to assist artist managers in providing mental health support tailored to their preferred level of intervention. Offering a practical and actionable resource designed to address key challenges identified in the research, ultimately improving professional dynamics within the music industry.

The AMMHTK was used and refined through a comprehensive two-part pilot study, which aimed to address limitations or barriers for further large-scale deployment. The pilot studies tested the practical applicability of the tool kit's personalised recommendations. Both phases of the pilot study identified necessary refinements to ensure the tool kit's effectiveness across the diverse music management industry setting.

By integrating empirical data on artist managers, HRM principles relevant to the creative industries, and findings from research and pilot studies, this thesis deepened the understanding of existing support systems within the music industry and provided an assessment of the factors influencing artist well-being and the effectiveness of current support structures.

## 1.2    CONTEXT

Previous research has focused primarily on documenting mental health issues rather than examining the artist manager relationship's impact on well-being. Past studies predominantly concentrated on specific mental health issues artists might face (Araújo et al., 2019; Berg et al., 2022; Gross and Musgrave, 2016; Musicians Union, 2023; Record Union, 2019). Studies indicate that musicians may encounter more severe workplace issues compared to the general non-music workforce, suggesting direct relationship between mental health issues and the atmosphere within the music industry (Bjerkeset et al., 2014; Gross and Musgrave, 2016). Research from the Music Managers Forum (MMF) has also documented the mental health status of music managers (MMF, 2019; Parker, 2021).

While HRM principles have been widely applied across industries since Miles (1965) Human Resource Theory (HRT) focused on enhancing productivity, the music management sector remains largely unexplored in HRM research (Dickson and Roethlisberger, 1939; Omodan et al., 2020; Punyanunt-Carter and Wrench, 2012). Prior studies examined HRM in major labels, leaving smaller segments, including

music management, underrepresented (Costello and Oliver, 2018; Burgess et al., 2021; Hennekam, 2022; Okechukwu, 2023; Opara, et al., 2019). The literature gap reflects the necessity for further exploration into HRM practices in the music management sector and the distinctive challenges encountered by the creative realm of the music industry (Bjaastad et al., 2016; Wang, 2024).

Investigating how HRM principles apply to the music industry bridges the gap between established business theories and music management practices. The studies focus on these principles reflects business and creative industry insights, highlighting the importance of a holistic approach to artist management. By integrating business management theories with the unique dynamics of the music industry, this research contributes valuable insights into fostering a resilient and supportive environment for music professionals. Findings advance understanding of HRM in the music industry and offer practical implications for enhancing mental health support systems through artist manager relationships.

## 1.3   AIMS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following list provides insights into the primary objectives guiding the research project. Each objective contributes to understanding of the support systems, awareness levels, and potential impacts on the artist manager relationship and the overall well-being of artists.

*Primary Objectives*

1. *Support Systems for Mental Health:* Investigate the existing support systems available for UK music managers to promote constructive mental health outcomes for the artists they manage.

2. *Awareness of Mental Health Resources:* Examine the awareness level of UK music managers regarding mental health resources for their artists, particularly concerning membership in music management organisations.

3. *Influence on Artist manager Relationship:* Explore how knowledge or lack thereof regarding mental health resources could influence the dynamics of the artist manager relationship and artists well-being.

4.  *Human Resource Management Principles:* Provide insights into the impact of implementing existing HRM frameworks within artist manager teams.

## 1.3.1 Research Questions and Sub-Question

At its core, HRM prioritises effective communication, urging managers to adopt a human-centric leadership approach, diverging from traditional top-down or dictatorial styles (Nwankwo, 2014; Onday, 2016). Understanding how managers currently handle these areas reveals gaps in support and identifies best practices that could be scaled across the industry. The research questions explore manager's knowledge of their artist's mental health and well-being, their awareness of available support resources, their management styles, and mental health awareness. This information is crucial for developing targeted training programmes and improving artist support systems within the music industry.

### *Research Questions and Sub-Question*

1.  What are the current support systems for UK music managers to implement constructive mental health outcomes for the artist's they manage?

2.  What is the status of music managers in the UK regarding *awareness* of mental health resources for their artists?

    a.  How does this knowledge, or lack thereof, influence the artist manager relationship and artist's well-being?

3.  How does membership in an official UK music management organisation provide support systems for stakeholders to suggest constructive mental health resources?

## 1.3.2 Advancing Scientific Knowledge and Significance

This study examines how HRM practices in music management can serve as protective factors for artist well-being, addressing a critical research gap with immediate industry implications. The primary objectives are to investigate support systems available to UK music managers for enhancing their artist's mental health outcomes and assess manager's awareness of mental health resources within music management organisations. The study also examines how manager's knowledge of

mental health resources impacts artist manager relationship dynamics and, subsequently, the overall well-being of artists or music groups they represent. These objectives provide a comprehensive assessment of support systems and awareness levels within the music industry, with direct implications for improving artist mental health outcomes. This not only contributes to the broader understanding of HRM within the music industry but also holds practical implications for enhancing the mental health support system for artists within the unique framework of the artist manager relationship.

While existing research sheds light on the prevalent mental health concerns faced by musicians and examines HRM in various industries, there is a distinct lack of focus on UK music managers well-being impacts on sustained mental health support (Ackerman et al., 2012; Asher and Kenny, 2016; Bjerkeset et al., 2014; Davis et al., 2004; Gaudesi, 2016; Gross and Musgrave, 2016; Morrow, 2013; Musgrave, 2014; Record Union, 2019; Watson, 2002). Prior research has also identified key issues related to HRM challenges in creative industries, including reliance on short-term funding, leading to employment and financial insecurity (Cunningham, 2011; Dean, 2007; Throsby and Zednik, 2011). This study aims to bridge these voids by offering an examination of UK music managers awareness of mental health challenges, creating a benchmark for knowledge on mental health resources. Further contributions were made in the form of a comprehensive list of HRM principles, serving as a foundation for understanding and applying HRM within the context of the music management industry.

Results of this research has yielded a practical and valuable resource, the AMMHTK, which was crafted from insights derived during the reflexive thematic analysis. Developed with the intention of empowering and educating, the tool kit stands as a resource for artists and managers in the music industry. Its purpose is to foster inclusivity and contribute significantly to the overall well-being of artists and managers. By offering a pragmatic guide for addressing the identified challenges, the tool kit aspires to cultivate a more nurturing and supportive environment within the dynamic landscape of the music industry. Encapsulating the principles of HRM, it emphasises social interaction, promoting two-way communication, motivating artists, encouraging active involvement, promoting work-life balance, cultivating a positive

organisational culture, and transformational leadership styles. The tool kit is discussed further in Section 5.6 and can be viewed at Figure Six.

## 1.4  SIGNIFICANCE AND SCOPE

Throughout the course of this study, HRM has been explored as a theoretical framework to examine how management practices influence the working lives of those in the music industry. The research applied this framework to explore how music managers understand, adopt, and implement HRM principles in their day-to-day interactions with artists. By viewing these elements through the lens of HRM, the study aimed to uncover how such practices are perceived by managers and how they may affect artist well-being within a professional context.

Data collection invited participants to reflect on their current approaches to issues such as mental health training, availability of support structures, communication techniques, and the balance between personal and professional boundaries in artist relationships. By focusing on these areas, the research aimed to identify both strengths and opportunities in the current approaches to artist care within the management process.

A particular strength of this study lies in its emphasis on the subjective experiences of music managers. While much of the existing literature addresses artists mental health from the perspective of clinical or institutional support this research brings managerial experiences to the forefront, shedding light on how they navigate mental health concerns in the absence of formal human resource departments (Gross and Musgrave, 2016; Record Union, 2019). Highlighting the often-overlooked emotional labour and informal support roles that managers take on, further emphasising the need for practical resources and guidance within this area.

The research contributes to a growing body of work that encourages industry stakeholders to reconsider how artists are supported in their careers. Rather than proposing an external solution, the findings suggest that improvements can be made within existing managerial structures by increasing awareness, training, and institutional backing for managers themselves. The results not only support the development of artist-centred mental health strategies but also advocate for a shift in how the role of the manager is understood and valued within the broader cultural sector.

### 1.4.1 Interdisciplinary Nature of Study

The research not only extends the body of knowledge on musician mental health but also critically examines how established HRM practices can be applied to an industry that traditionally operates outside conventional corporate structures (Ackerman et al., 2012; Asher and Kenny, 2016; Bjerkeset et al., 2014; Davis et al., 2004; Gaudesi, 2016; Gross and Musgrave, 2016; Morrow, 2013; Musgrave, 2014; Record Union, 2019; Watson, 2002).

The HRM principles have long been associated with improving job satisfaction and organisational performance in various industries (Bond and Bunce, 2011; Brenner, 2004; Cavanaugh, 2004; Chen et al., 2022; CIPD, 2019; Dobson et al., 2009; Ghosh and Satyawadi, 2012; Kuo, 2013; Landsbergis and Vivona-Vaughm, 1995; Miles, 1965; Opperman, 2002; Patwardhan et al., 2013; Punyanunt-Carter and Wrench, 2012; Taylor et al., 2017; Wood, 2018). This study explores the practical implications of implementing HRM practices to create supportive work environments that can mitigate the adverse mental health impacts of social media pressures, and financial insecurity.

A pivotal component of this research is the two-part pilot study conducted with Sarah, the founder of a UK music management company. Providing a practical lens through which the application of the AMMHTK can be examined in a real-world setting. By focusing on the participant's experiences, the effectiveness of the AMMHTK was evaluated. Addressing the immediate challenges faced by artist managers and the variability in managerial involvement in supporting artist mental health was stressed. The first part of the pilot study highlighted how personalisation of the tool kit to fit different management styles can lead to enhanced awareness and better outcomes in the artist manager relationship. The second part of the pilot study continued to reflect on Sarah's usage over a two-month period and incorporated the refinements addressed from data collected in the first part of the pilot study.

### 1.4.2 Definition of Terms

The following terms were used operationally in the thesis. The terms relate to services, music professionals and organisations used as key elements for the research:

*Artist and Repertoire:* Record executives who scout for and sign talent (Weissman, 2017). A concept originating in music publishing and recording

companies that involves the reviewing of artist demonstration recordings, considered for possible signing with a music company. Artist and Repertoire (A&R) departments also coordinate production developments, such as selecting others to work with artists and artist development processes (Rutter, 2016).

*Artist Manager, Personal Manager, Music Manager, Representative:* An overall career guide for artists, dealing with all facets of the artist's career (Weissman, 2017). An artist's representative who works closely with the artist at all stages and usually for all purposes to develop the artist's career (Hull, 2021).

*Critical Realism:* Critical realism acknowledges the dynamic interplay between structure and agency, recognising that social realities are influenced by underlying mechanisms that may not always be directly observable (Bhaskar, 2016; Bhaskar, 2011; Buch-Hansen and Nielsen, 2020). In the context of artist manager relationships, CR provides a framework for understanding the multifaceted influences within the UK music industry's management sector.

*Human Resource Management:* The perception that employees are human resources, human capital, not unlike other organisational resources such as finance and technology. Human capital needs to be managed differently order to achieve productivity and profitability outcomes (Compton et. al., 2014).

*Human Relations:* Human Relations is a management approach that emerged in response to the industrial revolution, focusing on the social and psychological aspects of work to improve employee satisfaction and productivity (Bright and Cortes, 2019; McGerr, 2003).

*Human Relations Movement:* The human relations movement is a management approach that emerged in response to the industrial revolution's impact on workers, prioritising social factors in the workplace over purely economic incentives (Bright and Cortes, 2019; McGerr, 2003).

*Human Resources:* Human Resources refers to the management of employees within an organisation, focusing on their recruitment, development, performance, and overall well-being to enhance organisational success (Bright and Cortes, 2019). Human resource plays a central role in overseeing the employee life cycle, including compliance, selection, compensation, performance management, and talent development.

*Human Resource Theory:* Human Resource Theory introduced by Raymond Miles (1965), builds upon the human relations movement by viewing employees as valuable resources with untapped potential that, when cultivated, contribute significantly to organisational success (Miles, 1965; Punyanunt-Carter and Wrench, 2012). Unlike earlier theories that prioritised social factors or task-related efficiency, HRT emphasises a participatory work environment that fosters creativity, communication, and risk-taking (Mayo, 1932; Maslow, 1943; McGregor, 1960).

*Mental Health:* In the context of this study, mental health encompasses emotional, psychological, and social well-being, which influences how individuals navigate stress, form relationships, and engage productively within their environments, with a dynamic focus on enhancing cooperation and community integration (Beezhold, et. al., 2015; Centre for Disease and Control, 2021; Keyes, 2013; World Health Organisation, 2014).

*Music Industry:* The music industry consists of those organisations concerned with developing musical content and personalities which can be communicated across multiple media (Wikström, 2020).

*Pilot Study:* A small-scale study conducted in advance of implementing a new intervention or tool, with the aim of assessing its feasibility, refining its use in practice, and identifying any necessary adjustments before wider application (Eldridge and Kerry, 2012).

*Professional/Established Artist:* A person who creates or interprets artistic works as an occupation (Strasser, 2009). A professional recording artist is usually signed to a larger music label and has had around four album releases widely publicised through mainstream media (Rutter, 2016). In music an artist is defined as a person who creates musical compositions as well as interprets works of art, although the term performer is the preferred terminology (Strasser, 2009). In copyright law the term refers to the identifiable creator or author of a work of art (Strasser, 2009).

*Qualitative Methodology:* Qualitative Methodology is a research approach that explores the 'why' behind observed phenomena, providing a deeper understanding of complex social dynamics (Anderson, 2013). Unlike quantitative methods, which focus on measurable data, qualitative research examines underlying meanings, motivations, and contextual factors influencing behaviour (Silverman, 2017).

*Royalty:* A payment made to an artist, publisher, or music company when their works are shared, and monies are returned as a result (Rutter, 2016). The payment or compensation for the use of a tangible or intangible asset (Strasser, 2009). In the music industry, this transaction occurs between a user (licensee) and an owner (licensor) for the sale or performance of the use of intellectual property (Strasser, 2009). An artist's royalty rate is determined through negotiation. Because music royalties are strongly linked to individuals, rates vary according to an artist's experience and past record in the music industry (Strasser, 2009).

*Streaming:* Music or video presented to the consumer via the internet, and not sold as a recorded item (Weissman, 2017). Real-time media delivery method to consume music or visual products. Popular online music-streaming services include YouTube, Spotify, and Apple Music. Streaming permits the option to listen in actual time, rather than download music or purchase and consume later (Rutter, 2016).

*Semi-Structured Interviews:* Frequently employed in human resource practitioner research, examines the individual experiences and realities faced by participants (Anderson, 2013; Braun and Clarke, 2021). In a semi-structured interview, researchers have a central topic, along with pre-formulated questions allowing exploration of new perspectives while maintaining focus (Rubin and Rubin, 2012).

To view a chart that details the key roles and relationships that are a part of a musician's team see Figure One. The chart highlights the essential players and provides a definition and the role of communication between these members to other music industry sectors. The hierarchical structure encompasses the artist at the top, followed by the artist manager and their communication links with key stakeholders, including the promoter, publicist, attorney, and publisher. Additionally, each role is accompanied by a brief definition to enhance clarity.

Figure 1: Artist Relationship: Key Roles
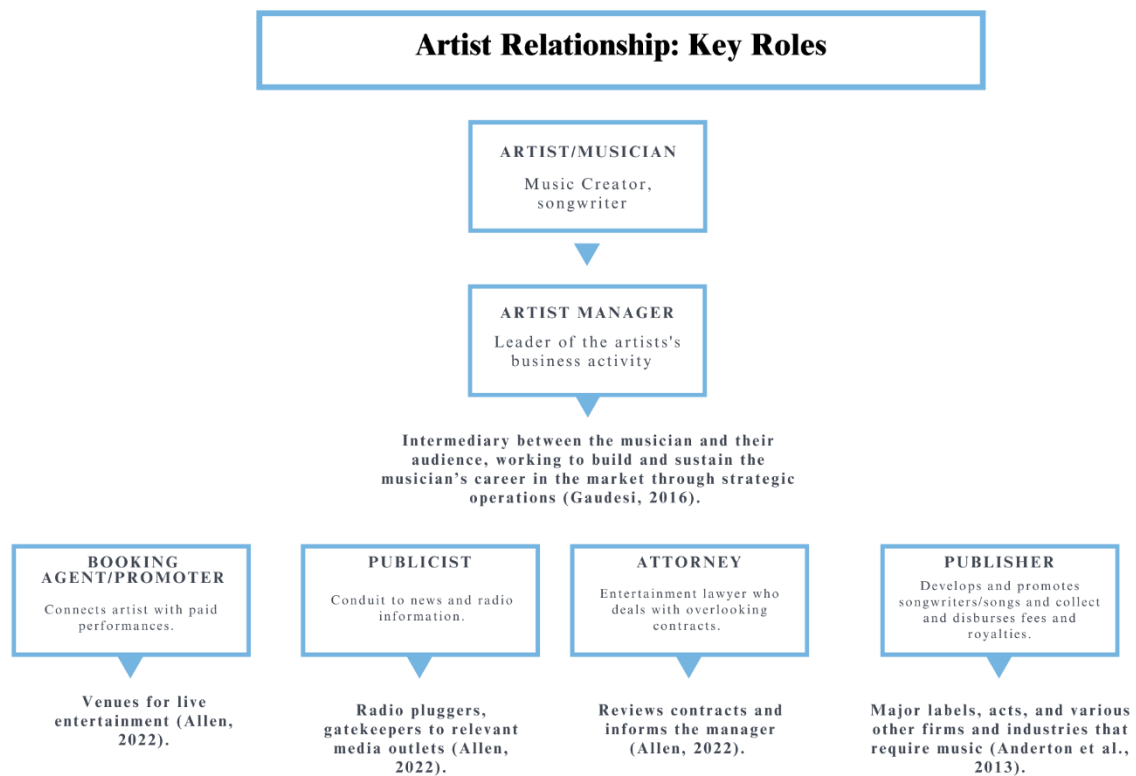


Source: (Allen, 2008; Anderton, et al., 2013; Gaudesi, 2016)

## 1.5    THESIS OUTLINE

While this chapter introduced the current research, Chapter Two is a review of the current research on HRM, mental health and the music industry, an overview of the artist manager relationship, and the impact of issues related to the artist manager relationship. Chapter Three describes the methodology, research design, and analysis for this study. Chapter Four details how the data was analysed through reflexive thematic analysis and presents the four overarching themes and subsequent sub-themes and also reviews the varying artist manager approaches to mental health support derived from participants data. Chapter Four also provides an interpretation of the results, as they relate to the existing body of research related to HRM. Chapter Five provides discussions on the research results and analysis, connecting this information to the theoretical framework and previous research. Chapter Five also presents the AMMHTK in detail. Chapter Six reviews the pilot studies with a UK artist manager, used to evaluate the tool kit's effectiveness. Chapter Seven will summarise the thesis and propose ideas for future research within the music industry.

# Chapter 2: Literature Review

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter Two serves as an extensive review of existing literature, encompassing intersections of mental health, the music industry, and artist management. It aims to understand the interconnectedness of these elements both as a collective whole and as individual components. The chapter also outlines the theoretical framework.

Sections 2.2 to 2.5 present background literature on five key topics, shedding light on the issues the study seeks to address and filling voids in the existing literature. Section 2.2 provides definitions for both the music industry and mental health. Section 2.3 explores mental health challenges within the music industry. This section is organised into two subtopics, providing a comprehensive overview of mental health within the music industry. It includes a historical context, discusses the effects of technological advancements, presents empirical data on mental health issues within the industry, examines the current challenges faced by musicians, the second subtopic outlines the resources available for musicians and artist managers. In Section 2.4, the term 'artist manager' is defined, and their roles within the artist manager relationship are illustrated. The fourth topic discuss the impacts and issues within the artist manager relationship.

Lastly, Section 2.6 contributes essential insights into theoretical foundations. Starting with the human relations movement in Section 2.6.1 and progressing to a discussion of Miles (1965) HRT, Sections 2.6.3 and 2.6.4 expand on the theoretical framework. In section 2.6.5, the HRM principles are introduced. This theoretical groundwork aims to uncover the complex dynamics between artists and managers and their potential impact on the overall well-being of artists.

Table 1: Literature Review Topics and Subtopics Reviewed

| Topic 1: The Music Industry and Mental Health Defined | Topic 2: Mental Health in the Music Industry | Topic 3: The Artist-Manager Relationship Defined | Topic 4: Influence of the Artist-Manager Relationship | Topic 5: Theoretical Framework |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Subtopic A: The Structure of the Music Industry | Subtopic A: Mental Health and Music | Subtopic A: The Artist Manager Defined | Subtopic A: Impact of the Artist Manager Relationship | Subtopic A: Human Relations Theory and Miles (1965) HRT |
| Subtopic B: The World of Mental Health | Subtopic B: Mental Health Resources for Musicians and Managers | Subtopic B: Roles of Artist Manager Relationship: Personal, Financial, and Psychological | Subtopic B: Issues in the Artist Manager Relationship | Subtopic B: Human Resource Management and Principles |

## 2.2 TOPIC ONE: THE MUSIC INDUSTRY AND MENTAL HEALTH

Section 2.2 examines Topic One, 'The Music Industry and Mental Health.' Section 2.2.1, 'Structure of the Music Industry,' will provide essential insights into general music industry definitions applied for the study. Additionally, Section 2.2.2, 'The World of Mental Health,' will offer foundational information on general mental health definitions that will be referenced throughout the text.

### 2.2.1 Structure of the Music Industry

There have been numerous attempts to define a seemingly undefinable industry (Engström and Hallencreutz, 2003; Negus, 1992; The British Government, 1998; Wikström, 2020). In 1992, Keith Negus defined the music industry as an industry that is 'concerned with developing global personalities that can be communicated across multiple media' (Negus, 1992, p. 42). Wikström (2020) challenged Negus's definition by removing the word 'global', because not all artists target the global market. He also added the words 'musical content' due to the advance in intellectual property with technological growth. With these changes, Wikström states the music industry consists of organisations that develop musical content that can be shared across different forms

of media. Despite the immense technological changes that have shaped and impacted the industry, this definition remains relevant.

Engström and Hallencreutz (2003) created a list of thirteen music industry components that aimed to extend the definition to include the new roles within the industry that came about due to rapid advances in technology. These music industry components include:

1. Music press

2. Record labels/producers/studios

3. Music publishers

4. Mastering studios

5. Suppliers of stage equipment

6. Distributors and wholesalers

7. Music retailers

8. Retailers of music instruments and studio equipment

9. E-business

10. Management

11. Artists/Musicians/Performers

12. Tour production and concert arrangements

13. Artist agencies

Additionally, the UK National Department of Employment Statistics created a comprehensive diagram that shows the five major sectors and sub-sectors through thematic grouping (Ons.Gov.Uk., 2020). These sectors include music creators, live music, music publishing, recorded music, and music representatives. While there is no singular definition for the music industry, most professionals work within one of these six major sectors. Music managers fall within the music representative sector. The music representative sector also includes collective management organisations, music trade bodies, music accountants, and music lawyers (Music by Numbers, 2020). The current research focused on the music representative sector of the UK music industry

because they often handle the day-to-day communications and outreach with the artists.

The definition of the music industry is continually progressing, primarily driven by the rapid technological advancements characterising recent decades (Allen, 2022; Anderson, 2014). The transformative impact of technology, particularly in music creation and sharing, has been a focal point in the industry's dynamic landscape (Allen, 2022; Anderson, 2014). These advancements, spanning the last three decades, have introduced new challenges for artists and managers, encompassing issues such as illegal music sharing, intellectual property concerns, heightened competition, and the ongoing evolution of recording technology (Anderson, 2014; Elberse, 2013). In contrast to other industries experiencing change, individuals within the music industry appear to express dissatisfaction with their working conditions. Discontent emerges as a significant factor contributing to the prevalent mental health issues faced by both artists and their managers (Araújo et al., 2019; Berg et al., 2022; Gross and Musgrave, 2016; Musicians Union, 2023; Record Union, 2019). The intersection of these technological shifts and the changing work environment presents unique challenges for those in the music industry, reflecting in the heightened mental health concerns within this professional domain.

### 2.2.2 The World of Mental Health

The Centre for Disease and Control (CDC) states that mental health includes our 'emotional, psychological, and social well-being' (Centre for Disease and Control, 2021). Mental health affects how we think, feel, and act and determines how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices regarding our health. (Centre for Disease and Control, 2021; World Health Organisation, 2019). The World Health Organisation (WHO) defined mental health in 2014 as a 'state of well-being in which the individual realises his or her own abilities and work productively' (World Health Organisation, 2014, p. 1).

Keyes (2013) stated that there are three components of mental health, social well-being, emotional well-being, and psychological well-being. He described emotional well-being as a person's happiness, interest in life and satisfaction (Keyes, 2013). Social well-being refers to their personal feelings of contribution to society and feeling a sense of belonging within their community. Psychological well-being is

defined as being successful at managing one's responsibilities and liking their own personality (Keyes, 2013).

In 2015, a team of researchers conducted a study with World Psychiatry that tested some of these definitions (Keyes, 2013; World Health Organisation, 2014). They argued that the definition of mental health is influenced by the culture that defines it (Beezhold, et. al., 2015). Their team wanted to create a definition that was inclusive by avoiding 'culture-bound statements' (Beezhold, et. al., 2015). The team proposed an alternative definition by stating that, mental health is a dynamic that allows individuals to better cooperate with society (Beezhold, et. al., 2015).

In this thesis, when discussing mental health and well-being, all three factors of mental health as proposed by Keyes (2013) will be considered, social, emotional, and psychological. Keyes (2013) factors will be incorporated due to the similar aspects of this definition and HRM principles (Keyes, 2013; Mayo, 1932; Onday, 2016). Galderisi's (2015) definition of mental health is considered, framing well-being as a dynamic that enables individuals to better cooperate with society. Each of these definitions contributes to the ideas associated with HRM principles through their integration of cooperation with society, a sense of community and overall interest in life (Beezhold, et. al., 2015; Keyes, 2013; Miles, 1965; Punyanunt-Carter and Wrench, 2012).

## 2.3    TOPIC TWO: MENTAL HEALTH IN THE MUSIC INDUSTRY

Section 2.3, 'Mental Health in the Music Industry,' presents a comprehensive chronological overview of research exploring the mental health of musicians. Within this section, 2.3.1, 'Mental Health and Music,' provides information detailing the connection between musicians and adverse mental health through reviewing historical information, technological advancements, empirical evidence, industry conditions, and mental health solutions. Subsequently, 2.3.2, 'Mental Health Resources Specifically for Musicians and Managers,' provides current information on available resources for both artists and managers. The final subsection, 2.3.3, 'Comparing Industries: NHS MindCoach by Virgin Care,' shifts the focus to a structure, the NHS, examining how they have addressed the rising concerns of negative mental health among their workforces.

### 2.3.1 Mental Health and Music

Section 2.3.1 presents historical and current research regarding mental health in the music industry. The first section will review relevant historical background up to the twenty-first century, the next section discusses technological advancements that shaped the modern music industry, then empirical research on artists mental health will be presented. The final section discusses the impact of the industries working conditions to musician's mental well-being.

#### *Historical Background*

The discussion of mental health and music dates as far back as the early nineteen hundreds when James Fredrick Rogers (1926) argued to expand the idea that music was a recommended cure for sundry bodily and mental ills. In the early to mid-nineteen hundreds, researchers investigated the physical ramifications performing music could have on a musician's well-being, such as the lung issues wind-performers experience (Bouhuys, 1964; Rogers, 1926). Rogers looked further into the claims made by past researchers and argued that the issues musicians face in terms of their health could relate to mental attributes, rather than physical ones. He additionally argued against the notion that musicians should be viewed differently when regarding their mental health, despite their chosen profession, Rogers states 'Musicians are an emotional lot, they could not be musicians if they were otherwise.' (Rogers, 1926, p. 621).

The next phase of mental health discussions took place in the late nineteen hundreds, when researchers began to examine the mental well-being of musicians. A 1985 study explored the cognitive processes of musicians and discusses the factors that can influence musician's mental well-being such as performance anxiety, the therapeutic potential of music-making as well as the challenges it may present and the cognitive load from mastering their work that can lead to burnout (Sloboda, 1985). In 1987, Cooper and Wills assessed the job satisfaction, mental well-being and health behaviours of 246 popular musicians in the UK. They found that, while artists were satisfied with their roles, they suffered from above levels of psychological anxiety. Due to factors such as performance anxiety, poor physical working conditions, and work overload related to the impacts of the job on their personal and social lives (Cooper and Wills, 1987). Cooper and Wills worked together again in 1989 to investigate the major sources of stress experienced by UK popular musicians. The

main factors contributing to their stress were performance anxiety, public ignorance and low esteem, work overload or underload, career development worries, and relationships at work (Cooper and Wills, 1989).

Around that time Susan Raeburn (1987) conducted a study that followed ten professional rock musicians in the San Francisco Bay area for a six-month period to analyse their stress and coping mechanicians. Five general categories of stress were identified, workload, role conflict, career development, relationships at work, and participation in decision-making (Raeburn, 1987). In 1999, Raeburn wanted to extend research on popular musicians and mental health. Raeburn argues that a popular musician often interacts with a group culture that reinforces risk taking behaviours and the overall nature of the popular music industry that demands artists to create and satisfy customer demands for new trends, these factors lead popular musicians with carrying degrees of personal vulnerability which leads to the potential do develop psychological problems (Raeburn, 1999).

These references provide insight into the historical perception of mental health and musicians. The challenges musicians faced prior to technological advancements, that later disrupted the industry, remain closely linked to those experienced by artists today. These advancements have exacerbated these issues, increasing pressures on musician's wile reshaping the industry in ways that further impact their well-being.

### *Technological Advancements*

Since the end of the nineteenth century, the music industry has undergone substantial transformations, primarily driven by technological advancements that have heightened demands on both artists and their managers (Allen, 2022; Anderson, 2014; Elberse, 2013; Gamble et al., 2018; Musgrave, 2014; Pizzolatto, 2023; Sun, 2019). Recent technological developments, particularly in music creation and sharing, introduced significant challenges for artists and managers, encompassing issues such as illegal music sharing, intellectual property concerns, heightened competition, and the rapid evolution of technology (Anderson, 2014; Elberse, 2013). These changes have contributed to an increasingly complex working environment for musicians and their managers, a trend that may continue with ongoing advancements. The convergence of these technological shifts has significantly altered the landscape of the music industry, presenting both opportunities and challenges for those involved in the artistic and managerial aspects of music production.

Through the technological evolution within the music industry, researchers began to examine the impact this has on the artists. Initially, George Musgrave (2014) examined growing competitiveness within the music industry driven by emerging technologies that facilitated illegal downloads and lowered marketplace entry barriers. Musgrave revealed that due to this, musicians experience a stronger connection between their reputation and influence and their creative responsibilities. Leading to artists success being deeply connected with their public image, causing artists to feel overworked (Musgrave, 2014). Elia Pizzolitto (2023) also highlights this finding in her research which focused on the competition between traditional record labels and new business models that have emerged through social networks and streaming services. Pizzolatto also states that modern musicians are required to navigate dual roles between creative and entrepreneurial responsibilities, requiring artists to engage in self-promotion, brand management, and direct fan interactions, which redefines traditional notions of musicianship. Pizzolatto also discusses how, despite technological disruptions, major record labels have maintained significant control over the industry (Pizzolatto, 2023).

Hyojung Sun (2019) discusses the idea of the 'celestial jukebox', or the dream that people could access all music all the time, anywhere, due to technological advances. Prior to the technological revolution in the music industry, many believed that its advancements would decrease the control of major labels, but the opposite followed. Rather than losing control, major labels exploited technological disruptions to regain control of the industry through collaborating with streaming services on licensing deals. The result, major record companies became gatekeepers that control what gets promoted, playlisted, and monetised (Sun, 2019).

This ongoing dominance means that artists and their managers often feel pressured to conform to the expectations and practices of major labels, leading to increased stress and anxiety among managers struggling to compete in a market still largely controlled by these major players (Pizzolatto, 2023). Social media and fan engagement are also essential in modern music marketing, benefiting emerging artists significantly (Gamble et al., 2018). Social media should be strategically used for co-creation and community building, enhancing fan engagement (Burnes and Choi, 2017). However, these platforms also demand constant content creation and

interaction, which can be overwhelming for artists and managers as they work to build their online presence and overall branding strategies.

Studies have documented the technological advancements that have impacted the music industry (Allen, 2022; Anderson, 2014; Elberse, 2013; Gamble et al., 2018; Musgrave, 2014; Pizzolatto, 2023; Sun, 2019). These advancements, specifically related to music sharing, have introduced challenges for artists and managers, contributing to an increasingly intense work environment (Anderson, 2014; Elberse, 2013). However, this body of work has primarily focused on industry-wide impacts of technological disruptions without examining how managers understand or respond to the mental health implications of these changes for artists, creating a disconnect between identified problems and potential management solutions. Research contributes to literature by examining these well-established industry pressures from the unexplored perspective of manager knowledge and awareness. By addressing this, the research positions itself as a critical bridge between the well-documented issues relating to technological advancements and the potential for music management industry-level solutions.

### *Empirical Evidence on Musician's Well-Being*

Technological advancements have significantly disrupted the music industry, contributing to growing mental health challenges among modern professional musicians. In response, researchers have begun investigating the extent of artists struggles and seeking to understand the underlying causes. Record Union (2019) revealed that, out of 1,500 professional musicians, 73% had experienced negative emotions such as stress, anxiety, and depression. Anxiety and depression were noted as the most common symptoms stated by participants. Participants reported they had negative emotions related to music creation, and 33% of the subjects experienced panic attacks as a side effect of working in the industry. The main drivers behind negative emotions were fear of failure and financial instability. Pressure to succeed and loneliness were also common (Record Union, 2019).

Similar results were found from a qualitative study conducted in that same year that aimed to examine the well-being of popular musicians. Participants viewed health as imperative to their careers, physically and mentally. Along with vocal strain and fatigue, participants described anxiety, depression, and performance related stress were commonly reported along with the pressure to maintain success and a public

image contributed to an intense environment. Many singers relied on their personal support network of family and friends rather than seeking professional help (Araújo et al., 2019).

In 2016, Gross and Musgrave conducted an extensive study in the UK regarding mental health in the music industry. They carried out a two-part study conducted alongside Help Musicians UK and the University of Westminster. The first part of this study found that out of 2,211 self- identifying professional musicians working in the UK music industry, 71.1% identified that they had experienced incidences of anxiety and panic attacks, and 68.5% of respondents reported incidents of depression (Gross and Musgrave, 2016).

Interest in mental health within the music industry has grown significantly over the years, with research highlight the challenges faced by musicians. A 2022 study found that over 36% of musicians reported moderate to severe depression, 33.5% expressed similar levels of anxiety, and 65.4% screened positive for alcohol misuse. Additionally, 45.4% expressed significant occupational stress and 81% rated their financial stress overwhelming. Occupational and financial stress had a strong relationship with mental health burdens in musicians (Berg et al., 2022). That same year, Help Musicians and the Musicians' (2023) conducted a survey for UK musicians. The survey highlighted a high prevalence of poor mental health, particularly among early-career and marginalised musicians. Almost 30% reported negative mental well-being, with this group being twice as likely to believe they would not be working in music within one to five years. Additionally, 94% of musicians with low mental well-being encountered at least one barrier to career development, compared to 85% of musicians generally. These barriers included financial instability, lack of career progression, and limited industry connections, highlighting the current challenges faced by artists.

Musgrave (2023) and a team of researchers investigated the impacts of working in the music industry by exploring how interventions are adapting to address these challenges. They discuss how the industry's unique pressures, such as irregular work schedules, financial instability, and constant public scrutiny, worsen mental health issues among musicians. Highlighting several developing interventions, including mental health awareness campaigns, peer support networks, and industry-specific mental health resources. The team advocates for fairer pay, better working conditions,

and a culture prioritising mental well-being, along with further research and policy changes to ensure long-term improvements in mental health support for musicians (Howard et al., 2023).

Increasing awareness of mental health challenges in the music industry has prompted researchers to examine the overall well-being and life expectancy of musicians compared to the general population. A 2015 study was investigated with Norwegian musicians. Researchers investigated mental health issues among professional musicians by assessing symptoms of anxiety and depression in a sample of 1,607 members from the Norwegian Musicians Union. A comparison with a workforce sample of 2,550 individuals reveals a higher prevalence of psychological distress among musicians. The findings highlight a noteworthy 18% prevalence of psychological distress among musicians, compared to 8% in the general workforce. Research also explores the impact of work-related time on psychological distress and identifies higher occurrence among musicians combining employment and freelance work, as well as soloists and lead performers. Solo or lead performers, vocalists, keyboard instrument players and musicians playing within the traditional music genre reported the highest prevalence (Bjerkeset et al., 2014).

This method was used again in Australia in 2016 with the University of Sydney. Kenny examined the longevity of popular musicians and the proportion of deaths resulting from suicide, homicide, or non-intentional injury or accident. By collecting data from 12,664 musicians and 200 sources, Kenny aimed to determine if there was a heightened mortality rate among popular musicians. The findings revealed a notable discrepancy, indicating that, 'Across the seven decades studied, popular musician's lifespans were up to 25 years shorter than the comparable US. population' (Asher and Kenny, 2016, p. 37). Kenny (2016) also distinguished that suicide, homicide, and accidental death rates were higher in the US. music industry compared to the general US. Population.

Sally-Anne Gross, George Musgrave, and a team of researchers (2023) brought this examination to Denmark alongside the Danish Partnership for Sustainable Development. Their methodology included four roundtable discussions with various stakeholders from the Danish music industry to gain an understanding of their needs (Carney et al., 2023). Using the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS), the researchers found that 46% of respondents had scores indicating abnormal anxiety

levels, and 27% had clinically significant anxiety levels, with young creators and women being the most affected. The findings suggest that well-being is generally worse among the music industry population than the wider Danish population (Carney et al., 2023).

In 2024 a second report was commissioned in Australia by Support Act alongside the Centre for Social Impact Swinburne that surveyed 1,518 creative industry workers. The report examined the mental health and well-being of these workers through examining certain areas such as psychological distress, financial instability and access to support service (Elmes and Riseley, 2024). The report found that psychological distress is alarmingly high, with 57% percent of respondents reporting incidences of suicidal thoughts or behaviours, which is significantly higher than the national average. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (2020-2022) estimated that 16.7% of the general population had experienced suicidal thoughts or behaviours The report concluded that 35% reported a current mental health condition, which is 1.6 times higher than the general population prevalence of 21.5%. (Arya, et al. 2024; Elmes and Riseley, 2024). The findings noted the heavy work loads, financial precarity, and limited access to mental health resources for creative workers. The report called for more tailored mental health interventions that recognise the unique pressures of creative work, along with stronger support networks and financial relief measures for those struggling with the demands of the industry.

Most recently, George Musgrave and Dorian Lamis (2025) compared the rates of suicide in creative workers to the general population across multiple countries and genres. Their comparison determined that musicians face significantly higher risk of suicide compared to the general population with rates being higher for women. In the UK, while male musicians, actors, and entertainers had a rate 20% higher suicide rate than the population, the female rate was 69% higher than the general population. In the United States, women working in the creative fields held the highest suicide rate in 2012, 2015, and 2021 compared to all other occupational groups (Lamis and Musgrave, 2025).

These studies in comparison to the general population highlights that systemic changes are needed, including greater financial support, improved working conditions, and expanded access to mental health services. Many creative workers are unable to

access professional help due to affordability issues, time constraints, or a lack of awareness about available services.

There is extensive evidence regarding the mental health challenges faced by modern musicians (Araújo et al., 2019; Asher and Kenny, 2016; Berg et al., 2022; Bjerkeset et al., 2014; Carney et al., 2023; Elmes and Riseley, 2024; Gross and Musgrave, 2016; Howard et al., 2023; Lamis and Musgrave, 2025; Record Union, 2019). While the evidence identifies a vital issue in the music industry, this research does not address artist's well-being from the managers perspective. Creating a critical knowledge absence where extensive documentation of artist mental health exists alongside a lack of understanding about managerial awareness and response capabilities. Deficiency in research is addressed by shifting focus from the artists themselves to the role of managers as key intermediaries in artists support systems (Gilfillan and Morrow, 2016; Morrow, 2018; Wang, 2024). Rather than solely documenting challenges, this research explores how the artist manager relationship affects artist well-being. Through the exploration of tailored HRM practices to the creative sector, the study investigates how managers currently approach mental health care in their practice and what resources they are aware of or utilise, while working collaboratively with them to identify needs and develop more supportive frameworks.

### Industry Conditions Impact on Well-Being

Underlying issues have been discovered within the music industry, rather than music making. Researchers have aimed to further examine the notions of the industry that negatively impact artists mental well-being. In the second part of Gross and Musgraves 2016 study, researchers aimed to discover why and how the correlations between creating music and negative mental health outcomes occur. Their research found that while causes of mental health problems are multi-faceted, there is a link between working conditions and the epidemic of mental health issues among musicians. The researcher's state 'Working in the music industry appears to be making people sick' (Gross and Musgrave, 2016, p. 6). Their examination provided evidence that while there may be a subjective relationship between mental health struggles and the creative mind, the most significant factor affecting musicians today comes from the industry's working conditions and cultural norms rather than the act of music-making itself. According to a participant from Record Unions (2019) 73% report:

> Consider musicianship a job that is deserving of salary benefits just like the people that run the industry. Would be cool if the people that fuelled the industry with their art were taken care of. (Record Union, p. 9)

The reality of working as a professional musician entails numerous negative impacts due to the poor working conditions of the industry. These conditions include irregular hours, job insecurity, financial instability, blurred boundaries between work and professional life, gender-based challenges; eating disorders, performance anxiety, extensive touring, external pressures, and substance abuse (Ackerman and Adams, 2004; Ackerman and Kenny, 2008; Araújo et al., 2019; Bjerkeset et al., 2014; Jessen et al., 2021; Lamis and Musgrave, 2025; Smith and Teague, 2015).

To further examine the issues artists are facing due to working conditions of the music industry, researchers have examined the transition from amateur to professional musician (Frick, 2023; Gross et al., 2023; Musgrave, 2022). Musgrave (2022) aimed investigated the positive effects of music-making on emotional health and the potential drawbacks of pursuing it as a professional career. His research aimed to challenge the notion that music-making is inherently beneficial, especially for those who pursue it professionally. Musgrave discussed the transition from amateur to professional musician, with outcomes being influenced by factors such as talent, motivation, and social conditions. He suggests that the initial emotional benefits of music-making can transform into stressors as individuals embark on professional careers. These stressors include job insecurity, irregular working hours, and performance anxiety (Musgrave, 2022).

Musgrave examined mental health comparisons of amateur to professional musicians further in 2023 alongside Sally-Anne Gross and Catherine Loveday. The team found that over half of professional musicians experienced high anxiety levels and a third suffered from depression. Compared to amateur musicians, professional musicians reported deteriorated mental health and higher levels of clinical depression. These mental health challenges were frequently due to factors such as their perceived success levels, those that perceived themselves as more successful had higher levels of stress (Gross et al., 2023).

In that same year Jonathan Fricke (2023) explored the transition from amateur to popular musician to analyse the elevated rates of mental health challenges among professional musicians. Fricke identified several factors that contributed to mental

health challenges, such as demanding schedules, performance pressure, judgement for their creative output, and the notoriously fickle and competitive nature of the music industry where success is not certain. Fricke argued that these relational dynamics push artists to compromise their well-being to meet industry demands, often leading to significant psychological distress (Fricke, 2023).

The act of being a musician leads to challenges because due to an unpredictable future, unknowing whether their music will reach success and lead to financial support (Bjerkeset et al., 2014). Because of this, musicians often grapple with maintaining artistic integrity while meeting commercial expectations, leading to internal conflicts about their creative identity. Research shows that balancing personal authenticity with public personas can result in self-questioning and identity challenges (Beech et al., 2016; Costas and Fleming, 2009).

Apart from being an artist, working in the industry often causes musicians to face mental health challenges, rather than music-making (Gross and Musgrave, 2016). Providing further evidence that the music industry permeates negative working conditions that lead professional musicians to experience issues that impact their well-being. Due to job insecurity, musicians are required to juggle multiple roles such as performing, teaching, composing, and session work. The lack of structure of regular income leads to irregular working hours, job insecurity, financial struggles, and blurred boundaries between work and personal life (Lamis and Musgrave, 2025; Smith and Teague, 2015). The challenge of an ongoing changing work environment combined with an unstable economy can lead musicians to struggle balancing their family and work lives (Bjerkeset et al., 2014).

Artists also face gender-based challenges. The hierarchical structure of the industry often places women in vulnerable positions, making it challenging to report misconduct without fear of retaliation or career repercussions. For example, while women in the music industry experience sexual harassment such as inappropriate comments and physical assault, these attitudes have become normalised, so they are often overlooked or dismissed. Findings report that there are a lack of support systems for victims which can lead to a sense of hopelessness (Jones et al., 2023). Eating disorders are also prevalent in musicians and often experienced as a result of perfectionism, depression, anxiety and stress due to the demands of their job (Easmon and Kapsetaki, 2017).

Along with music creation, live performance duties are another aspect of a professional musician's role. Touring, gigging, or any other type of live performance provides opportunities to harm musician's mental well-being. Performing artists face several physical, social, and psychological challenges (Ackerman and Kenny, 2008). Physically, musicians can deal with performance-related risk factors such as poor posture, poor physical condition, inadequate instrument set-up, long hours of playing, insufficient rest breaks and inefficient movement patterns (Ackerman and Adams, 2004). Psychologically, a musician is required to maintain their skills at peak form, endure hours of solitary, subject their performances to scrutiny, and the need to self-evaluate their performances (Ackerman and Kenny, 2008). Psychological factors such as performance anxiety, public scrutiny, isolation, substance abuse issues, sleep disturbances, irregular work hours, and competition contribute to negative working conditions for professional musicians (Ackerman et al., 2012; Ackerman and Kenny, 2008; Araújo et al., 2019; Jessen et al., 2021; Lamis and Musgrave, 2025).

The nature of live performances generates negative lifestyle factors such as intense touring schedules, a quest for perfection, isolation, and even substance abuse (Lamis and Musgrave, 2025). Irregular working hours, late-night performances, and the lifestyle associated with the electronic music scene contribute to disrupted sleep patterns, which in turn negatively impact mental health (Araújo et al., 2019; Jessen et al., 2021). Past research highlighted the virtuous and viscous cycle that musicians face between their fan interaction and fulfilling performance duties. Poor audience engagement or lack of satisfaction with performances can increase stress and lead to mental health issues. Cycling through the ongoing tour process can cause an artist to burnout and experience anxiety or depression (Davidson et al., 2020). The competitive nature of the music industry and the need for constant public engagement creates challenges for professional musicians maintaining their mental health (Araújo et al., 2019).

Substance abuse is an issue many professional musicians face. A 2018 study was conducted aiming to understand gigging entertainers, including DJs, band members, and variety acts, working in Glasgow's pubs and nightclubs and their relationships with alcohol. Researchers examined the relationship between entertainers, including musicians and other performers, and alcohol within their work context. They identified key themes in the drinking behaviours, revealing constant exposure to alcohol and

marketing, psychological stressors promoting drinking during performances, the perception of 'free drinks' as a job perk, and a social expectation for entertainers to drink. The drinking behaviour themes intensified with higher levels of occupational success (Berg et al., 2018).

Performance anxiety is another element of live performances that impacts artists. Performance anxiety is a category of disorders that impact individuals in a range of performance settings, such as examinations, competitions and public speaking (Ackerman and Kenny, 2008). Past research has identified that female musicians and those under the age of thirty experience higher elves of music performance anxiety (Ackerman et al., 2012).

The combination of these factors accumulated from live performances created an industry where touring musicians are facing concerns with their mental well-being. A group of researchers examined the overall impacts of touring on musician's mental well-being, focusing on depression, suicidality, and identifying potential protective factors. Data from a survey of 1,154 international touring professionals, including both artists and crew members, revealed that 39.4% scored high for suicidality, with anxiety, stress, and burnout also prevalent. The researchers identified depression and anxiety were strong predictors of suicidality (Beitz et al., 2022). Bergson (2023) also revealed mental health challenges faced by touring musicians through a survey of 550 participants. Bergson found that touring professionals experience high levels of stress, depressive symptoms, and suicidal behaviour (Bergson, 2023).

Literature provides insight regarding the industry working conditions that are impacting artists well-being (Ackerman and Adams, 2004; Ackerman and Kenny, 2008; Araújo et al., 2019; Bergson, 2023; Bjerkeset et al., 2014; Easmon and Kapsetaki, 2017; Fricke, 2023; Jessen et al., 2021; Jones et al., 2023; Gross and Musgrave, 2016; Lamis and Musgrave, 2025; Musgrave, 2022; Smith and Teague, 2015). However, there remains a notable weakness in understanding whether artist managers recognise their role in perpetuating or mitigating these harmful conditions. This is addressed by examining musician's experiences with the same structural pressures as other industries while exploring how they navigate these within the artist manager relationship. The findings reinforce the urgency of addressing these adverse working conditions while recognising the lived experiences and responsibilities of artist managers, who are affected by the same, often unsustainable, structures.

### *Mental Health Solutions*

Following evidence that musicians are facing mental health challenges, researchers examined numerous solutions that artists are currently utilising for support. Past research found that family, friends, and industry peers are prominent support systems for artists (Araújo et al., 2019; Collins et al., 2018). Artists who utilise these support systems have exhibited lower levels of depression and anxiety symptoms (Jessen et al., 2021). Seeking support from fellow musicians, mentors, or music educators can create a northing environment that removes unnecessary judgement from the performance environment (Kenny, 2011). In addition to family support, mindfulness and emotional well-being have been noted as beneficial factors that demonstrate a protective buffer against depression and suicidal thoughts, even when encountering substantial stress (Beitz et al., 2022; Bergson et al., 2023).

While these support initiatives have proven to be beneficial, researchers found that increasing personal resources often increases levels of anxiety rather than demonstrating a decrease in stressors (Davis et al., 2004). Kenny (2004), working with a team of researchers, found that artists that engaged in higher uses of coping and personal strategies, such as self-care, adequate sleep, exercise and avoid harmful substances, had the highest scores of trait anxiety. Kenny argues that this is due to their perfectionism and performance anxiety. While Kenny still notes the benefits of mindfulness, deep breathing, and present-moment awareness, she recommends psychological interventions and medication for more severe cases (Davis et al., 2004; Kenny, 2011).

In addition to strategies that the musician can utilise, mental health interventions within the music industry are a positive and necessary step forward in assisting musicians. Previous mental health interventions reviewed were found most successful when they were accessible, affordable, and delivered by professionals familiar with their expressed concerns (Berg et al., 2020).

Some researchers claim that the next step forward in maintaining a positive working environment for musicians requires the establishment of a code of practice (Jepson et al., 2024). Jepson (2024) argues that establishing a code of practice is essential to provide guidelines and support systems that promote mental well-being within the industry. She recommends creating policies that acknowledge the specific

mental health needs of music industry professionals which can lead to better support structures.

Various strategies came together in the evolution of the current solutions related to mental health care in the music industry (Araújo et al., 2019; Beitz et al., 2022; Bergson et al., 2023; Collins et al., 2018; Davis et al., 2004; Jessen et al., 2021; Kenny, 2011). A critical void exists in understanding how managers fit into these support systems or whether they possess knowledge of these current solutions to recommend or facilitate access for their artists. Research showing that industry-specific mental health interventions are most successful when accessible, affordable, and delivered by professionals familiar with their concerns (Berg et al., 2020). Implying that managers could play a crucial role in connecting artists with appropriate resources. The findings inform both academic understanding of the music industry's mental health landscape and practical approaches to improving support systems through enhanced managerial awareness and capability and the multifaceted approaches employed by managers.

Additionally, current research on mental health strategies within the music industry lack the insight of HRM strategies for well-being. These strategies are usually designed for broad organisational structures, rather than creative relationships (Burgess et al., 2021; Hennekam, 2022; Okechukwu, 2023; Opara, et al., 2019). Absence limits the applicability of HRM-informed practices in environments where no formal human resource infrastructure exists. Existing HRM well-being frameworks were applied to creative sectors to identify elements that are beneficial within the artist manager relationship. The application demonstrated the need for industry-specific HRM strategies that reflect the relational and structural realities of artist development. The result contributes to a deeper understanding of how HRM practices can be adapted to address mental health in music industry contexts where formal human resource support is lacking.

## 2.3.2 Mental Health Resources for Musicians and Managers

Based on the identified challenges faced by artists, the MMF has initiated the annual publication of a guide aimed at music manager development (Parker, 2021). The 'Managers Guide to Mental Health' compiles resources relevant to the support of mental health issues within the music industry. In a recent reiteration of this guide, the MMF extensively addressed the primary factors contributing to mental health challenges faced by musicians and their managers. These factors encompass, but are

not confined to, stress, imposter syndrome, anxiety, depression, and issues related to addiction.

The guide presents an annual status of interviews with UK music managers and advice currently available for music managers regarding mental health needs (Parker, 2021). Although commendable as an initial stride in the right direction, the guide primarily concentrates on strategies for managers to attend to their mental health needs and those of the artists on their roster. To advance the discourse, further investigation is warranted to establish a baseline understanding of UK music managers awareness of the mental health status of their artists. Additionally, there is a need for providing comprehensive guidance on enhancing musician's mental well-being. The MMF acknowledged the initiation of their guide in 2017, stressing the ongoing evolution of mental health discourse within the music industry and their commitment to open dialogue on the subject (Parker, 2021).

The mental health charity Mind released a guide on mental health in the electronic music industry, specifically for artist managers. The guide offers valuable advice on supporting both artists and managers. For artists, the resource addresses issues such as drug and alcohol use, frequent travel, toxic criticism, and work insecurities. For managers, the guide discusses the unique aspects of their role, including dealing with co-dependency. Additionally, a section for artist managers focuses on their own mental health, offering suggestions on time management, self-rewarding, setting boundaries, and building a support network. Emphasising the importance of holistic support in maintaining mental well-being within the electronic music industry (Mind, 2021).

Tamsin Embleton (2023), a former tour manager, created a resource to help musicians and live music professionals navigate the psychological and physical challenges of touring. Embleton's manual covers a wide range of issues, including mental health, performance anxiety, addiction, group dynamics, relationship problems, media interactions, physical health, diversity and inclusion, crisis management, and post-tour recovery. The guidance serves as a valuable tool for managers, equipping them with knowledge and resources to support their artists and crew members effectively (Embleton, 2023). Embleton (2023) argues for better access to mental health and business support, professional development, mentoring, and education. Respondents advocate for economic reforms to the streaming model and legislation

for fair remuneration to creators. Experts stress the importance of mental health resources, as managers continue to find this area particularly challenging. The findings underscore the need for industry-wide partnerships to support mental well-being for both managers and artists. Improved access to mental health resources and work/life balance initiatives, such as mentoring and career coaching, are seen as vital for the sustainability of the music industry.

In 2024, Embleton explored the impacts of touring through her own experiences interwoven with three fictionalised anecdotes. She shares her personal stories, contrasting the taxing reality of touring with its romanticised image. The article includes three fictional stories, a DJ using alcohol as a coping mechanism, a pop star struggling with body image issues, and a young tour manager dealing with grief and burnout. Each story is followed by supportive strategies, such as therapy options for the tour manager experiencing grief. Embleton discusses how job demands can prevent proper grieving and offers insights into therapeutic discussions about attachment patterns. While the scenarios are fictional, they reflect common industry issues, providing helpful information for managing mental health challenges (Embleton, 2024).

Tamsin Embleton also founded the Music Industry Therapist Collective (MITC) in 2018. Which is an organisation of music industry psychotherapists, counsellors, psychoanalysts and psychologists that aim to provide music industry professionals with high quality care from registered and experienced practitioners with an understand of how the industry works. The MITC notes the negative working conditions of the industry and its impact on psychological difficulties, aiming to promote a sense of quality and support. (MITC, 2024)

MusiCares created a Resilience on the Road Toolkit, which is a living resource to foster and sustain mental and physical wellness among music professionals on the road. MusiCares aims to provide access to resources, high-quality physical wellness and an underpinning of empathy and compassion. The toolkit provides musicians with a range of support mechanisms such as support groups, mental health assessments, stories from other artists and information on building overall well-being through meditation, self-care and resilience (MusiCares, 2023).

In 2024, a review aimed to identify mental health issues in the music industry and inform the development of a 'code of practice' for mental health support. The team

analysed twenty-seven studies on mental health in the music industry, identifying five types of support services, talking therapies, telephone services, medical intervention, and music therapy. The researchers highlighted a lack of literature on effective mental health interventions for contemporary music industry members, emphasising the need for expanded research. While the guide provides an overview of existing resources, it acknowledges that current support is insufficient for industry needs (Jepson et al., 2024).

Along with the guides provided by MMF, Mind, BAPM and Tamsin Embleton there are numerous organisations, non-profit agencies, and charities seeking to provide musicians with assistance regarding their mental health. These organisations encompass the mental health support currently available for musicians working in the UK.

### Help Musicians UK

Help Musicians UK is a charity for musicians of all genres, including new artists to those who are established in their careers. Providing health and welfare services, creative development funding, ground-breaking research, and a mental health helpline for the entire music industry (Joseph, 2022). Help Musicians offers grants to musicians dealing with illness, injury, or other health-related issues. These grants cover medical treatments, therapies, and essential living costs (Help Musicians, 2025). Reoccurring payments and social visits to retired musicians is also offered. To further their mission, in 2017, Help Musicians launched Music Minds Matter, which was the first 24/7 mental health helpline formulated specifically for musicians.

### Music Minds Matter

Music Minds Matter is a Help Musicians dedicated mental health support line available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to musicians within the UK The mental health support line, staffed by accredited therapists, can refer musicians to deeper therapeutic support through the charity's longstanding clinical partner, the British Association for Performing Arts Medicine (BAPAM) (Music Minds Matter, 2021).

### British Association for Performing Arts Medicine

The British Association for Performing Arts Medicine (BAPM) is a UK-based charity that is dedicated to supporting the health and well-being of creatives arts workers and the unique challenges faced in their careers. BAPM provides professional

help and well-being services tailored to the needs of those working in the performing arts, leading as largest provider of clinical services to the UK's performing arts sector (BAPM, 2024). The BAPM offers free clinics where creative workers can receive confidential medica advice and assistance with physical and mental health issues related to creative practice.

Additionally, The BAPM released a healthy touring checklist and rider which provides practical advice for artists on aiding their well-being while touring. The rider guides musicians and performers through a list that asks questions regarding their diet, relationships and recognising signs of stress or illness. The checklist guides readers to a source where BAPM provides range of tools for needs such as mental health support in a crisis and managing performance anxiety to warm up exercises for musicians (BAPM, 2024)

### Music Managers Forum

Providing service primarily for managers. The MMF shared a sustainability guide for artist managers which focuses on mental and environmental sustainability in the music industry (MMF, 2024).

### Musicians Union

The Musicians Union (MU) is a trade union that represents musicians in the UK, advocating for musician's rights and campaigns for a better music industry. To support the mental well-being of artists, the MU offers free weekly well-being sessions, which includes practices such as Feldenkrais method, meditation, and yoga. The MU also provides resources, like mental health first aid training, during mental health awareness week (Musicians Union, 2023).

### Music Support

Music Support is a UK charity organisation that aids musicians working in the UK who are affected by mental health challenges and substance addiction. The charity provides support through a free confidential helpline managed by industry peers, mental health first aid training, backstage spaces at festivals with mental health trained staff, and support for family and friends of musicians. In 2024, it was reported that their helpline experienced a 51% increase in helpline calls year-on-year (Gottfried, 2024).

### *Key Changes*

Key Changes is a UK charity organisation aimed to support musicians with mental health and well-being. Offering a range of services for artists experiencing mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and other conditions. Key Changes supports artists through numerous initiatives such as community programs, performance opportunities, hospital services and progression support. Community programs provide artists with mental health conditions to work alongside professional producers to create music, and the charity additionally organises concerts for performance opportunities. These community services are also offered for musicians within hospital settings. Key Changes provides volunteering opportunities, peer mentor training, and supported work placements (Key Changes, 2025).

### *Tonic Rider*

Tonic Rider is a charity organisation that promotes mental well-being and recovery through music. One of their flagship initiatives, the Tonic Rider Programmer, which offers mental health support and training specifically for music industry professionals. Offering mental health training courses such as Mental Health First Aid and Suicide First Aid Lite, a six-week peer support group program, various workshops addressing topics like performance anxiety and substance abuse, and a well-being series which offers workshops on topics like nutrition and tour preparation (Tonic Rider, 2024)

### 2.3.3 Comparing Industries: NHS MindCoach by Virgin Care

Mental health awareness has become a key topic for nearly every industry (Bjaastad et al., 2016). While this awareness has influenced industry leaders to seek necessary change in their methods and re-format their internal structures, these conversations have yet to become commonplace within the music industry (Douze, 2019). The challenge is that while discussions around mental health are not prevalent in the music industry, it is also an industry with a high propensity for negative mental health outcomes (Araújo et al., 2019; Berg et al., 2022; Gross and Musgrave, 2016; Musicians Union, 2023; Record Union, 2019).

An industry that has taken the mental health crisis head-on is NHS, which in 2016 partnered with Virgin Care to create a development programme for colleagues

that aimed to help people better understand themselves and their co-workers (Virgin Care, 2016). Following a survey produced by Virgin Care for the NHS, this program found that 38.4% of respondents felt unwell due to work-related stress in the last 12 months, which is an increase from 36.7% in 2016. Evidence uncovered that 25.4% of respondents said they felt pressure from their manager, and 91.9% said they placed pressure on themselves.

To address the issues found throughout the survey, a clinical psychologist developed MindCoach; which uses positive psychology to enhance mental well-being and resilience (Virgin Care, 2016). MindCoach aims to teach a healthy mind-set that includes optimism, flexibility, and a belief that one has control over their life. Today, MindCoach, delivered as a half-day workshop for NHS staff, is attended by everyone in the apprenticeship programme and is an element of their leadership development framework.

MindCoach stands out as a commendable initiative strategically crafted to address the prevalent mental health issues among NHS staff. The survey conducted by Virgin Care in 2016 unearthed concerning statistics, indicating that a significant 38.4% of respondents experienced a decline in well-being attributable to work-related stress within the past 12 months. In comparison, Gross and Musgrave (2016) reported substantially higher figures reflective of mental health challenges within the music industry. A striking 71.1% of respondents acknowledged incidents of anxiety and panic attacks, while 68.5% reported instances of depression (Gross and Musgrave, 2016). This contrast between mental health concerns in the music industry and the NHS exposes a critical need for specialised support mechanisms. Despite the existence of various mental health programs designed for musicians, a noticeable disconnect persists by the lack of initiatives directed at assisting music managers in supporting the mental health needs of their artists.

## 2.4    TOPIC THREE: THE ARTIST MANAGER RELATIONSHIP

Section 2.5 provides an in-depth understanding of the intricate dynamics inherent in the relationship between artists and their managers. The initial subsection offers an evaluation of various definitions attributed to the term artist manager. Subsection 2.5.2, explores the multifaceted dimensions of the artist manager relationship, categorising them into personal, financial, and psychological domains.

### 2.4.1 Artist Manager Defined

An all-encompassing description of the artist manager's role was provided by Geoffrey Hull in 2011, defining an artist manager as an artist's representative who works diligently with the artist at every stage to develop the artist's career. Hull (2011) highlighted the prevalent structure of artist management businesses, typically operated by multiple firms and managers simultaneously handling approximately five to six acts on their roster.

In 2021, researchers Michal Szostak and Lukasz Sulkowski sought to deepen the understanding of the artist manager's definition through in-depth interviews, aiming to answer the question, 'who is the artist manager'? They introduced a 'creativity development model' grounded in the artist manager's characteristics, defining the identity as a 'visionary, reproducer, craftsman, and creator' (Sulkowski and Szostak, 2021, p. 376). The roles of an artist manager encompass a broad spectrum, ranging from overseeing day-to-day activities to conceptualising large-scale ideas and ensuring the artist's long-term success (Allen, 2022; Hull, 2021). Allen (2022) stresses the comprehensive involvement of an artist manager in 'every facet of an artist's life. The MMF provided an exhaustive guide to an artist manager's responsibilities, including financial acumen and negotiating deals in the best interest of their artists (Coldrick, 2017; Parker, 2021). Wang (2024) further describes the high intensity of involvement incorporated in the artist management role:

> To keep musicians on track to make music, artist managers need to obtain a significantly high level of involvement to understand what musicians tend to express through their music, who they are and who they are not, in what ways they see the world and human relations, what they see as positive beliefs and practices, and what they see as destructive or negative ones. (Wang, 2024 p. 3)

With the application of the HRM to this research, distinction is identified, discerning the differences between a manager in a more common corporate or organisational environment and an artist manager in the music industry. Allen (2022) states that there are four classic functions to any type of management and that these four functions apply to artist management, planning, organising, directing, and controlling. The artist manager's role differs significantly from that of a general organisational manager. In most management organisations, the managers hire staff,

and those staff are considered subordinate to the manager. In the artist manager relationship, the manager works for the artist, and the artist employs the manager (Morrow, 2018).

In 2022, Paul Allen (2022) defined the artist manager as:

> The most effective manager is one whose belief in the artist is deep enough to be the basis for every decision made on his or her behalf, whether it is believing in the artist's potential or believing in who the artist is. (Allen, 2022, p. 13)

Allen (2022) also points out that an artist manager does not have set office hours or definitive time off for holidays or weekends.

Hilary Glow (2010) wrote an article alongside Deakin University that highlighted the role of artist managers and the need for a critical approach to navigating complex industry dynamics. Glow critiques traditional management framework, which assumed that all branches can be confined within the same ideologies. She argued that arts management requires a different approach because unlike traditional management frameworks, creative industries are motivated by emotional and cultural values. She advocated that rather than solely focusing on administrative efficiency, they should engage in self-reflexive practices that challenge assumptions about how the arts are managed and valued. Glow suggested that managers take a critical, relational and adaptive approach to their work, rather than exclusively business motivations (Glow, 2010).

According to Morrow (2018), artists function as capitalists who own and sell the products of their labour, highlighting potential issues stemming from the informal hiring and firing system prevalent in the artist manager relationship. Morrow (2018) also notes the absence of formal qualifications for artist managers and the initiation of some artist manager relationships through personal connections, potentially leading to challenges like issues of artistic and aesthetic autonomy.

### 2.4.2 Roles of the Artist manager Relationship: Personal, Financial and Psychological

The following section explores the multifaceted dimensions of the artist manager relationship, categorising them into personal, financial, and psychological domains.

### *Personal*

An artist manager is responsible for developing all aspects of the artist's career and it is vital that the artist and manager work closely together (Hull, 2021). Along with maintaining a strong and positive relationship with the artist, a personal manager needs to have good 'people skills' so that they can communicate with all the other members of the artist's team that affect income streams (Hull, 2021; Morrow, 2017). These 'people skills' also come into play when building an artist manager's network, which is a necessary part of the role to provide the artist with the right opportunities to develop a significant career (Hull, 2021).

The first stages of the artist manager relationship deal with artist development. Consisting of feedback and constructive criticism relating to the artist's song writing and performance abilities. Artist managers are responsible for being able to identify the strengths and weaknesses in an artist to decide if they can achieve certain roles of the career on their own or if someone needs to be hired, such as a songwriter, producer, or someone to assist with vocalisation (Allen, 2022; Hull, 2021). Once these aspects are considered, it is the manager's responsibility to source the artist with a recording contract and then ensure that the release with that contract is successful (Hull, 2021).

Once a record deal is agreed on, the artist manager works with the record label's marketing and promotion to ensure that there is an efficient plan for a successful record. The manager also works alongside the artist to encourage them to complete the record and ensure that they are present for any marketing or promotional activities, the process repeats for the next record and carries on for as long as possible. Ensuring the artist's longevity by expanding to wider audiences is also an important aspect of the manager's role. A management agreement typically lasts one to two years but sometimes lasts as long as three to five years (Hull, 2021).

### *Financial*

The revenue streams of a professional artist are conventionally categorised into three sectors, live appearances, recordings, and song writing (Allen, 2022; Hull, 2021). In the live performance income stream, the artist manager assumes the responsibility of preparing the artist, organising concerts and events, while the artist is accountable for the actual performances. The manager's commission is reflective of the revenue generated from this stream (Allen, 2022; Hull, 2021; Morrow, 2018). Artist managers, entrusted with overseeing every facet of the artist's career, typically receive a

commission ranging from 15% to 20% of the artist's total income, with instances where the commission may rise to 25%. Commission is calculated based on the adjusted gross income, where specific expenses are deducted before the manager receives their share (Morrow, 2018; Munro and Simpson, 2012).

For the recording stream, the division of revenue between the artist and manager is contingent upon their agreement or contract. Recording artists, as defined by Hull (2021), participate in recordings by playing instruments or singing. Many recording artists, often referred to as 'royalty artists,' derive their income from royalty payments linked to record sales (Hull, 2021, p. 8). Artists may choose to engage in both writing and performing music or exclusively pursue one of these roles. Songwriters, who may be independent or affiliated with a record label, receive royalties for the songs they wrote or contributed to. Like the recording stream, the decision to share a portion of this revenue with the manager lies with the artist.

The commission structure for artist managers has been a subject of recent debate. While the standard commission falls within the range of 15-20%, this typically pertains to the live performance sector unless otherwise specified in the artist manager agreement (Hull, 2021). Allen (2022) emphasises that the duties of managing routinely encompass virtually every aspect of an artist's professional and personal life (Allen, 2022, p. 9). Members of the MMF adhere to a code of practice stipulating that a commission should not exceed 25%, with profit-sharing arrangements capped at 50% (Parker, 2021, p. 1).

### *Psychological*

The psychological dynamics within the artist manager relationship extend to the realm of creative control, encompassing the level of influence that the manager wields over the artist's creative undertakings (Gilfillan and Morrow, 2016; Morrow, 2018). Within the discourse on artist management, there exists a perspective that conceptualises it as a form of collective creativity. Morrow (2018) articulates this concept:

> Both the artist and the artist manager, in an ongoing manner, contribute to each other's creative processes, thereby collaboratively shaping the trajectory of artists careers over time' (Morrow, 2018, p. 15).

In this collaborative creative process, the interplay between the artist and manager is intricate, with each party influencing and enriching the other's creative expressions. Morrow's (2018) assertion underlines the reciprocal nature of this collaboration, where the artistic vision and career development of both artist and manager merge synergistically over the course of their professional journey. Shared creative space fosters an environment where the artist manager relationship becomes a bond of creative input, shaping the artistic output and career trajectory of the artist.

Managers are considered emotional caretakers of musician (MMF, 2012; Wang, 2024). According the MMF's (2012) Code of Practice, artist managers are recognised as the sole individuals of legal duty of care for artists (MMF, 2012; Wang, 2024). Managers have the role of accessing the entirety of the musician, which adds the dimension of a 'emotion worker' and are required to devote emotions to understand the musician, aiding in the conversion of project to product 'through the matter of emotion.' The requires an element of emotional labour, where managers are required to make an investment. Wang (2024) summarises this as 'The emotional dimension of artist management is about an emotion worker managing another emotion worker' (Wang, 2024 p. 162).

## 2.5 TOPIC FOUR: INFLUENCE OF THE ARTIST MANAGER RELATIONSHIP

Subsection 2.6.1, 'Impact of the Artist manager Relationship,' examines research illuminating the profound effects the artist manager relationship can exert on the artist's well-being. Subsequently, Subsection 2.6.2, 'Issues of the Artist manager Relationship,' explores the contemporary challenges portrayed by research within the dynamic landscape of the artist manager relationship in the music industry.

### 2.5.1 Impact of the Artist manager Relationship

The primary driving force shaping a musician's career is their manager, serving as the inaugural business associate within the artist's team (Morrow, 2013). Watson's (2018) analogy compares the artist's team structure to a bicycle wheel, where the artist and manager function as the central hub, orchestrating the assembly of other key players, like spokes on the wheel, to propel the artist's career forward. These team members include the publisher, attorney, and publicist, forming an interconnected network that navigates the complexities of the music industry (Watson, 2002). The

manager's role, positioned at the core of this wheel, involves decision-making and strategic coordination with each spoke, representing facets like record companies, streaming services, radio stations, booking agents, publishers, and publicists (Watson, 2002).

In a pilot study conducted by Francesco Gaudesi in 2016, the manager emerges as the intermediary between the musician, the business aspects of the music industry, and the audience (Gaudesi, 2016). Gaudesi investigates the context of artist development within organisations managed by these professionals, stressing the critical role of the artist's identity and communication to the audience, which the artist manager significantly influences (Gaudesi, 2016; Morrow, 2006). Within this framework, the interpersonal relationship between the artist and manager emerges as foundational, built on a bedrock of mutual trust that proves fundamental to the artist's trajectory within the industry (Gaudesi, 2016). A collaborative and trust-based approach stands as a cornerstone, fostering an environment conducive to the artist's professional growth and long-term success.

Musgrave explored the impacts of both business and personal relationships on musician's mental well-being, drawing on evidence that relationships play a vital role in musician's careers (Musgrave 2023). Through semi-structured interviews with twenty-eight UK-based musicians, he examined the cultural and psychosocial emotional triggers affecting their well-being. The findings reveal the complex nature of musician's relationships, noting that their economic relationships often overlap with personal ones. Musgrave (2023) found that the perspectives of partners and families are often overlooked in favour of the musician's viewpoints.

Professionally, musicians often experience discrepancies in relationship definitions. Misinterpreting the boundary between friend and colleague can lead to feelings of depression and anger. Musgrave discusses the ambiguity in artist manager relationships, where managers, although technically employed by musicians, often make key business decisions, complicating role understandings. Some artists developed close relationships with colleagues who felt like family, but these connections often ceased once the professional relationship ended. Musgrave states that misinterpreting these relationships can be harmful when managerial utility is misconstrued as meaningful friendship. Highlighting a core issue in artist manager

relationships, the lack of clear definitions for beneficial relationship types for mental well-being and success (Musgrave, 2023).

Past research established that managers are the driving force shaping a musician's career and function as the hub of the artist's professional network, operating as the intermediary between the musician and the audience (Allen, 2022; Gaudesi, 2016; Morrow, 2013; Watson, 2002) While these studies establish the manager's strategic and relational importance, they did not investigate how this influence translates into awareness of mental health or support capabilities. A lack of knowledge remains in understanding whether managers are aware of the psychological impacts of their role, how they define the boundaries of their relational responsibilities, and whether they feel equipped to address mental health concerns within this dynamic. Although Musgrave (2023) explored the emotional complexity of artist manager relationships from the artist's point of view, he did not examine how managers interpret or navigate these uncertainties. This study questions how managers address their personal, financial, and psychological responsibilities in the absence of clear guidance around appropriate support approaches for mental health. Seeking to extend existing knowledge by shifting focus from what managers are to what they do and understand in relation to artist mental health.

### 2.5.2 Issues of the Artist manager Relationship

The pivotal role of the artist manager in determining the success or failure of the musicians they represent is a central focus. Scholarly works, such as those by Morrow (2013) and Gaudesi (2016), acknowledge the significant influence wielded by the artist manager relationship, providing context for understanding how managerial decisions impact the well-being of musicians. The examination of case studies, including those involving Elvis Presley and Colonel Tom Parker, Jimi Hendrix and his co-managers Michael Jeffery and Chas Chandler, along with research documented around the tragic death of Avicii, sheds light on potential issues within the artist manager relationship (Allen, 2022; Hopkins, 1984). Additionally, research from the MMF (2019) and EMMA (2023) provides a greater understanding into issues managers are facing within their roles.

Artist managers within the media are often depicted as a 'manipulative, greedy, and unprincipled opportunist' (Anderton et al., 2013 p. 184; Wang, 2024). An illustrative instance from 1997 involved the long-term partnership between Elvis

Presley and his manager, Colonel Tom Parker (Allen, 2022). Commencing when Presley was seventeen, their initial contract granted Parker 25% of the artist's overall earnings and 50% of merchandise and recording proceeds. Over time, Parker's share increased to 50% of all earnings, coupled with substantial powers of attorney enabling him to negotiate contracts on behalf of the artist. A parallel case involves Jimi Hendrix, who engaged co-managers Michael Jeffery and Chas Chandler starting in 1966. Their agreement stipulated a 30% share of Hendrix's total earnings, a 3% product royalty, and 50% of profits from their jointly owned music publishing company (Allen, 2022; Hopkins, 1984). A notable concern was the co-managers ownership of the artist's creations through their shared publishing company. In both instances, the managers received commissions surpassing typical management agreements, raising questions about the fairness and ethical dimensions of such arrangements. Due to these representations, the public is often provided with negative illustrations of artist management (Wang, 2024).

Research regarding the artist manager relationship, music management ethics, and working conditions has gained momentum in recent years, particularly in response to the widely publicised suicides of prominent musicians, such as EDM artist Avicii in 2018. Avicii's suicide was not only widely covered in the media but also served as an incentive for critical discourse around artist manager relationships and the ethical responsibilities within the music industry (Chaparro and Musgrave, 2021; MMF, 2019). The complex ethical terrain these professionals navigate reveals managers functioning as protective intermediaries between artists and powerful industry entities while constantly balancing economic imperatives against artist well-being. Researchers found that, managers are acutely aware of the moral and ethical dimensions of their decisions, valuing their friendship with artists and considering social norms within their genre (Chaparro and Musgrave, 2021). These findings emphasise how ethical decision-making processes are intricately linked to both management practices and mental health outcomes in the industry, with managers employing strategies like transparent communication and relationship cultivation to navigate these challenges.

Music management industry research has consistently portrayed contemporary managers as multifaceted professionals simultaneously functioning as entrepreneurs, dealmakers, and caretakers of their client's business interests and personal well-being

(Calkins et al., 2023; MMF, 2019). Studies have revealed concerning manager workload patterns, with nearly a quarter of respondents working over 49 hours weekly according to the MMF's report, while a report from EMMA, shows that 58% are either self-employed or running small management companies (Calkins et al., 2023; MMF, 2019). Excessive workload correlates with reported mental health challenges, yet managers frequently lack access to appropriate support resources despite their critical role in artist careers. Significant gender disparities have also emerged across studies, with women more likely to occupy lower income brackets despite shouldering similar responsibilities to male counterparts (Calkins et al., 2023).

Research collectively points toward necessary structural reforms within the industry. The MMF has advocated for improved remuneration models and working conditions, while the EMMA has emphasised policy initiatives targeting financial structures and diversity advancement (Calkins et al., 2023; MMF, 2019). These economic conditions directly impact sustainability in the profession, with recommendations for user-centric streaming models addressing the financial stressors that increase mental health challenges (Calkins et al., 2023). Additionally, Chaparro and Musgrave's (2021) moral intensity testing revealed managers awareness of ethical dimensions in their decision-making, including consideration of friendship values and genre-specific social norms. Existing research illustrates a profession characterised by significant ethical responsibility, excessive workloads, inadequate compensation structures, and limited well-being resources. These conditions create substantial challenges for music managers while simultaneously tasking them with supporting artist well-being (Calkins et al., 2023; Chaparro and Musgrave, 2021; MMF, 2019). This sentiment is echoed within a statement from a participant in MMF's (2021) 'Guide to Mental Health':

> I have seen many managers, usually through lack of experience, neglect to create a framework, or a set of behavioural guidelines, around the relationship they have with their artist (MMF, 2019 p. 9)

The information provided on mental health, and the music industry serves as a backdrop to the broader context of the challenges faced by artists, managers, and the industry as a whole. Overall, the union of historical perspectives on musician's health, the evolution of the music industry, and recent research on mental health challenges forms a comprehensive backdrop for examining the role of HRM within the music

industry. It underscores the need for a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by artists and managers and the potential impact on mental well-being.

Recent research began to shed light on the complex challenges faced by music managers, revealing a profession marked by excessive workloads, precarious employment, and limited access to mental health support (MMF, 2019; Calkins et al., 2023; EMMA, 2023). These findings reveal structural conditions that often make management work unsustainable and potentially psychologically harmful. Wang (2024) calls for future research to develop and assess support systems for the well-being of artist managers. Despite this recognition, a key void remains, while managers are expected to support artist well-being, there has been little investigation into whether they possess the mental health literacy or training required to fulfil this responsibility. Lack of integration represents a critical blind spot, regarding how these personal challenges intersect with musician's capacity to support artist's well-being. The deficit is addressed by exploring not only the working conditions of artist managers but also their self-perceived knowledge, preparedness, and emotional capability to support mental health in practice. The AMMHTK was developed and assessed it ability to assist managers with supporting artists and their own well-being.

## 2.6  TOPIC FIVE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section provides foundational information on the Human Relations Movement and subsequent HRT and HRM. Subsection 2.6.1, 'Human Relations Movement' presents a chronological summary of the immergence of HRM. Section 2.6.2, 'Human Resource Theory' discusses the emergence of the HRT and following HRM. Section, 2.6.3, 'Human Resource Theories Principles' delivers a list of principles derived from a review of approximately forty studies, reports, conference papers, and academic texts. Lastly, Section 2.6.4 'Human Resource Management in the Music Industry' provides an overview of research relating to HRM and creative industries.

### 2.6.1 Human Relations Movement

The motivation for the human relations movement dates to the early 1900's following the industrial revolution (Bright and Cortes, 2019; McGerr, 2003). During this time, there was a significant increase in people working in factories, which created an underclass of inadequately educated workers. Concerns began to grow over

working conditions and the indication that money, influence, and pressure from large corporations were overlooking the well-being of employees. Notable researchers, such as Frederick Winslow Taylor (1911), responded to these concerns by exploring ways corporations could establish more effective systems for their employees. Taylor, recognised as the 'Father of Scientific Management,' introduced principles such as time studies, division of labour, cost-control systems, written instructions, planning, and standardised equipment which shaped the foundation for incentives and compensation systems (Bright and Cortes, 2019; Taylor, 1911).

Taylor's (1911) work laid the foundation for subsequent management research aimed at benefiting employees, leading to the emergence of the human relations movement as a response to issues associated with scientific management and the oversight of social aspects of work. Elton Mayo's (1932) pivotal research played a fundamental role in the origin of human relations movement, emphasising the social factors in the workplace. Mayo's investigations during the Hawthorne studies revealed that employee well-being and productivity were influenced more by social factors than environmental changes. Mayo's investigation also aided in stressing the importance of management's role in creating a positive work environment. Mayo's observations laid the groundwork for numerous industries to prioritise the well-being of their employees by integrating considerations of group dynamics and social systems. The human relations movement advanced scientific management because it acknowledged that peoples' attitudes, perceptions, and desires played a critical role in their workplace performance. Recognising the importance of social dynamics in the workplace marked a departure from Taylor's (1911) emphasis on pay as a solution to social pressures.

In addition to Mayo (1932), researchers like Abraham Maslow (1943) and Douglas McGregor (1960) contributed to the human relations approach. Maslow's 'Hierarchy of Needs Model' focused on human motivation levels and the significance of communication, while McGregor's Theory X and Y addressed opposing views on management, to view Maslow's Hierarchy of needs, see Figure Two. Theory X and Y represented different perspectives on employee motivation, with Theory X managers believing in control and direction, while Theory Y managers embraced a more collaborative and supportive approach (McGregor, 1960). Essentially, The X manager is influenced by the negative aspects of classical management theories, while the Y manager follows the rules of the human relations movement, to view differences

between Theory X and Y Table Two. To review a figure portraying a connection between Maslow's (132) table and McGregor's (1960) Theory see Figure Three (Lyon, 2016).

Figure 2: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs
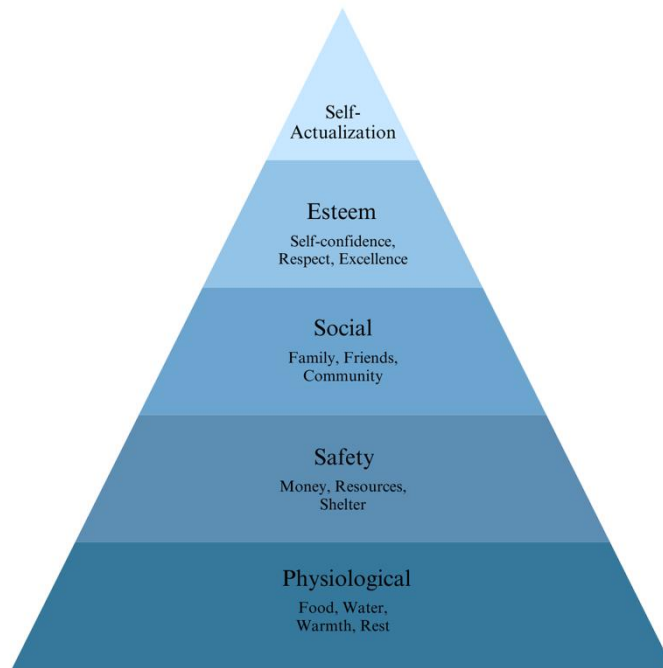


Source: (Maslow, 1943)

Table 2: Differences Between McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y

| Theory X | Theory Y |
|----------|----------|
| People dislike work and find ways to avoid it | People percieve work as natural and find it enjoyable |
| Workers want to avoid responsbility | People want responsiblity |
| Want direction | Prefer self-direction |
| Resists Change | Wants to work toward organisational goals |
| Not Intelligent | Have the potential to develop and adapt |
| Not Creative | Are intelligent |
| Managers must control, reward, and/or punish employees to maintain performance | Are creative |
| | Work conditions need to be set to achieve worker and organisaitonal goals |

Source: (McGregor, 1960)

Figure 3: Connection between Maslow's (1932) Table and McGregor's (1960) Theory
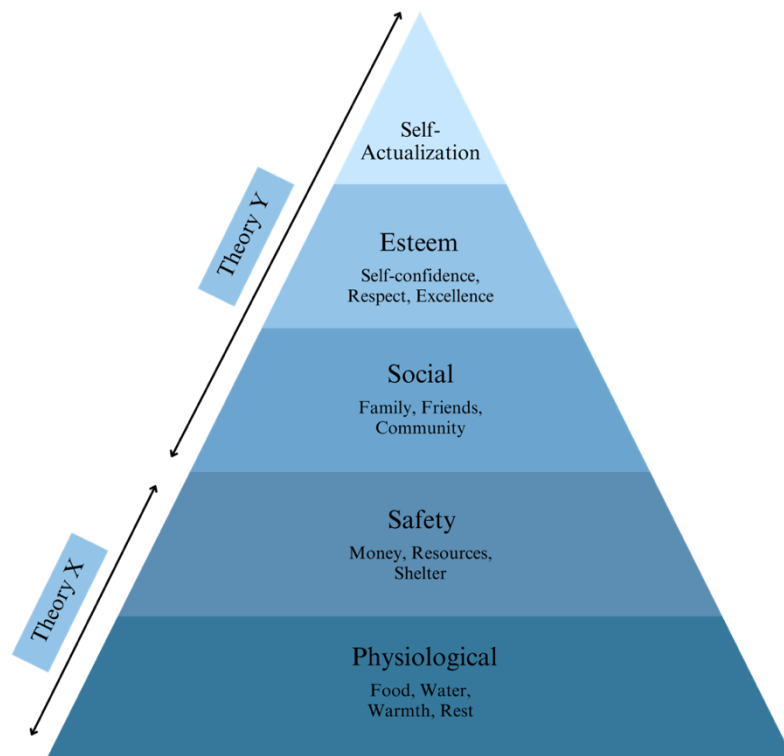


Source: (Lyon, 2016)

### 2.6.2 Human Resource Theory

The theories conceived by Mayo (1932), Maslow (1943), and McGregor (1960) outlined the human relations framework which emphasised the fulfilment of higher-order needs that enhance employee productivity. Deviating from an additional branch of management, HRT, which views employees as valuable resources contributing to organisational functioning and individual needs (Miles, 1965; Punyanunt-Carter and Wrench, 2012).

Raymond Miles HRT provided a foundation for the HRM in 1965, proposing a paradigm where employees possess untapped resources that, if cultivated, can contribute significantly to organisational success. Departing from traditional human relations approaches, Miles emphasised creating a work environment conducive to fostering employee creativity and risk-taking. Highlighting the importance of consistent and bidirectional communication, with participatory decision-making processes (Miles, 1965; Punyanunt-Carter and Wrench, 2012). To view a table providing examples of differences between human relations and human resources see Table Three.

Table 3: Raymond Miles- Human Relations vs. Human Resource

| | Human Relations | Human Resources |
|---|---|---|
| Worker Needs | Workers need to belong, be liked, and be respected. | While workers need to belong, be liked, and be respected, workers also want to creatively and effectively contribute to worthwhile goals. |
| Worker Desires | Workers really desire to feel as though they are a useful part of the organization. | Workers really desire to exercise initiative, responsibility, and creativity, so management should allow for these. |
| Outcomes | If worker needs and desires are filled, they will willingly cooperate and comply with management. | Management should tap into worker capabilities and avoiding wasting untapped resources. |
| Job Satisfaction | When employee needs and desires are met, they'll be more satisfied. | When employees feel that they have self-direction and control and are able to freely use their creativity, experience, and insight they will be more satisfied. |
| Productivity | Job satisfaction and reduced resistance to formal authority will lead to more productive workers. | When employees feel that they have self-direction and control and are able to freely use their creativity, experience, and insight they will be more productive . |
| Management Goal | Managers should strive to ensure that all employees feel like they are part of the team. | Managers should help employees discover hidden talents and ensure that all workers are able to fully use their range of talents to help accomplish organizational goals. |
| Decision Making | Management should allow employees to offer input on routine decisions and be willing to discuss these decisions, but management should keep important decisions to themselves. | Management should allow and encourage employees to freely participate in the decision making process with all types of decisions. In fact, the more important the decision is, the more the manager should seek out his employee resources in the decision making process. |
| Information Sharing | Information sharing is a useful tool when helping employees feel like they are part of the group. | Information sharing is vital for effective decision making and should include the full range of creativity, experience, and insight from employees. |
| Teamwork | Management should allow teams to exercise moderate amounts of self-direction and control. | Management should encourage teamwork and continually look for greater areas where teams can exercise more control. |

Source: (Miles, 1965)

The evolution from the human relations movement to HRM introduced a shift in focus on the manager employee relationship. While research during the human relations movement aimed to enhance employee productivity, HRM considers employees as resources contributing to organisational functioning and individual needs (Miles, 1965; Punyanunt-Carter and Wrench, 2012). Distinctly, HRM encompasses task, social dynamics, and innovation, as opposed to human relations movement which emphasised task-related and social aspects of employment (Maslow, 1943; Mayo, 1932; McGregor, 1960).

Following Miles (1965) work with HRT, HRM has continued to evolve, recognising human capital as a central asset. Bright and Cortes (2019) define HRM as

providing value to organisations through managing the employee life cycle from the time of hiring to retirement. They highlight five key aspects, including human resource compliance, employee selection, performance management, compensation rewards and benefits, and talent development and succession planning with each aspect contributing to the organisation's value for employees. Signifying the contemporary importance of effective HRM in driving organisational success.

As HRM evolved, two types of HRM developed, soft and hard HRM. Soft HRM focuses on training and developing the current workforce to enhance quality and dedication. In hard HRM, people are valued like any other resource in an organisation that contribute to meeting organisational goals. Hard HRM is often combined with strategies to reduce costs, low wages for employees with a high degree of supervision (Beardwell and Claydon, 2007).

### 2.6.3 Human Resource Management and Employee Well-Being

Well-being is a central role within HRM research, identifying key issues that employees face that impact their well-being such as inadequate working conditions, mental overload, and job insecurity. Human resource management research also identifies key aspects that positively impact employee's well-being such as positive interpersonal contact, supportive supervision, and pay parity (Atkin and Brooks, 2021; Bryson, 2014). Bryson (2014) reviewed previous research and identified these elements that can positively and negatively impact an employee's well-being. A full list of these elements can be found on Table Four on the following page.

These negative aspects on well-being correlate with elements that are natural to the music industry or functioning's within creative industries. The reality of working as a professional musician requires several negative impacts due to the poor working conditions of the industry. These conditions include irregular hours, job insecurity, financial instability, blurred boundaries between work and professional life, gender-based challenges; eating disorders, performance anxiety, extensive touring, external pressures, and substance abuse (Ackerman and Adams, 2004; Ackerman and Kenny, 2008; Araújo et al., 2019; Bjerkeset et al., 2014; Jessen et al., 2021; Lamis and Musgrave, 2025; Smith and Teague, 2015).

These issues, which are natural to the music industry, align closely with evidence of negative impacts of well-being in the general workforce. Providing evidence that

working within the music industry is causing artists to face issues with their personal well-being.

Table 4: Positive and Negative Elements that Impact Employee's Well-Being

| Negative Impact on Well-being | Positive Impact on Well-being |
|---|---|
| *Inadequate working conditions* : Poor air quality, lighting, temperature, workspace, and posture. | *Physical security:* Safe practices, adequate equipment, and a pleasant working environment. |
| *Unsatisfactory working and personal relationships*: Conflict and tensions between individuals or groups. | *Positive interpersonal contact:* Supportive relationships with managers, co-workers, and external stakeholders. |
| *Lack of control over work:* Unmanageable workloads, unrealistic expectations, and impossible deadlines. | *Autonomy over their job:* Control over tasks, participation in decision-making, and job variety. |
| *Mental and physical overload:* Excessive work-related demands, long hours, lack of breaks, and cancelled leave. | *Opportunities to use and develop skills:* Access to training and encouragement for professional growth. |
| *Job insecurity:* Lone working, high-risk roles, and uncertainty over future employment. | *Job security and career prospects:* Clear development pathways and stability. |
| *Poorly managed change:* Exclusion from decision-making, lack of transparency, and ineffective communication. Ashfor | *Clarity over expectations: Regular* feedback and performance appraisals. |
| *Responsibility for others without support:* Being assigned roles without adequate preparation or suitability. | *Supportive supervision:* Coaching, mentoring, and concern for employees' well-being. |
| *Under-promotion or over-promotion:* Lack of recognition or placement in roles beyond capability. | *Perception of fairness: Fair* treatment, access to grievance procedures, and workplace equity. |
| *Role ambiguity and inconsistent management:* Poor leadership causing confusion and discord. | *Perception of significance:* Employees feeling their work is valued and meaningful. |
| *Dysfunctional organisational structure: Weak* managerial support, poor communication, and low morale. | *Pay parity:* Fair salary comparison with others. |

Source: (Atkin and Brooks, 2021; Bryson, 2014)

### 2.6.4 Human Resource Management and the Music Industry

Since, Miles HRT theory in 1965, HRM has been implemented across various industries with the shared objective of strengthening productivity (Dickson and Roethlisberger, 1939; Mayo, 1932; Miles, 1965; Odionye, 2014; Omodan et al., 2020; Punyanunt-Carter and Wrench, 2012). Despite the increasing recognition of the importance of HRM related to mental well-being across various industries, there is a discernible lack of a corresponding shift within the music industry, especially in the domain of music management (Bjaastad et al., 2016). The absence of HRM within the music industry gives rise to issues related to the industry's intrinsic nature. The unique function of the music industry and its impact on artists and managers have led

researchers to identify challenges with HRM application for creative industries (Dean, 2007; Jogulu et al., 2017; Throsby and Zednik, 2011). Previous research explored into the application of HRM within the music industry, exploring both its limitations and potential benefits (Burgess et al., 2021; Hennekam, 2022; Okechukwu, 2023; Opara, et al., 2019).

The incorporation of human resource departments within the music industry commenced in the nineties, simultaneously marking a period during which A&R managers and human resource managers began sharing responsibilities (De Magalhaes, 2015). Depending on the label's size, the A&R function may be singularly managed or constitute an entire department, often integrated into the broader human resource framework (Mellor, 2006). The human resource or A&R department undertakes a multifaceted role, overseeing aspects such as staffing, conducting employee interviews, and formulating contracts that formalise the employer-employee relationship (De Magalhaes, 2015; Rutter, 2016). Despite the prevalence of human resource departments within major labels, a notable void exists in the music management sector of the industry.

Research highlights key issues related to HRM challenges in creative industries, including reliance on short-term funding leading to employment and financial insecurity (Cunningham, 2011; Cunningham and Higgs, 2010; Throsby and Zednik, 2011). Financial uncertainty not only affects artists but managers, administrators, and other support staff. Additionally, labour force issues stemming from labour oversupply are common within the global performing arts world market (Dean, 2007; Throsby and Zednik, 2011). These issues lead to not only HRM related issues, but often a lack of training to aid with these issues.

Some researchers argue that the lack of HRM application within the music industry could be attributed to individuals' willingness to work for lower pay and endure negative working conditions (Davidson, 2004; Jogulu et al., 2017). Davidson (2004) discusses how individuals do not enter the creative industry for monetary rewards. Jogulu (2017) suggests that this is because individuals feel called to work in the creative sector, viewing it as a source of 'liberation' but also a source of 'constraint' as they commit to a particular industry (Jogulu et al., 2017, p. 1849).

Other researchers, such as Joyce Costello and John Oliver (2018) argue for the necessary adaptation of HRM practices to face the future challenges for creative

industries. Addressing the critical role of adaptation for companies within the context of Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) issues in media firms. The term 'adapt or die' was chosen to adopt their view of the issues facing many media firms HRM departments (Costello and Oliver, 2018, p. 95). Key issues have been identified in the dynamic media environment that significantly impact HRM practices related to recruitment, retention, and performance. These issues related to casualisation of labour, innovation in technology social voice and stakeholder engagement, and changing dynamics in succession planning (Artero and Manfredi, 2015; Deuze and Steward, 2010; Loretto and Vickerstaff, 2015, Menara et al., 2017). Costello and Oliver (2018) discuss how these trends present new challenges for HRM functions, impacting performance management, training, and succession planning. They emphasise the need for attracting talent, generating commitment, improving employee satisfaction, and fostering engagement.

Creative and cultural industries require different approach to management, blending creative freedom with business. Different to mainstream management, which focuses on linear productivity, artist managers work in a non-linear environment that values creativity, intuition, and emotion (Wang, 2024). While smaller segments of the music industry, like music management, currently exhibit a deficit in HRM functions, scholars have researched the examination of HRM practices within the broader spectrum of creative industries. The following studies explore the adaption of HRM in the music industry, addressing challenges, potential solutions, and the relevance of HRM practices in diverse contexts within the industry.

Wang (2024) describes the artist management industry as sui generis, or Latin for 'its own kind.' Without scaling practices on linear thinking, managers work in an environment where they follow a 'mechanist' approach, this non-linear thinking develops a cycle that Wang refers to as 'The Loop.' This loop is a project-product cycle, which requires a constant conversion between the project form, non-linear, to the market form, linear. Creating a unique pressure for artist managers that require them to consistently adapt their management strategies (Wang, 2024).

In 2019, a team of researchers conducted a comprehensive review to examine the relevance of HRM practices within performing arts organisations in Australia The team focused on issues such as unstable employment, low wages, and the dominance of small- to medium-sized organisations, the research highlighted how these

challenges affect not only performers but also managers and administrators. Employing a qualitative research approach through semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, a lack of strategic discussion was revealed about the value of HRM within large performing arts companies (Opara, et al., 2019).

A group of researchers from Ireland examined technologically mediated HRM in the gig economy. Emphasising the distinct features of gig work accessed through digital platforms. The study advocated for increased research efforts on HRM in contexts without traditional employment relationships. The team highlighted the need for a deeper understanding of the diversity within the digital platform classification and its implications for the role and value of HRM (Burgess et al., 2021). The team challenged the perception that gig workers fall outside the traditional HRM field, revealing the presence of HRM-related activities and practices in the gig economy.

In the 2022 collection of texts, 'Music as Labour', a team of researchers discussed moving towards inclusion in the music industry. Hennekam (2022) addressed the pervasive inequalities in the music industry, discussing age discrimination, systematic exclusion, and sexual harassment. The texts drew from the author's research and studies with various collaborators (Bennett et al., 2019; Brown et al., 2006; Evans and Gibb, 2009; Hennekam, 2017; Lee, 2012). Hennekam (2022) argues the need for learning lessons from HRM to create an inclusive and diverse workplace, ultimately advocating for social change to make the music industry a space where everyone feels supported, accepted, and able to develop personally and professionally.

Ifeoma Okechukwu (2023) explored the connection between music and tourism as agents of human resource development in Nigeria. Okechukwu used literature methods to emphasise the symbiotic relationship between music, tourism, and human resource development, asserting that proper recognition and support for these elements can significantly enhance societal well-being. The research recommended collaborative efforts from the government, individuals, curriculum planners, and sponsors to encourage the integration of music and tourism for optimal HRM and development in Nigerian society.

### 2.6.5 Human Resource Management Principles

Studies highlight a noticeable gap in the literature concerning the intersection of music, mental health, and HRM. Despite the extensive application of HRM practices across various industries since Miles (1065) HRT theory, there is a distinct absence of a corresponding shift within the music industry, particularly in music management (Bjaastad et al., 2016). Potentially stemming from the unique nature of creative industries, which present distinct challenges for HRM application (Dean, 2007; Jogulu et al., 2017; Throsby and Zednik, 2011).

There is an absence of mental health focused HRM frameworks specifically designed for artist manager relationships. While existing research acknowledges the prevalence of mental health challenges within the music industry there remains limited scholarly exploration of how HRM principles might be adapted to address these concerns within the unique dynamics of music management contexts (Ackerman and Adams, 2004; Ackerman and Kenny, 2008; Araújo et al., 2019; Bergson, 2023; Bjerkeset et al., 2014; Easmon and Kapsetaki, 2017; Fricke, 2023; Jessen et al., 2021; Jones et al., 2023; Gross and Musgrave, 2016; Lamis and Musgrave, 2025; Musgrave, 2022; Smith and Teague, 2015).

Existing HRM research in creative sectors focuses on broader organisational structures rather than the intimate, often informal relationships that characterise artist management (Burgess et al., 2021; Hennekam, 2022; Okechukwu, 2023; Opara, et al., 2019). Unlike traditional corporate environments driven by financial and operational productivity, creative industries operate on emotional, cultural, and artistic values (Glow, 2010; Wang, 2024). This fundamental difference creates a paradox where individuals view their work as both liberating, providing autonomy and creative fulfilment, yet also constraining, involving instability and external pressures (Davidson, 2004; Jogulu et al., 2017). Lack of research creates a knowledge deficit regarding how mental health considerations influence professional boundaries, communication patterns, and support mechanisms within these relationships.

These factors result in an insufficient exploration of how the dual pressures of creative and commercial success compound mental health challenges within artist manager relationships, particularly given the industry's reliance on project-based work, irregular income streams, and emotional labour demands (Artero and Manfredi, 2015; Deuze and Steward, 2010; Loretto and Vickerstaff, 2015; Menara et al., 2017).

The absence of tailored HRM frameworks that address these realities limits both theoretical understanding and practical application of supportive management practices within the music industry context (Costello and Oliver, 2018). Demonstrating the necessity for recontextualised HRM frameworks specifically designed for the music industry's unique operational characteristics and the artist manager relationship dynamic. Such frameworks must address the intersection of mental health support, professional relationship management, and the distinctive challenges of creative labour.

To address this deficit, seven HRM principles tailored to artist management in the music industry were identified. While these principles were drawn from broader HRM research, their adaptability highlights the unique needs of artists and their managers. Research has shown that HRM practices that prioritise employee's emotional, psychological, and cognitive well-being not only enhance individual welfare but also foster organisational trust (Diskienė et al., 2021b). Applying these principles to music management could provide necessary structural support and improve overall industry standards. By exploring how sustainable HRM models can be adapted to reflect the structural realities of creative industries, where non-traditional organisational hierarchies dominate (Hennekam, 2022; Opara et al., 2019).

The seven HRM principles were selected based on their exploration of HRM methods that enhance employee well-being or support positive mental health outcomes. Selection criteria included studies that provided empirical evidence, theoretical insights, or industry-specific perspectives on HRM strategies linked to employee support, well-being, and workplace mental health. Human resource management was also connected to music industry research to provide a bridge between current HRM and how it connects to the artist management industry. To review a list of the HRM and artist management studies that were analysed and provided empirical evidence for the HRM principles, view Table Five.

Once selected, these sources were examined using thematic analysis to identify recurring HRM themes specifically related to mental health and well-being. Studies were chosen based on their examination of HRM practices that contribute to positive psychological outcomes, such as employee well-being, job satisfaction, and organisational trust. The most frequently recurring and empirically supported themes formed the foundation of the seven HRM principles. Following the initial

identification, each principle was further evaluated for its adaptability to artist management, ensuring relevance to the unique challenges of the music industry. Any principles that lacked strong empirical support or did not align with the realities of artist management were excluded. For example, a common HRM principle within management research is recruitment and selection. In most traditional management structures, managers hire staff who operate as subordinates within the organisation. In contrast, within the artist manager relationship, the artist employs the manager, inverting the conventional power dynamic (Morrow, 2018).

By providing an empirically grounded, adaptable HRM framework, this study offers a necessary reference point for both future researchers and practitioners seeking to advance HRM applications within creative industries. The introduction of structured HRM principles into the discourse in the creative sector broadens the theoretical and practical scope of HRM research, ensuring that mental health considerations recognised are embedded within artist management strategies. Bridging HRM and creative industry research and providing a model that future studies can build upon to refine, validate, and expand within the evolving landscape of creative work.

Table 5: Human Resource Management and Artist Management Sources Cited

| Human Resource Principle | Human Resource Management Studies Cited | Artist Management Studies Cited |
|---|---|---|
| Social Interaction | Atkin and Brooks, 2021; Lindeberg et al., 2024; Miles, 1965: Punyanunt-Carter and Wrench, 2012 | Gaudesi, 2016; Hull, 2021; Watson, 2002 |
| Two-Way Communication | Andreu Perez et al., 2022; Miles, 1965; Punyanunt-Carter and Wrench, 2012; Zheng, 2015 | Anderton et al., 2022; Gaudesi, 2016; Hull, 2021; Morrow, 2018; Watson, 2002 |
| Motivation and Satisfaction | Deci and Ryan, 2000; Kuo, 2013; Satyawadi and Ghosh, 2012; Sekhar et al., 2013; Udin, 2024; Yan and Davidson, 2013 | Ferlazzo, 2015; Musgrave, 2014; Nwankwo, 2014; Record Union, 2019 |
| Employee Involvement | Bond and Bunce, 2011; Charoensukmongkol and Puyod, 2021; CIPD, 2019; Cross et al., 2003; Dobson et al., 2009; Gentry et al., 2016; Landsbergis and Vivona-Vaughm, 1995 | Gilfillan and Morrow, 2016; Morrow, 2018 |
| Work-Life Balance | Atkins and Brooks, 2021; Nabawanuka and Ekmekcioglu. 2022; Stankevičienė et al., 2021; Wood, 2018 | Allen, 2022; Anderson, 2008; Elberse, 2013; Gamble et al., 2018; Gross and Musgrave, 2016; MMF, 2019; Musgrave, 2023; Musgrave, 2014; Smith and Teague, 2015 |
| Organisational Culture | Brenner, 2004; Cavanaugh, 2004; Crawford et al., 2010; Espasandín-Bustelo et al., 2020; Heaphy and Dutton, 2008; Miles, 1965; Opperman, 2002; Punyanunt-Carter and Wrench, 2012; Slade et al., 2017 | Allen, 2022; Morrow, 2018; Watson, 2002 |
| Leadership Style | Bass, 1985; Bass and Riggio, 2006; Berson et al., 2015; Burns, 1978; Charoensukmongkol and Puyod, 2021; Jaskeviciute et al., 2021; Kark et al., 2003; Lavigna and Paarlberg, 2010; Mayo, 1932; Sajjad et al., 2019; Steinmann et al., 2018; Trottier et al., 2008; Udin, 2024 | Allen, 2022; Gaudesi, 2016; Hopkins, 1984 |

***Human Resource Management Principles:***

1. Social Interaction

2. Two-Way Communication

3. Motivation and Satisfaction

4. Employee Involvement

5. Work-Life Balance

6. Organisational Culture

7. Leadership Style

*Social Interaction*

Social interaction, collaboration, and team dynamics are an integral element regarding HRM research and well-being, placing an importance on the interpersonal dimensions inherent in the workplace (Atkin and Brooks, 2021; Lappalainen et al., 2024). Human resource management actively advocates for the cultivation of social interactions, fostering group dynamics, and promoting team-building initiatives as instrumental mechanisms for enhancing employee well-being. Research demonstrates that establishing a sense of belonging and community within the organisational context produces a positive work culture, contributing to a more satisfying and meaningful work experience and worker well-being (Lappalainen et al., 2024). Research advocates for managers to encourage teamwork and consistently seek opportunities where teams can have increased autonomy and influence over their tasks and decisions (Miles, 1965; Punyanunt-Carter and Wrench, 2012). Managers need to balance fostering collaboration with ensuring that employees are not overworked and maintain good well-being (Atkin and Brooks, 2021). By acknowledging the significance of group dynamics, HRM seeks to create cohesive work units that operate synergistically, fostering an environment conducive to individual and collective growth.

The social interaction between artist and manager is central in the artists well-being and overall success, it is vital that the artist and manager work closely together (Hull, 2021). The artist manager functions as the bridge between the artist and the broader music industry, improving interactions within the team to enhance the artist's career (Watson, 2002). By fostering strong social interaction, managers can create a

supportive environment that encourages collaboration and mutual trust. Within this framework, the interpersonal relationship between the artist and manager emerges as foundational, built on a basis of mutual trust that proves fundamental to the artist's overall well-being and trajectory within the industry (Gaudesi, 2016).

It is important for an artist manager to ensure that there are various elements of teamwork, collaboration, and interaction within the relationship with their artist. These interactions should go beyond the business setting to foster a sense of community and heighten the trust between artist and manager. Incorporating outings or teambuilding activities provides an opportunity for the artist manager relationship to develop beyond the business environment. Activities outside of the business setting also provide the artist an opportunity to learn more about the manager and humanise their role. Bonding can originate in numerous settings depending on the artist manager. If the manager works with a single artist, they could invite them for an occasion outside of business such as lunch or a museum. If a manager works with multiple artists or a band, they could host a larger group bonding activity like a cooking class or escape room. Setting aside time for these conversations in a unique environment managers can promote positive social interactions with their artists. By prioritising these social aspects, artist managers can create a workplace culture that promotes openness, trust, and effective communication about mental health, ultimately contributing to a healthier and more supportive work environment.

*Two-Way Communication*

Effective communication is an essential aspect of a manager's role within HRM (Andreu Perez et al., 2022; Miles, 1965; Punyanunt-Carter and Wrench, 2012; Zheng, 2015). Human resource management suggests that employees should be afforded sufficient opportunities to articulate their concerns, offer constructive feedback, and actively participate in decision-making processes. Enhancing communication management is key to improving HRM and effective communication within an organisation can lead to better management practices and positive results for both parties involved (Zheng, 2015). Two-way symmetrical communication within organisations is vital for strengthening relationships with employees, especially during crises. A symmetrical communication style, characterised by openness, feedback, and employee participation, fosters trust and commitment, leading to increased employee support (Andreu Perez et al., 2022). Social support, through two-way communication,

in the workplace helps reduce stress among employees, which positively influences levels of job satisfaction and helps prevent burnout (Singh and Singhi, 2015; Snyder, 2009). When employees are granted the platform to express their perspectives and actively engage in the decision-making, it fosters a sense of value and recognition, this, in turn, cultivates an environment where employees feel not only heard but also integral to the organisational fabric. A positive relationship between organisations and employees mediates the influence of two-way symmetrical communication on these gatekeeping practices (Andreu Perez et al., 2022). Additionally, research suggests that if an employee understands the organisational goal through adequate communication, they are more likely to take steps to achieve it (Zheng, 2015). By promoting open channels of communication and active employee involvement, HRM seeks to create a workplace culture that prioritises the individual's voice.

Two-way symmetrical communication is essential in artist management, as it fosters trust, collaboration, and mutual understanding between the manager and the artist (Andreu Perez et al., 2022). For an artist manager, communication is essential for success as the manager is responsible for conveying the artist's identity to the audience (Gaudesi, 2016). Past research recognises that poor communication can even lead to the termination of a manager (Anderton et al., 2022). Creative collaboration is vital, where the artistic vision and career development of both artist and manager coalesce (Morrow, 2018). It is necessary for good communication, both within and beyond the artist's team (Anderton et al., 2022). Managers should maintain open communication lines with artists, ensuring their needs, concerns, and aspirations are addressed. Encouraging artists to trust in the manager and their decision-making processes fosters a sense of value and recognition, enhancing the sense of agency and satisfaction for both parties. Managers also need strong people skills to communicate effectively with all team members affecting income streams (Hull, 2021; Morrow, 2017). Ensuring that both parties have an active role in decision-making, rather than the manager unilaterally dictating the artist's career path.

Two-way communication within the artist manager relationship involves ensuring there is an open and trusted line of communication between artist and manager. The manager's role is to communicate the artists vision to the world (Morrow, 2018; Watson, 2002). In this sense, the communication between artist and manager could impact the artists overall success. Managers are encouraged to facilitate

open dialogue through consistent check-in meetings. These meetings should serve as a platform to discuss the artists well-being, workload, and shared goals for the future, ensuring that the artists feel valued and understood. These meetings can be structured using a clear agenda that encourages the artist to share concerns or feedback on the manager's work. Providing constructive feedback is another vital component of these interactions. It is important to not only highlight areas where improvement is needed but also to recognise and praise recent achievements and progressions to motivate artists and help them grow professionally. Additionally, establishing a safe space for open discussion and fostering transparency can significantly enhance communication. Artists should feel comfortable voicing their thoughts and concerns without fear of judgment or repercussions, leading to more honest conversations and ultimately benefiting both the artists and the organisation.

*Motivation and Satisfaction*

Human resource management research acknowledges a fundamental relationship between employee motivation, satisfaction, and overall well-being within the workplace (Davidson and Yan, 2013; Ghosh and Satyawadi, 2012; Kuo, 2013; Patwardhan et al., 2013; Udin, 2024). Research highlights that employees who feel motivated and valued are more likely to experience a stronger sense of well-being in their professional roles (Ghosh and Satyawadi, 2012; Patwardhan et al., 2013). Intrinsic work motivation is a psychological mechanism in which individuals perform an activity to obtain the satisfaction and pleasure in the inherent activity (Deci and Ryan, 2000; Udin, 2024). When employees are intrinsically motivated, they are moved to carry out certain activities because of the pleasure it brings them and not because of the external rewards or pressures (Davidson and Yan, 2013; Udin, 2024) Recognition mechanisms play a key role in acknowledging individual contributions, while active participation in decision-making processes is widely regarded as essential for both motivation and satisfaction. These factors often have a direct impact on an individual's overall well-being, encompassing initiatives designed to effect positive change in an employee's personal circumstances both within and outside the workplace (Kuo, 2013). Addressing these individual elements can substantially contribute to heightened motivation and job satisfaction (Kuo, 2013; Patwardhan et al., 2013). Ultimately, HRM promotes a holistic approach to employee well-being by recognising and addressing these individual factors.

Elements such as motivation and satisfaction are key facets of the artist manager relationship, especially within a highly competitive industry where access to external motivation can often be limited (Musgrave, 2014). For instance, in 2019, Record Union reported that the pressure to succeed was a major contributor to poor mental well-being among artists. Empirical evidence indicates that the principles of the HRM, emphasising the cultivation of positive, motivational, and healthy relationships by managers, play a significant role in boosting motivation for learning and improving self-esteem among employees (Ferlazzo, 2015; Nwankwo, 2014). While an artist may achieve significant personal and creative milestones within the artist manager relationship, but these achievements might not always be reflected in conventional success metrics such as streams, sales, followers, or awards. Which is why it is essential for managers to actively incorporate motivation, incentives, and encouragement into their management approach. It is not enough for an artist's work to be acknowledged externally; managers must also recognise and celebrate the artist's contributions within their professional relationship. Internal recognition from a manager, such as setting realistic goals and celebrating even the smallest wins, can be just as vital to their sense of progress and motivation.

Managers should actively integrate elements of rewards and demonstrate appreciation in their practice. Rewards can take many forms, from acknowledging an artist's creative milestones to providing personalised encouragement. For example, a manager could write a note to congratulate an artist on completing an album, this would acknowledge the significance of the accomplishment and reinforce the artists motivation. Another example is celebrating an artist's milestone on social media with a personalised message or video. Public recognition can help validate the artist's hard work and boost their confidence. Managers should engage in active listening, which encourages open communication and ensures that employees feel heard and understood, building trust and laying the foundation for a supportive workplace environment. By prioritising motivation and job satisfaction within the artist manager dynamic, managers can help foster an environment that sustains an artist's enthusiasm, resilience, and long-term career fulfilment.

*Employee Involvement*

Employee involvement highlights the significance of creating an environment where employees play an active role in shaping and resolving work-related decisions and addressing challenges. A participative approach enhances employee well-being and strengthens their commitment to the organisation (Bond and Bunce, 2011; Dobson et al., 2009; Landsbergis and Vivona-Vaughm, 1995). Managers can enhance well-being by emphasising employee involvement in their interactions. To encourage dynamic exchanges, leaders should facilitate discussions that explore possibilities and work towards shared goals. Such as recognising the positive aspects of employee's contributions and ensuring ideas are not dismissed prematurely (Clerkin et al., 2016; Cross et al., 2003). In past research, employee involvement was found to moderate the relationship between transformational leadership and role ambiguity, suggesting that high employee involvement can mitigate the negative impact of transformational leadership on role ambiguity (Charoensukmongkol and Puyod, 2021). Previous research within HRM also suggests a strong and positive connection between employee's satisfaction with their participation in decision-making and their overall job satisfaction, indicating that having a say is an essential factor for employee well-being at work (CIPD, 2019).

In artist management, the degree of the artists involvement in decision making varies depending on the artist manager relationship, this includes their respective roles and responsibilities. Past research emphasises the collaborative nature of the artist manager relationship, where the artistic vision and career development of both intersect to create a shared creative and personal strategy (Morrow, 2018). Despite this, it is common practice for managers to handle many business-related discussions independently, involving the artist only when their direct input or presence is required. While this aligns with the manager's role in overseeing the business aspects of the relationship research supports the benefits of a participative approach in strengthening an individual's sense of well-being and commitment to their work (Bond and Bunce, 2011; Landsbergis and Vivona-Vaughm, 1995; Dobson et al., 2009).

The nature of employing practices might lead to complex power dynamics since the artist employs the manager, the level of artist involvement in business and creative decisions changes depending on the artists preferred level of control over their career trajectory. Although the artist manager dynamic differs from conventional business

hierarchies, managers can still incorporate artist involvement in a way that enhances their career development without disrupting established roles. Ensuring that artists have the choice to be involved in decision that impact their careers can foster a sense of empowerment (Gilfillan and Morrow, 2016; Morrow, 2018).

One way to achieve this is by increasing the artist's level of creative control and ensuring they can make decisions that are important to them. Managers should have open discussions with their artists to identify areas where they wish to be more involved, whether in merchandising, business partnerships, branding, or other aspects of their career. A manager could present the artist with a list of opportunities and discuss the pros and cons of each, empowering the artist to have a say in the decision. By recognising and respecting the artist's preferred level of involvement, managers can foster a collaborative environment that balances professional structure with artistic autonomy.

### Work-Life Balance

Organisation that cultivates a flexible work environment, through adaptable scheduling, family-friendly policies, and stress management initiatives significantly contribute to employee satisfaction and well-being (Wood, 2018). Intense workloads and stress can negatively impact employee's health and overall well-being (Atkins and Brooks, 2021). A healthy work-life balance mediates the relationship between work culture and employee well-being (Diskienė et al., 2021a). Supportive practices are widely recognised strategies that empower employees to effectively manage professional and personal responsibilities. Elements such as temporal flexibility, supportive supervision, and operational flexibility strongly impact employee well-being through a healthy work-life balance, and a family friendly work culture promotes better work-life balance which leads to higher employee satisfaction and emotional well-being (Diskienė et al., 2021a).

Recent technological developments drastically reshaped the music industry, altering the work-life balance for modern artist managers (Allen, 2022; Anderson, 2014; Elberse, 2013). While digital advances often make it easier for artists to access markets and promote their work, the advances have also increased the demands placed on the musicians. Artists today navigate an increasingly complex professional landscape that requires them to balance creative output and business responsibilities. Self-promotion through social media is also imperative in modern music marketing,

often significantly benefiting emerging artists (Gamble et al., 2018). These platforms demand constant content creation and interaction, which can be overwhelming. As a result, many artists are experimenting with different approaches to career management to mitigate these pressures (Musgrave, 2014). Technological advances also impact the manager, a 2019 survey from the MMF found that 23% of artist managers work over forty-nine hours per week and many are attempting to push back against the 'always-on' culture of social media and round-the-clock promotion.

Maintaining a reliable work-life balance is a significant challenge for modern musicians due to the multidimensional nature of their career. To sustain a regular income, artists often tackle multiple roles beyond performing, such as session work, composition, and teaching (Smith and Teague, 2015). The nature of the music industry insists that artists face this financial insecurity along with public scrutiny as an aspect of their professional careers (Musgrave, 2023). Gross and Musgraves (2016) reinforce this issue by highlighting that while there is often speculation about a connection between creativity and mental health struggles, the primary factor affecting musicians today stems from the industry's working conditions and cultural expectations rather than the creative process itself. Additionally, past research has uncovered that supervisors play a critical role in enhancing employee's ability to maintain a balance between work and personal responsibilities which improves their well-being (Ekmekcioglu and Nabawanuka, 2022).

Providing artist managers with strategies to support their artists well-being can play an essential role in fostering a healthier work-life balance. Managers should actively establish boundaries to prevent burnout, incorporate rest periods into scheduling, accommodate personal needs, and come up with well-being plans based on the artist and their wants and needs. In a busy work environment, it's easy for artists to overcommit themselves. Managers can take the lead by offering flexible work hours or adapting schedules based on the artist's needs. For example, if an artist is feeling overwhelmed, the manager could reduce the number of meetings in a week or arrange remote collaboration sessions to minimise stress. Managers should actively establish boundaries and incorporate rest periods into scheduling to prevent burnout for both them and the artist. Due to increased demands related to self-promotion and social media, managers should encourage healthy habits, this could include designated offline hours. Managers should also advocate for professional separations between

personal and promotional content, to ensure artists are able to maintain strict boundaries around posting professional content.

Managers should remain open to feedback and willing to adjust plans to better suit the evolving needs of their artists, ensuring a supportive and nurturing environment that drives both personal and professional success. Managers could also build in mandatory breaks or vacations after intense periods of work, such as a tour or a major album release. For instance, after a tour, the manager might schedule a two-week break where no work-related tasks are allowed, allowing the artist to recharge mentally and physically. By promoting a work environment that prioritises well-being alongside professional success, managers can help artists sustain both their creativity and long-term career stability.

*Organisational Culture*

Human resource management encourages an environment where employees can be creative and take risks (Miles, 1965; Punyanunt-Carter and Wrench, 2012). A positive work culture or organisation, inherently intertwined with HRM principles, is critical to employee well-being and performance, employees working in positive organisation experience better mental health and lower burnout (Crawford et al., 2010; Dutton and Heaphy, 2008; Jarden et al., 2017). Research indicates that aspects of an organisational work culture that enhance employee well-being incorporate the following three elements; physical working conditions, job aid, and performance feedback (Brenner, 2004; Cavanaugh, 2004; Opperman, 2002). In this framework, it is essential that physical working conditions are safe and conducive to employee performance, which ultimately can have an impact on the employee's performance (Opperman, 2002). Job aid refers to the social working conditions related to employee productivity (Cavanaugh, 2004). Managers can proactively foster internal corporate social responsibility by designing organisational cultures that promote flexibility, innovation, and employee well-being (Diaz-Carrion et al., 2020). Along with this, managers are encouraged to provide employees with external and intrinsic support, which exceeds to outside of working hours. Performance feedback supports the idea that the system is conducive to the amount, and speed, of knowledge that is spread within it (Brenner, 2004). These principles stress the proactive role that organisational culture plays in shaping the perceptions, motivations, and interactions of employees

which ultimately influence their overall well-being (Brenner, 2004; Cavanaugh, 2004; Opperman, 2002).

In the music industry, the relationship between an artist and their manager can be viewed as a microcosm of organisational culture. The unique nature of this relationship, without set office hours, formal hiring, or specific qualifications, can lead to challenges like issues of artistic autonomy (Allen, 2022; Morrow, 2018). Creating safe working conditions, providing needed support, and offering constructive feedback is vital for the artist's well-being and success. A positive culture that prioritises well-being can lead to higher job satisfaction and better performance, significantly impacting mental and emotional health (Brenner, 2004; Cavanaugh, 2004; Opperman, 2002). Organisational culture within the artist manager relationship refers to the dynamics and values that shape their working partnership. While a manager may own or be part of a management organisation, this HRM principle specifically applies to the culture of the relationship itself. Together, the manager and artist form the core of the artist's business network (Watson, 2002). The nature of this relationship is critical to the artist's success and well-being.

To promote a healthy organisational culture within the artist manager relationship, managers should provide artists with support within and outside of the business setting, it is important for managers to maintain professional boundaries, while offering personal support when personal issues affect the artist's professional life. Promoting healthy working conditions is also important, relating to the artist's workload and scheduling demands. When an artist is in mental health distress, the manager should have accessible resources to provide adequate job aid when necessary. Promoting a positive organisational culture within the artist management relationship can encourage an environment where and artist feels safe to express their concerns and share in their overall career goals. Prioritising physical working conditions and job aid creates a positive and inclusive atmosphere for artists and managers.

*Leadership Style*

The final principle outlined through HRM, aligns with manager leadership styles that are supportive, participative, and transformational. Mayo's (1932) research showed that many worker behaviours and emotions have their origin in their supervisor's actions. Aspects of a transformational leader include understanding motivation and behaviour, being sensitive to employee's needs, communicating

effectively, and to encourage and empower employees (Bass, 1985; Bass and Riggio, 2006; Berson et al., 2015; Chen et al., 2003; Klug et al., 2018). A transformational leader functions as an ethical role model through communicating a vision for the future, challenges employees to be more motivated, encourages employees to prioritise collective goals, and genuinely cares about the employee (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978; Lavigna and Paarlberg, 2010; Trottier et al., 2008; Udin, 2024). Through these actions, a transformational leader can provide clear communication and employee support, and in so doing, reduce role ambiguity and promote a higher degree of work-life balance (Charoensukmongkol and Puyod, 2021).

A transformational leader can also be identified as a multiplier. The definition was developed by Liz Wiseman and Greg McKeown in (2010), they define a multiplier as a leader or manager who:

> Uses their intelligence to amplify the smarts and capabilities of the people around them. They inspire employees to stretch themselves to deliver results that surpass expectations. (McKeown and Wiseman, 2010 p. 49)

A multiplier aims to multiply talent, rather than add it. A few notable elements of a multiplier is a leader who is calm and constant, even amid chaos. They create an environment where superior thinking can flourish and give permission to make mistakes through generating pressure without giving stress. In retrospect, there are diminishers. A diminisher overexpresses their ideas to maintain control which suppresses thinking and capability. A notable element of this leadership strategy that aligns with HRM is something Wiseman and McKeown (2010) refers to as 'The Liberator.' A liberator creates an intense environment, which requires employees best thinking. Fostering safety in the workplace by creating space for employees by admitting mistakes and shifting the ratio of listening and talking, ensuring employees ideas are heard. Encouraging employees to contribute, without fear of failure and understands that people love to contribute their genius. 'The Liberator' can be compared to a 'Tyrant' who instead of creating a maximising environment, produces a tense once. Which, at times unintentionally, makes employees holdback due to fear of failure or persecution (McKeown and Wiseman, 2010).

These elements lead to trust in managers and organisations which positively impacts employee well-being through HRM practices like job autonomy and perceived organisational support (Diskienė et al., 2021b). Research indicates that there is a

relationship between transformational leadership and work engagement, showing correlation with innovative work behaviour and a trusting leader which subsequently contributes positively to the work engagement levels of employees (Ali et al., 2019; Klug et al., 2018). Incorporating a transformational leadership style into the artist manager relationship can significantly benefit the artist's overall well-being (Bass, 1985; Bass and Riggio, 2006; Berson et al., 2015; Chen et al., 2003; Klug et al., 2018).

Trust is a fundamental element of the artist manager relationship, a collaborative and trust-based approach serves as a cornerstone, fostering an environment conducive to the artist's professional growth and long-term success (Gaudesi, 2016). Incorporating a transformational leadership style into the artist manager relationship could significantly benefit the artist's overall well-being This involves understanding and addressing the artist's needs, communicating effectively, and empowering them to achieve their goals. Transformational leaders in artist management can inspire and motivate artists, fostering a trusting and collaborative relationship that enhances both engagement and well-being.

There are well-documented instances of negative, authoritarian leadership in artist management, such as Colonel Tom Parker with Elvis Presley and co-managers Michael Jeffery and Chas Chandler with Jimi Hendrix. In both cases, the managers received commissions surpassing typical management agreements, raising ethical concerns (Allen, 2022; Hopkins, 1984). Such historical relationships have influenced the overall perception of artist managers. Consequently, it is even more vital for managers to present themselves as transformational leaders to foster a fair and supportive environment for artists.

Within the artist manager relationship, a transformational leadership style involves promoting trust, open communication, and a shared vision, fostering a supportive and growth-oriented dynamic. By aligning with the elements of HRM principles managers can adopt aspects of transformational leadership to enhance their artist's well-being while maintaining professional boundaries. Managers who engage in high levels of mental health involvement should set boundaries to prevent personal distress, ensuring that their high engagement does not negatively impact their well-being. For example, establishing designated times for work-related discussions, directing artists to professional mental health resources when necessary, and recognising when an artist's struggles extend beyond the manager's expertise.

Managers should consistently provide constructive feedback but also engage in behaviours that inspire and motivate the artist. If an artist is struggling with a project, the manager might offer encouragement and suggest creative approaches to overcome obstacles, demonstrating a commitment to the artist's growth and well-being. Positive reassurance can also be incorporated through a term Wiseman and McKeown (2010) refer to as a 'Talent Magnet.' Encouraging leaders to not only notice artist's successful behaviours but label them and identify why they are beneficial. Artist managers can incorporate this through reassuring artists on their strengths, rather than focusing on weaknesses. Promoting a culture of mutual respect and accountability within the artist manager relationship can help maintain a healthy balance between professional responsibilities and personal well-being (Bass, 1985; Bass and Riggio, 2006; Berson et al., 2015; Chen et al., 2003; Klug et al., 2018).

## 2.7  SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

Chapter Two offered a comprehensive exploration, linking key themes of mental health, the music industry, and the intricate dynamics within the artist manager relationship. The initial segment of this literature review navigates through discussed a triad of focal points, the music industry, mental health, and the artist manager relationship. A systematic organisation then categorised the literature into overarching topics such as the music industry and mental health, exploring nuanced connections. The theoretical framework was discussed along with the compilation of the seven HRM principles, derived from a comprehensive review of forty studies, reports, conference papers, and academic texts. Chapter Three will provide the research design, including the theoretical framework and following with chosen methodology and methods.

# Chapter 3: Research Design

## 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The following chapter outlines the design and methodology of the study. The adoption of a qualitative approach was underlined by a CR perspective. The methodological choices incorporated semi-structured one-to-one interviews and reflexive thematic data analysis. The exploration focused on existing support systems available to UK music managers for fostering positive mental health outcomes among the artists they manage, as well as assessing the awareness levels of music managers in the UK regarding mental health resources for their artists.

Chapter Three begins with a discussion of the use of the CR perspective and reviews the chosen methodology and the overall research design. Section 3.2 'Target Population' shares the targeted participants. Section 3.3 discusses the sampling method chosen, purposive criterion sampling, this section also reviews the sample size, twelve participants. Section 3.4 discusses the selected interview setting, Zoom. The recruitment process will be provided in Section 3.5. Section 3.6 shares the chosen instruments. Section 3.7 reviews the procedure and timeline of the research. Section 3.8 outlines how the data will be analysed using reflexive thematic analysis. Section 3.9 discusses ethics and limitations. In closing, Section 3.10 provides a summary of the chapter.

## 3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM, METHODOLOGY, AND METHODS

The next section will discuss factors that lead into the research design. Beginning with section 3.2.1, the research paradigm will be introduced. Section, 3.2.1, the chosen methodology. Lastly, Section 3.2.3 will review the chosen research methods.

### 3.2.1 Research Paradigm

Research into the mental health relationship between music managers and artists requires a paradigmatic framework that can address both individual experiences and structural industry factors. Research paradigms encompass ontological assumptions (what is real) and epistemological assumptions (how we know what is real), which

guide methodology selection and shape researchers' understanding of complex social phenomena (Edwards, et al., 2020; Patton, 2015).

Critical realism, originating from Bhaskar's (1975) work, provides this foundation by recognising the social world as a stratified, open system where deeper structures influence observable phenomena (Archer, et al., 1998). Ontologically, CR assumes that reality exists independently of our knowledge of it, whilst epistemologically, it acknowledges that our understanding of this reality is fallible and mediated through social structures (O'Mahoney and Vincent, 2016).

Critical realist's depth ontology reveals that reality operates on multiple levels beyond surface observations, making it particularly suitable for exploring complex music industry relationships. Bhaskar's (2008) four-planar social being framework, encompassing intra-personal, inter-personal, structural, and natural planes, enables comprehensive examination of how individual mental health experiences interact with industry structures and power dynamics (Banfield and Maisuria, 2022). This paradigm allows researchers to investigate both the psychological experiences of managers and artists whilst acknowledging the structural forces that shape these relationships within the music industry context.

Critical Realism, often compared to the more commonly used constructivism, shares a similar view of epistemology but differs in ontological perception (Fleetwood, 2005). Defining relationships as social structures with causal powers, contrasts constructivism's belief that relationships lack causal powers (Johnston et al., 2013). Departure from the constructivist viewpoint is pivotal, as CR argues that relationships are not merely shaped by external factors but actively contribute to shaping the outcomes themselves. According to the CR framework, relationships are dynamic entities, reliant on the actions and knowledge of the participants involved (Johnston et al., 2013; Maxwell, 2011).

In 2016, Steve Vincent and Joe O'Mahoney provided a definition of the CR perspective for qualitative researchers. Vincent and O'Mahoney (2016) stated that CR scholars seek to distinguish the difference between objectivism and subjectivism through their view on ontology and epistemology. CR researchers believe in an external world with clear properties that we can understand better through scientific study. However, they also acknowledge that what we know is shaped by our perspective, which is always changing (O'Mahoney and Vincent, 2016).

Critical Realism believes that there are two aspects to understanding the world, the intransitive dimension, being, and the transitive dimension, knowledge (Buch-Hansen and Nielsen, 2020). Critical realist researchers argue that being is more fundamental than knowledge, emphasising the importance of what exists over what is known. Critical realists reject reducing statements about being to a matter of what exists, epistemic fallacy and ontic fallacy, which assume that knowledge directly reflects reality (Bhaskar, 2016; Bhaskar, 2011; Buch-Hansen and Nielsen, 2020). A dual-dimensional approach helps to avoid oversimplifying complex phenomena either by reducing it to what is known or assuming that knowledge directly reflects the reality of the phenomenon. Buch-Hansen and Nielson (2020) laid out a list of seven assumptions made by CR researchers, they can be viewed on Table Six.

Table 6: Critical Realist Assumptions

| Critical Realist Assumptions |
| --- |
| The social world is a system in which there are no immutable patterns and in which entities can change in their interactions with other entities. Consequently, regularities in social reality develop over time and often differ from one setting to the next. |
| Social phenomena thus cannot be adequately explained by being subsumed under statements of laws. |
| The natural and social sciences are similar in some respects yet differ fundamentally in others. |
| The natural and social sciences are similar in some respects yet differ fundamentally in others. |
| Social scientists should focus on explaining rather than predicting phenomena. |
| Scientific knowledge is fallible and without unquestionable foundations. |
| Scientific knowledge both grows and changes. |

Source: (Buch-Hansen and Nielsen, 2020)

An aspect of CR that sets it apart from other theoretical perspectives is the notion that reality contains three domains, the empirical domain, actual domain, and the real or deep domain (Bhaskar, 2008; Buch-Hansen and Nielsen, 2020). The empirical domain holds experiences and observations concerning human senses, which the other

domains do not recognise. These elements of the empirical domain are only the 'tip of the iceberg' as observations cannot 'be the criterion of existence' (Buch-Hansen and Nielsen, 2020 p. 30). Bhaskar (2008) argues that experiences and conceptions at the empirical domain do not reflect how things genuinely are. The actual domain consists of not only these experiences but also events and phenomenon that might not be observed. Buch-Hansen and Nielsen (2020) describe that the empirical and actual domain 'correspond to the flat world view of empirical realism i.e., to a reality that, in addition to observable events and phenomena, contains experiences and observations' (Buch-Hansen and Nielsen, 2020 p. 30).

Through an extension from empirical realism, Bhaskar (2008) added a third domain, the real or deep domain. In addition to events, observations, and experiences the real domain consists of structures and mechanisms that are not directly observable but give rise to occurrences in the actual domain. According to Bhaskar (2008) 'the real domain is bigger than the other two domains because it incorporates both' (Bhaskar, 2008 p. 46).

To exemplify the three domains Buch-Hansen and Nielsen (2020) discussed how the empirical, actual, and real domains are presented within the global climate crisis. The real domain includes underlying structures and mechanisms that impact the climate emergency, which are unobservable. For example, the accumulation of greenhouse gases, the structure of industrial capitalism, economic growth imperatives, and global energy systems. Considering the idea that climate changes involve casual mechanisms that are related to the structures of both the social and the natural worlds (Buch-Hansen and Nielsen, 2020; Spash, 2019). Critical realists believe that these mechanisms exist, such as the greenhouse effect continuing to operate regardless of political debate or media coverage, whether we perceive or understand them.

The actual domain is where real-world events occur despite observation. Including rising sea levels, more frequent extreme weather events, and long-term changes in biodiversity and human migration. Illustrated through world economic growth, which has grown over two percent per year over the last two hundred years (Buch-Hansen and Nielsen, 2020; Steffen et al., 2015). These events occur whether they are recorded or understood to their full extent.

The final domain is the empirical domain, which involves observations, measurements and models from climate scientists such as the temperature rises,

emission data, and climate reports. These observations aid in the understanding of the actual and real domains but they are theory. Critical realism acknowledges this epistemic fallibility, or the idea that human knowledge is inherently limited and subject to error. According to the CR perspective:

> From the vantage point of critical realism, our knowledge is sufficiently certain to regard the climate crisis as real. […] It calls for not just more research but for action to prevent specific scenarios. Such recommendations can be legitimised by a critical realist perspective but not a positivist or postmodernist one. (Barnard et al., 2019; Buch-Hansen and Nielsen, 2020 p. 84-85)

Widely employed in qualitative research, CR provides an in-depth exploration, applicable to individual cases or entire economies (Gouldner, 1964; Morgan and Olsen, 2007; O'Mahoney and Vincent, 2016). Its versatility extends to research domains such as health, creativity, and relationships (Mainela et al., 2012; Martin, 2019).

In 2022, Erica Koopman and Catharine Schiller employed CR as a philosophical framework, enhancing the understanding of causation in healthcare. Their research examined the foundational concepts of CR and its unique perspective on the stratified reality of empirical, actual, and real domains (Koopman and Schiller, 2022). Researchers assert that CR offers a valuable approach to decipher complex healthcare phenomena, allowing a deeper understanding of hidden mechanisms generating outcomes.

Kate Martin, in a 2009 study with the University of College London, explored CR in young people's mental health inpatient units. Grounded in CR, the research examined constraints on shared decision-making in inpatient mental health. The primary aim was to listen to and comprehend the views of young individuals, contributing to practical ways of implementing their perspectives in decisions about mental healthcare. Martin (2009) proposed an approach rooted in understanding the underlying structures, power relations, and constraints influencing decision-making processes.

A team of researchers from Ireland addressed the challenges faced by those studying business relationships and networks over time. They proposed CR as a suitable ontology for addressing these challenges (Mainela et al., 2012). Despite

recognising the difficulty in applying CR, the paper aims to fill the methodological gap by offering clear support for designing and executing studies on business relationships. Advancing the use of CR in industrial marketing research by providing practical support for researchers and managers in developing coherent studies and theoretical frameworks.

Taking CR further into creative research, Simon Das (2014) argues for its benefits compared to positivism and interpretivism. Emphasising the need for a multifaceted understanding of creativity. Das (2014) presents CR as a methodological framework offering a comprehensive approach. Considering mechanisms, contextual factors, and employing various qualitative research methods to achieve sophisticated causal explanations in the exploration of creativity and innovation in management.

The exploration of CR through diverse applications in various research domains, such as healthcare, mental health, business relationships, and creativity, sets the stage for its application. In adopting the CR lens, this thesis recognises the ontological perspective and embraces the notion that the artist manager relationship is not a passive construct but a dynamic interplay of influences. This perspective invites a more dynamic exploration of the mechanisms at play within the relationship, acknowledging that it holds a certain agency in determining its trajectory.

By acknowledging the causal powers embedded in this social structure, the study also seeks to unravel the intricacies of how actions, decisions, and knowledge within the artist manager relationship contribute to its overall impact, whether positive or potentially detrimental. Through an ontological perspective, there are inherent qualities or forces within the social structure that influence the artist manager relationship. From an epistemological standpoint, the focus shifts to understanding how these relational dynamics are experienced and interpreted. In doing so, research aligns itself with aspects of CR, advocating for an understanding of social phenomena that acknowledges both the external forces and the active contributions of those involved (Johnston et al., 2013; Maxwell, 2011). Alignment with CR's principles provides a methodological framework for investigating the artist manager relationship and its implications within the context of the UK music industry's music management sector.

Taking CR as an ontological lens is crucial for music management research as it significantly influences various elements of the research process. Most importantly, it

shapes the underlying acknowledgement of the empirical, actual, and real domains that exist within the music management industry, enabling researchers to uncover hidden mechanisms that drive mental health outcomes. The CR foundation proves essential in informing the qualitative research design through formulation of research questions, choice of qualitative research methods, semi-structured interview data collection, and reflexive thematic analysis. Critically, this approach enables interpretation through the recognition of the artist manager relationship as an active, causal entity rather than merely observable behaviour, providing deeper insights into the structural forces that generate psychological impacts within these professional partnerships.

In the observable empirical domain, there are visible and measurable signs of mental health problems in the industry and issues artist managers face to address these concerns. This empirical evidence is crucial for CR research design as it provides the observable phenomena that point to deeper structural mechanisms. Recent studies reveal the high levels of stress and anxiety among musicians (Berg et al., 2022; Gross and Musgrave, 2016; Heyman et al., 2019; Musicians Union, 2023; Record Union, 2019). Research indicates that musicians face higher suicide rates than the general population (Elmes and Riseley, 2024; Gross and Musgrave, 2023; Kenny, 2016; Musgrave and Lamis, 2025; Vaag, et.al, 2015). Substance abuse is a prevalent and observable issue within the music industry (Lamis and Musgrave, 2025). In response, musicians have begun speaking out about their struggles with well-being. For example, in 2023, Lewis Capaldi worked with Netflix to release a documentary that discussed his struggles with mental health, anxiety, and Tourette's syndrome (*How I'm Feeling Now*, 2023).

These empirical observations are vital for CR methodology as they represent the surface level manifestations that require investigation into the underlying actual and real domains. They inform the research design by identifying what needs explaining (the mental health crisis) whilst pointing towards the need to explore the deeper causal mechanisms operating through manager and artist relationships that generate these observable outcomes.

Relating to artist management, there are measurable examples of issues within the artist management relationship. Case studies have examined well-known artist manager relationships that hold a negative perception to the public, such as Elvis Presley and Colonel Tom Parker, Jimi Hendrix and his co-managers Michael Jeffery

and Chas Chandler, along with an investigation documented around the tragic death of Avicii (Allen, 2022; Hopkins, 1984). Studies have also documented the concerning workloads of artist managers (MMF, 2019; Calkins et al., 2023). Organisations, such as the MMF and EMMA, argue for structural reforms and advocate for improved remuneration models and working conditions. In addition, there have been policy initiatives aimed at addressing financial structures and promoting diversity for managers (MMF, 2019; Calkins et al., 2023).

Within the actual domain, there are events and practices that play out in musicians and managers lives that are not always visible or understood. The nature of a professional musician includes conditions that impact their well-being through the standardisation of the gig economy, the 'tortured artist' narrative, pressure to perform, and unstructured nature of their day-to-day roles (Bouhuys, 1964; Burgess et al., 2021; Rogers, 1926).

These issues include but are not limited to irregular hours, job insecurity, financial instability, blurred boundaries between work and professional life, gender-based challenges, eating disorders, performance anxiety, extensive touring, external pressures, substance abuse, fan interaction and fulfilling performance duties (Ackerman and Adams, 2004; Ackerman and Kenny, 2008; Araújo et al., 2019; Berg et al., 2018; Bjerkeset et al., 2014; Davidson et al., 2020; Jessen et al., 2021; Lamis and Musgrave, 2025; Smith and Teague, 2015). The working relationship between artists and managers is inherently complex, as economic associations often overlap with personal ones. The lack of clear definitions for beneficial relationship types can negatively impact both artists well-being and ultimately their professional success (Musgrave, 2023).

In the real domain, there are underlying structures and mechanisms that are invisible yet shape events and behaviours within the music industry. Past findings highlight the impact of technological advancements on escalating work-related stressors, as developments in music creation and sharing have heightened demands on both artists and their managers (Allen, 2022; Anderson, 2014; Elberse, 2013; Musgrave, 2014; Pizzolatto, 2023; Sun, 2019). Modern musicians are now required to navigate dual roles between creative and entrepreneurial responsibilities, requiring engagement in self-promotion, brand management, and fan interactions (Pizzolatto, 2023). Technology has intensified social media demands, where platforms require

constant content creation and interaction despite being intended for co-creation and community building (Burnes and Choi, 2017; Gamble et al., 2018). These technological pressures create structural mechanisms that generate stress for both artists and managers, as they must continuously adapt to digital demands whilst maintaining creative output and industry relationships.

Chaparro and Musgrave (2021), conducted a moral intensity test which examined managers awareness of ethical dimensions in their decision-making. Their findings demonstrated a profession characterised by significant ethical responsibility, excessive workloads, inadequate compensation structures, and limited well-being resources. These conditions create substantial challenges for music managers while simultaneously tasking them with supporting artist well-being (Chaparro and Musgrave, 2021; MMF, 2019; Calkins et al., 2023). This study examines the artist manager relationship within the UK music industry through the three distinct ontological domains, focusing on the real domain.

The CR perspective directly informed the selection of qualitative research methods because understanding mental health in music management requires access to the underlying mechanisms that cannot be quantified. Qualitative methods illuminate layers of meaning within professional relationships, capture diverse participant perspectives, and reveal how individual agency interacts with structural constraints that affect well-being. This approach is essential for mental health research as it aligns with CR's epistemological stance of understanding social dynamics through direct engagement with those who experience them, enabling researchers to uncover the hidden causal mechanisms that generate mental health outcomes in manager-artist relationships (Gouldner, 1964; Morgan and Olsen, 2007).

Integrating CR's ontological lens with qualitative methodology is crucial because it reveals how manager and artist relationships function as causal mechanisms in mental health outcomes. This supports the development of effective interventions, as it moves beyond treating symptoms to addressing the structural causes of mental health issues within the industry.

The CR perspective shaped research and interview questions by targeting unobservable mechanisms that drive mental health problems. Rather than asking surface level questions about stress levels, CR informed questions investigate the underlying power dynamics, industry pressures, and relational structures that create

mental health challenges. This approach is vital because it enables researchers to identify where interventions should focus on changing structural conditions rather than merely supporting individuals after problems emerge. Questions explored how managers experience and navigate these hidden mechanisms, providing insights essential for developing targeted, systemic mental health interventions for music industry professionals.

The adoption of semi-structured interviews served as a methodological choice that enabled a deeper understanding of the artist manager relationship, allowing participants to articulate their experiences, perceptions, and insights. The selected interview format gave participants the opportunity to discuss their knowledge of music management, the relationship with their artists, and the impact this has on managers and artist's mental well-being with the assumption that the respondents have an experience they can elaborate on (Edwards, et al., 2020). Through the CR perspective, this lived experience travelled beyond the empirical and actual realms by encouraging managers to discuss the underlying mechanisms, such as the music industry's technological evolution, impact of record label involvement, inconsistent boundaries in the artist manager relationship, and ethical elements in their decision-making processes (Allen, 2022; Anderson, 2014; Bhaskar, 2008; Buch-Hansen and Nielsen, 2020; Burnes and Choi, 2017; Calkins et al., 2023; Chaparro and Musgrave, 2021; Lamis and Musgrave, 2025; MMF, 2019; Elberse, 2013; Musgrave, 2014; Pizzolatto, 2023; Sun, 2019). Providing opportunities to discuss these topics in more detail and moving further into the real domain of CR research (Bhaskar, 2008; Buch-Hansen and Nielsen, 2020; Edwards, et al., 2020).

Through a reflexive thematic analysis, the lens of critical realism was deployed through retroduction or retroductive reasoning. Retroductive reasoning was applied through the empirical domain to suggest the underlying mechanisms that explain what exists for these observations to occur (Braun and Clarke, 2021; Bhaskar, 2008; Maxwell, 2011). Employing a reflexive form of thematic analysis encouraged flexibility and adaptability, allowing themes to emerge organically from codes created during the analysis process.

### 3.2.2 Methodology

The study employs qualitative methodology to investigate how music managers implement HRM tools for the artists they manage. While quantitative data identifies

'what,' qualitative approaches discuss the 'why' behind observed phenomena (Anderson, 2013). Qualitative methodology allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the complexities within the artist manager relationship, fostering an open-ended dialogue where participants can articulate challenges or ideas related to their dynamic (Steudel and Yauch, 2003). Qualitative inquiry, with its inherent range and open-ended nature, proves invaluable in this context. By offering a flexible platform, qualitative research enables participants to articulate and discuss problems or ideas they encounter in their artist manager relationships (Steudel and Yauch, 2003). Allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted dimensions of these relationships, going beyond the mere identification of issues to explore the underlying nuances and contexts that shape the dynamics between music managers and artists (Anderson, 2013; Steudel and Yauch, 2003). In essence, the qualitative methodology serves as a lens through which the intricacies of the artist manager relationship can be examined with depth.

The qualitative framework was maintained throughout each phase of the research, ensuring methodological consistency. The initial stage of research established the development of the AMMHTK. Qualitative examination extended into two subsequent phases designed to evaluate and refine the tool kit's practical application through a comprehensive pilot study. These phases employed the same methodology that proved effective in the initial phase of research. Continuity of methodological approach ensured that the results analysed in the initial phase of research could be extended and refined through practical evaluation.

### 3.2.3 Method

One-to-one semi-structure interviews were chosen as the main source for data collection. Semi-structured interviews, frequently employed in human resource practitioner research, examine the individual experiences and realities faced by participants (Anderson, 2013; Braun and Clarke, 2021). In a semi-structured interview, researchers have a central topic, along with pre-formulated questions derived from themes developed in focus groups, allowing exploration of new perspectives while maintaining focus (Rubin and Rubin, 2012).

This approach has been chosen as it provides an intimate platform for music managers operating in the UK to articulate and reflect upon their individual experiences. By adopting a semi-structured format, the interviews offer a balance

between predefined questions and the flexibility to examine into emergent themes, allowing for a more comprehensive exploration of the nuances inherent in their roles. The focus of these interviews is specifically on the unique experiences of music managers within the UK context. A focused lens enabled capturing insights into the challenges, strategies, and varied dynamics encountered by professionals in their daily operation. Research aims not only to gain an understanding of the current landscape but also to identify potential areas of concern or success within HRM principle implementation for artists.

The chosen method aligns with previous research in the field of mental health, where qualitative methodology and semi-structured interviews have been commonly employed (Gross and Musgrave, 2016; Li et al., 2022; Musgrave, 2014). A study conducted in 2022 by researchers at the National University Hospital in Singapore investigating the experiences and challenges faced by community mental health workers, used a similar approach. Conducting semi-structured interviews with eighteen participants, the researchers successfully applied thematic analysis, employing Braun and Clarke's six-step phase for their analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2021; Li et al., 2022).

While some critics argue against interviews as the primary data source in qualitative research, highlighting potential participant bias, data completeness issues, and the variance between reported information and actual actions, these factors were considered during each step of the research process (Atkinson and Silverman, 1997; Becker and Geer, 1957; Dean and Whyte, 1958; Hepburn and Potter, 2005; Silverman, 2007). Despite these concerns, interviews remain a valuable tool for examining people's experiences and perspectives, with measures in place to address potential biases and ensure data completeness (Hammersley, 2012).

Following the initial stage of research and the development of the AMMHTK, the two-part pilot study incorporated specialised data collection methods for its objectives. The pilot study involved two distinct phases. Part one of the pilot study assessed the tool kit's initial usability and effectiveness in real-world management contexts. Part two evaluated systematic refinements and determined readiness for larger-scale implementation.

The first part of the pilot study employed multiple qualitative approaches to assess the AMMHTK's initial usability and effectiveness in practical management

contexts. Semi-structured interviews served as the primary method, supplemented by documentation templates and structured meeting reflections to provide comprehensive evaluation data. The participant completed an initial assessment using three questions derived from the original interview protocol (Anderson, 2013; Hagan, 2019). These questions established baseline data on mental health involvement preferences, crisis preparedness approaches, and artist relationship styles, corresponding to the tool kit's core categorisation framework to provide personalised recommendations.

The second part of the pilot study also employed a multi-method qualitative approach designed to evaluate the refined AMMHTK's functionality. Building on pilot study results, this method incorporated structured data collection procedures including semi-structured interviews, a refined documentation template, and three distinct meeting reflections.

## 3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

The next section will discuss the design of the qualitative research project. Beginning with section 3.3.1 the target population of the project will be outlined. Following this will be sections 3.3.2 and 3.3.3 which discuss sampling method and size. Sections 3.3.4-3.3.7 will discuss research setting, recruitment, instruments, procedure, and timeline. Section 3.3.8 will provide the chosen analysis.

### 3.3.1 Target Population

The focal point of this study is a specific and critical unit within UK music industry music managers. More specifically, this group comprises individuals who not only reside in the UK but are actively engaged in the music industry as artist managers. By focusing on music managers who both work and live in the UK, this ensures a localised examination that considers the contextual factors, industry practices, and cultural nuances specific to the British music scene. Geographical specificity acknowledges the potential influence of regional factors, industry practices, and cultural nuances on the experiences, challenges, and strategies employed by both music managers and self-managing artists. In essence, this delineation of the target population aims to capture the diverse perspectives and roles within the UK music industry.

Inclusion criteria are composed of individuals of any gender aged eighteen and above. Reflecting a commitment to capturing a diverse range of perspectives and

experiences within the realm of music management. Acknowledgement of age and gender diversity ensures a representative and broad spectrum of individuals contributing to the artist management landscape in the UK. Music managers at any level of experience and expertise were welcome to take part.

### 3.3.2 Sampling Method

Research employed purposive criterion sampling to select music managers actively engaged in the UK music industry (Shuttleworth and Wilson, 2008). Criterion sampling involved intentionally choosing a focused and limited sample, with the aim of obtaining the most pertinent and valuable information (Duan et al., 2013; Huberman and Miles, 1994; Kelly, 2010). By using this method, there were identified cases that would allow for the effective use of research resources by aligning closely with research objectives (Duan et al., 2013).

### 3.3.3 Sample Size

Determining an appropriate sample size for conducting semi-structured interviews within a specific population poses a challenge, requiring careful consideration to ensure the collected data provides an examination of the studied phenomena (Hennink et al., 2019). Purposive selection aimed to assemble a diverse yet targeted group that provided rich insights into the intricacies of artist management. Twelve research participants were thoughtfully chosen from the pool of artist managers residing and working in the UK music industry. This amount was chosen to limit the potential of saturation, or the point in data collection when no original issues or themes emerge. Acknowledging the importance of selecting participants who can offer meaningful perspectives and optimising the value of the research findings while managing the constraints of time and resources.

### 3.3.4 Setting

The research setting, the physical or social context where a study unfolds, is fundamental for qualitative research, aiming to extract meaning from participants responses within their natural environment (Given, 2008). While it is common for research, especially on sensitive topics under a PhD setting, to be conducted within the university, the traditional approach shifted due to the Covid-19 pandemic (Poitras, 2012). Interviews were adapted to an online format using Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), with Zoom Video Conferencing being the chosen platform. Although not the

conventional norm, this transition became widespread as people adjusted to online tools for various forms of communication during the pandemic (Novick, 2008; Self, 2021). Face-to-face interviews have historically been considered the 'gold-standard' in qualitative research, valued for the deeper connection facilitated by physical proximity and the nuanced understanding derived from observing body language and non-verbal cues (Holt, 2010; Lechuga, 2012; Seitz, 2016; Vogl, 2013). Despite VoIP lacking personal proximity, tools like Zoom allow for real-time face-to-face interviews, ensuring a blend of verbal and non-verbal responses.

While not the conventional choice, online interviews offer unique advantages. Participants, for instance, can engage from the comfort of their homes, fostering a potentially more open discussion, especially regarding sensitive mental health information often associated with studies. Online interviews also enhance convenience, eliminating travel time and costs typically associated with face-to-face interactions, potentially broadening the geographical reach and participant pool (Archibald et al., 2019; Gray et al., 2020). Aligning with environmental sustainability and reducing the need for commuting to interview locations (Hanna, 2012).

This methodology further facilitated access to participants with higher profiles who might typically encounter scheduling and geographical constraints. The incorporation of Zoom as a technological medium streamlined the recording process and enhanced the ease of transcription.

### 3.3.5 Recruitment

The recruitment of participants involved word-of-mouth strategies at music industry events, including conferences linked to MMF and University of West London (UWL)/London College of Music (LCM). All participants were volunteers. Each participant received comprehensive information, Appendix A, E, and F, before and during their one-to-one interview. Participants retained the freedom to withdraw from the research at any stage during data collection. Emphasising the voluntary nature of their involvement, each participant provided informed consent to participate.

### 3.3.6 Instruments

Interview questions were based on questions used from a previous study on music management (Hagan, 2019). To view the original interview questions from Hagan's (2019) study, see Appendix B. The initial segment of the inquiry comprised

eight questions centred on obtaining demographic information from the participants. Following the initial inquiry into participants general demographic characteristics, they were provided with a sequence of seven comprehensive questions. These questions were designed to enquire into their understanding of the existing mental health resources accessible to artists, their encounters within the artist manager relationship domain, and the obstacles encountered in their present efforts to aid artists dealing with mental health issues. For a comprehensive overview of the specific questions posed to the participants, please refer to Figure Four.

Following the initial phase of research, the two-part pilot study incorporated new instruments for further data collection. Primary data sources for parts one and two of the pilot study included documentation templates completed by the participant, meeting reflections completed by the researcher, and transcriptions of meetings. In the first part of the pilot study, a final post-implementation interview captured comprehensive reflections on tool kit usefulness and impact. Ensuring systematic tracking of tool kit application while enabling capture of both structured usage data and participant experiences throughout the study (Barker et al., 2015; Temidayo, 2024).

The second part of the pilot study incorporated an enhanced documentation template that was converted to Google Spreadsheet format and integrated into the Google Site platform for real-time tracking, and structured meeting reflections specifically adapted for each meeting phase to capture relevant feasibility assessment data. The data collection approach was designed as a result of pilot study insights while incorporating more systematic procedures to enable comprehensive evaluation of refinement effectiveness and scalability considerations (Gurfinkel et al., 2022).

Figure 4: Semi-Structured Interview Questions

**Semi-Structured Interview Questions**

Demographic Questions:

1. What is your age?
2. What are your preferred pronouns?
3. How long have you been an artist manager?
4. How did you get started as an artist manager?
5. How many artists or groups do you manage?
6. How long have you managed these artists/groups?
7. What is your estimated total number of streams throughout your current management roster?
8. Are you now or have you ever been a member of a music management organisation, or are you an independent manager?

Interview Questions:

1. The Music Management Industry has seen a lot of growth in the last 2-5 years in terms of the access and resources, for mental health needs, available for both musicians and managers in the UK. Along with this, there has been an increase in conversations regarding mental health in the UK music industry. What do you think has changed or caused this change or increase in conversations/awareness/resources?

2. What level of involvement do you have in the knowledge of your artists mental health (1-10 scale, 1 being no involvement and 10 being severe involvement)
   a. Is this manifested in unsuitable settings, such as business meetings/does this involve regular or separate meetings?

3. If an artist expresses, they are having difficulties with their mental health, how do you go about addressing these needs?

4. How are the boundaries between professionalism and socially driven interactions managed? Friendship vs. Business relationship.
   a. What type of relationship do you have with the artist you manage?

5. What do you see as the main challenges you face in assisting the artists/artists/groups you manage in terms of their mental health?
   a. Could you give an example?

6. Are you aware of any training programs or opportunities to better address the mental health issues of the artist/artists/groups you manage? Would this be something you would use?

7. Is there anything else you would like to add to the questions and information provided?

### 3.3.7 Procedure and Timeline

The effective projection and planning of resources, personnel, and timeline play a pivotal role in ensuring the success of research (Marshal and Rossman, 1989). Consideration gains a significance in qualitative research due to its inherent flexibility, which may introduce unforeseen challenges requiring additional time. Considering this, a comprehensive timeline estimate has been undertaken, which is visually presented in the form of a Gantt Chart, as outlined in Appendix C. The Gantt Chart allowed for a visual representation of the project's chronological breakdown, aiding in efficient management and anticipation of potential challenges that may arise during the research process.

### 3.3.8 Analysis

The data derived from the interviews went through the process of reflexive thematic analysis, a method that entails identifying, organising, and interpreting recurring themes within the collected information (Cassell et al., 2021). Themes are defined as recurring features in participants responses that hold relevance to the research question. Analysis exceeds the organisation and presentation of data, involving a deeper interpretation of various aspects related to the research questions (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun and Clarke, 2021). Recognised as a foundational method in qualitative analysis, thematic analysis offers flexibility, making it adaptable across various analytic approaches and producing rich, detailed, and complex data (Aronson, 1994; Braun and Clarke, 2021; Roulston, 2001).

While thematic analysis in qualitative research offers advantages such as flexibility, some scholars have raised concerns (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Boyatzis, 1998; Tuckett, 2005). Although the adaptability of thematic analysis permits varied interpretations and the collection of rich and complex data, it has also resulted in the method lacking a definitive structure or format, contributing to an overall absence of standardised practices (Meehan et al., 2008).

In 2008, Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke introduced an outline detailing six phases to guide researchers through thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2008). Their guide establishes a recursive process, allowing researchers to navigate through the phases as needed throughout the entire developmental process. Braun and Clarke's six-phase guide was employed to analyse the collected data, initiating from data

transcription and progressing towards the creation of the final report and presentation. To view Braun and Clarke's six phases of thematic analysis, see Table Seven.

Table 7: Six-Phases of Thematic Analysis

| Phase | Step |
|---|---|
| **Phase One** | Familiarise yourself with the data |
| **Phase Two** | Generating Initial Codes |
| **Phase Three** | Searching for Themes |
| **Phase Four** | Reviewing Themes |
| **Phase Five** | Defining and Naming Themes |
| **Phase Six** | Producing the Report |

Source: (Braun and Clarke, 2021)

Within qualitative management research, the study adopts a reflexive form of thematic analysis. Reflexive thematic analysis was selected for its ability to empower the researcher to shape the research outcome and focus without being confined to a specific theoretical framework (Campbell et al., 2021). Developed by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke in 2008, this approach stands out for its flexibility and adaptability, allowing themes to emerge organically from codes created during the analysis process (Braun and Clarke, 2021; Hayes, 2000). Reflexive thematic analysis involves a later theme development stage, where the researcher engages with the data, integrating their values, skills, experience, and training to generate themes (Braun and Clarke, 2021). This organic coding process required a reflexive researcher who consistently follows the six phases outlined by Braun and Clarke (2021) to maintain a reflective stance throughout the analysis.

Top-down processing was employed, deriving themes from existing concerns (Cassell et al., 2021). Integrating HRM principles, the thematic analysis uses top-down processing to explore the relationship between the theory and data obtained from the semi-structured interviews. Allowing the qualitative enquiry to examine how the responses of UK music managers align with HRM principles. Data heavily relied on

the researcher's skills and emotional commitment, focusing on the participants knowledge of mental health resources available for the artists they manage and their perspectives on the artist manager relationship (Kidd and Parshall, 2000).

In September 2022, Kelly Zainal and Joanna Barlas undertook a comprehensive qualitative study in Singapore, conducting eleven semi-structured interviews with female migrant domestic workers to investigate mental health stressors, available resources, coping strategies, and their impact on health (Barlas and Zainal, 2022). Utilising reflexive thematic analysis, multiple themes and sub-categories were identified, encompassing mental health challenges, and coping strategies. Drawing inspiration from Barlas and Zainal (2022), research seeks to establish themes and sub-categories specifically related to the artist manager relationship's impact on overall artist well-being. Thematic analysis methodology, as advocated by Braun and Clarke (2021), highlights the importance of selecting themes based on their relevance to the research question, rather than relying on numerical values to determine their validity.

In a study by Gross and Musgrave (2016) in collaboration with Help Musicians UK, two overarching themes, 'Precarity' and 'Cultural Norms and Working Conditions', emerged from interviews with twenty-six musicians across the UK, focusing on mental health in the music industry. Building on this conversation, the study aims to explore the working conditions surrounding mental health in the music industry.

The two-part pilot study used qualitative content analysis to examine manager's responses, prioritising understanding of participant experiences and decision-making processes rather than reducing data to quantifiable variables (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2015). This comprehensive analysis provided detailed understanding of both operational application and manager's experiences with the AMMHTK's initial implementation, whilst focusing on scalability considerations and practical requirements for broader deployment with multiple UK artist managers (Markless and Streatfield, 2012).

### 3.3.9 Ethics and Limitations

The qualitative research conducted involved human subjects, requiring thorough consideration of ethical implications to uphold research validity and reliability (Silverman, 2013). As the moderator, it was the researcher's responsibility not only to

ensure participants comfort during the discussion but also to address their feelings during the debriefing period at the session's conclusion (Barbour, 2011). It is important to allow sufficient time for the debriefing process, as participants may have reservations about certain topics discussed in the interview setting.

The consent form, accessible in Appendix E, was provided to participants, offering them the option to decline any question they preferred not to answer and allowing them to withdraw from the interview process at any point. The form also reassured participants that the interview would be recorded while maintaining anonymity regarding their names and organisations. Participants were provided with a list of mental health resources available to artists and artist managers in the UK, detailed in Appendix D. To further facilitate participant agency, they were given the opportunity to share any additional thoughts or comments during the concluding phase of the semi-structured one-to-one interview.

### 3.3.10 Data Protection

According to the UK Data Protection Act of 2018, adherence to data retention principles is essential, stressing the importance of not retaining data beyond its necessary duration. It is vital that the researcher ensured that the data collected falls within the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which outlines obligations that limit the use of personal data and its usage (Information Commissioner's Office, 2022). Under the Data Protection Act of 2018, researchers are required to follow 'Data Protection Principles' these can be viewed in Table Eight (Gov.UK, 2018).

Table 8: Data Protection Act 2018 'Data Protection Principles'

| Data Protection Principles (2018) |
|---|
| Used fairly, lawfully, and transparently. |
| Used for specified, explicit purposes. |
| Used in a way that is adequate, relevant, and limited to only what is necessary. |
| Accurate and where necessary, kept up to date. |
| Kept for no longer than necessary. |
| Handled in a way that ensures appropriate security, including protection against unlawful or unauthorised processing, access, loss, destruction, or damage. |

Source: (Gov.UK, 2018)

The confidentiality of specific data has been carefully maintained, ensuring that any details allowing the identification of individual participants were excluded from the final report. Participants names and any identifying information were neither requested nor linked to their responses. Given the substantial collection and analysis of personal information pertaining to artists, it was vital to be mindful of specific details that could reveal the participant's identity, workplace, or profession. Anonymity was safeguarded by refraining from associating the interview results with personal identifiers, such as names or represented artists. The sole identifiers used were participants pseudonyms, gender, age, years in music management industry and music membership affiliations. Incorporating these statistics aimed to provide readers with contextual background information on the participant.

To maintain confidentiality, all researcher's records, including audio, video, and text transcriptions, were securely stored on a locked computer accessible only by the researcher. All records, including tape recordings and raw data, are scheduled for destruction two years after the thesis publication or within a total span of three years. Ethical approval for the research was obtained from the University Research Degrees Sub-Committee (URDSC) of the University of West London on January 13th, 2022. The research submission process involved presenting an overview of the research, ethical considerations, and the consent form provided to participants.

### 3.3.11 Protection of Participants

Given the cultural context of the research, discussions during the semi-structured interviews touched upon sensitive subjects. To mitigate the risk of emotional harm to participants, a comprehensive set of strategies was used to proactively manage potential distress or emotional discomfort (Wiles, 2013). These strategies encompass the careful observation of participants body language during the semi-structured interviews, allowing participants the option to decline any question without repercussion, reiterating their right to withdraw from the interview process, forewarning participants about potential risks prior to their participation, supplying information on readily accessible resources should immediate support be required, and conducting a debrief session post-interview to ensure participants comfort (Wiles, 2013). A detailed list of resources made available to participants before, during, and immediately after the one-to-one interview can be found in Appendix D, sourced from the Musicians Union website.

### 3.3.12 Artificial Intelligence

In the development of this thesis, artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used to assist with grammar. Specifically, Grammarly's AI engine was used for detailed grammatical checking and suggesting improvements in sentence structure and word choice (Grammarly, 2025). Support helped ensure that the writing adhered to academic language standards.

### 3.3.13 Right to Withdraw

Participants were explicitly told their unequivocal right to decline participation or withdraw from the interview at any point and for any reason. The foundational principle of obtaining valid consent, as underscored by Silverman (2013), centres on the voluntariness of the participants, ensuring that their agreement to participate is uncoerced and freely given. The absence of any coercive measures stresses the commitment to upholding the integrity of the consent process and fostering a genuine, unpressured willingness on the part of the research participants.

### 3.3.14 Debriefing

In accordance with the British Psychological Society's (BPS) Code of Human Research Ethics ensuring an adequate debriefing process for participants is essential (BPS, 2021). Recognising that verbal descriptions alone may not entirely eradicate the

potential for harmful impacts in certain circumstances, the imperative lies in supplementing verbal clarifications with comprehensive debriefing measures to mitigate any lingering adverse impacts on participants.

Before the semi-structured interviews began, the following paragraph was read to participants:

> Discussions around mental health have only begun to become prevalent in the music industry, despite this, it is also an industry with a high propensity for negative mental health outcomes (Ackerman et al., 2012; Asher and Kenny, 2016; Bjerkeset et al., 2014; Davis et al., 2004; Gross and Musgrave, 2016; Musgrave, 2014; Record Union, 2019). The following study aims to gather information regarding UK music managers knowledge of mental health challenges as well as their awareness of available resources. This interview will focus on examining the knowledge of UK music managers knowledge of their artists mental health while providing information on how to further assist musician's mental health as well as your own.

Throughout the recruitment process, participants were reminded, via email correspondence before the interview, and prior to the interview initiation, of the recording and transcription procedures. Emphasis was placed on maintaining strict anonymity by not disclosing participants names. Additionally, participants were provided with a comprehensive list of mental health resources, available in Appendix D, both preceding, during, and promptly following the interview process, sourced from the Musicians Union website.

### 3.3.15 Consent

The principle of informed consent serves as a cornerstone in research ethics, providing participants with comprehensive information and enabling them to make a considered decision regarding their involvement (Wiles, 2013). The consent form, detailed in Appendix E, serves as a foundational document in this process, ensuring that participants are well-informed about the research in an accessible manner, including their right to withdraw at any point (Silverman, 2013).

The importance of obtaining informed consent is accentuated by the need to safeguard participants, particularly in studies that may pose potential mental strain (Morin, 2020). The clarity and transparency of the consent form empower participants to engage in the research willingly, offering them the autonomy to decline specific

questions or exit the interview as desired. Informed consent process becomes particularly vital in situations where unexpected issues arise during data collection, necessitating a form of process or rolling consent. Ensuring ongoing participant protection, even if the interview is already underway through addressing unanticipated challenges that may emerge (Cutleffe and Ramcharan, 2001; Piper and Simmons, 2005).

The consent form explicitly outlined participants rights. It highlighted that the interview would be recorded while assuring participants of the strict anonymity of their names, organisations, and any other identifying features. The form notified participants that in the event they disclose information indicating harm to themselves or others, the researcher may need to report to local authorities. The consent form also articulates the storage duration of participant information and the possibility of excerpts being shared for academic publications, presentations, and the dissertation.

## 3.4   SUMMARY

In conclusion, this chapter laid the groundwork for a comprehensive exploration of the artist manager relationship in the UK music industry, providing valuable insights into mental health awareness and resources within this dynamic professional context.

The research methodology adopts a qualitative approach to investigate the dynamics of artist manager relationships within the UK music industry, particularly focusing on the impact on mental health. Research draws on CR as its philosophical perspective, emphasising the causal powers within social structures (Johnston et al., 2013). Purposive criterion sampling was employed to select music managers actively engaged in the UK music industry. One-to-one, semi-structured interviews form the primary data collection method, offering participants the flexibility to express their experiences openly. Under the philosophical lens of CR, the research questions examined the awareness of UK music managers regarding mental health resources for musicians, adding a critical dimension to the exploration.

Reflexive thematic analysis, served as the chosen method for data analysis. Aligning with the research project's focus on understanding overarching themes related to mental health resources and the artist manager relationship. The thematic analysis process incorporated a top-down processing strategy, exploring themes derived from pre-existing concerns, particularly within HRM principles. Ethical

considerations played a pivotal role, guided by principles such as informed consent, participant debriefing, and ensuring data protection compliance under the UK Data Protection Act of 2018. Chapter Four outlines the data analysis process, employing reflexive thematic analysis, and provides a concise overview of the obtained results.

# Chapter 4: Results and Analysis

## 4.1    INTRODUCTION

The following chapter discusses the results of the study and provides a comprehensive analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of the research's results. The first section, 4.2, includes a description of the sample. Next, section 4.3 provides details the participant sample. The next section, 4.4, will discuss a summary of the findings. Section 4.5 introduces reflexive thematic analysis by providing an analysis overview and a discussion on the connection between the research questions and HRM. Section 4.6 presents a summary of the themes and sub-themes derived from the reflexive thematic analysis. Following the summary, an intricate examination of the four recognised themes that surfaced through the process of reflexive thematic analysis will be provided in sections 4.7 through 4.10. In addition to the themes and sub-themes identified through reflexive analysis. Sections 4.11 through 4.13 explore the various approaches that artist managers take in their roles, as categorised based on participant responses. These sections highlight the varying degrees of involvement, support, and strategic direction that managers provide, which are influenced by factors such as their personal management philosophy, their artist's needs, and the overall industry landscape. Throughout this chapter, references are made to Table Fourteen, which offers a clear overview of the themes and sub-themes derived from the reflexive thematic analysis, further illustrated through relevant participant quotes from the interviews.

## 4.2    DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE

Purposive criterion sampling was used to identify music managers who live and work in the UK music industry (Shuttleworth and Wilson, 2008). Determining a focussed sample, aiming to achieve the most appropriate and useful information from UK artist managers (Duan et al., 2013; Huberman and Miles, 1994; Kelly, 2010). The research focused on twelve artist managers actively involved in the UK music industry. Individuals were recruited through personal networks or identified based on their roles as artist managers in the UK The selection of these participants was grounded in their professional standing as artist managers within the UK.

The initial segment of the inquiry comprised eight questions centred on obtaining demographic information from the participants. For a comprehensive overview of the specific questions posed to the participants, please refer to Figure Four. Participants exhibited a diverse range of characteristics. Their ages spanned from twenty-three to sixty-five years, and their duration in the music management industry varied from one and a half years to fifteen years. In terms of gender distribution, seven of the participants identified as female, while five identified as male. It was observed that 58% of the managers held memberships in music management organisations. All these memberships were affiliated with the MMF. Malik was unique in their affiliation, as they were a member of two distinct music management organisation, the MMF and the Australian Artist Managers (AAM).

To summarise, the results related to length of time in management, participants management experience ranged from two to fifteen years. A notable 58% of participants worked in the U.K music management industry for five plus years, while 42% worked in the industry less than five years. Liam worked in the live music industry for over thirty years and has managed for the last fifteen. An overview of participants responses to the general demographic questions can be found in Table Nine.

Table 9: Participant Profiles

| Participant Name | Age | Gender | Years in Industry | Music Management Organisation Memberships |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| John | 30 | He/Him | 12 | MMF |
| Maria | 27 | She/Her | 4 | MMF |
| Malik | 35 | He/Him | 14 | MMF + AAM |
| Adam | 33 | He/Him | 16 | - |
| Emily | 23 | She/Her | 1.5 | - |
| Ava | 65 | She/Her | 3 | MMF |
| Isabella | 30 | She/Her | 7 | MMF |
| Morgan | 39 | She/Her | 7 | MMF |
| Chloe | 27 | She/Her | 4 | MMF |
| Liam | 61 | He/Him | 15 | - |
| Taylor | 23 | She/Her | 2 | - |
| Joe | 29 | He/Him | 7 | - |

## 4.3 PARTICIPANT SUMMARIES

The next section provides additional insights into each participant, including the number of artists they currently manage and the duration of their professional engagement in the field and their pathway into music management.

### *John*

John is a thirty-year-old male with a twelve-year career in the music management industry, currently serving as a member of the MMF. Operating both independently and within a music management company, he presently oversees a roster of eleven artists, with durations of collaboration ranging from one to four years. John also collaborates with a co-manager for the artists on his roster.

### *Maria*

Maria, a twenty-seven-year-old female, presents a four-year career as a music manager and holds membership in the MMF. Initially entering the industry as a

musician, Maria transitioned into music management. Currently managing six artists, Maria's professional trajectory encompasses independent work, employment with a management company, and the recent establishment of her own music management firm.

### Malik

Malik, a thirty-five-year-old male, brings fourteen years of experience to the music management, aligning himself with both the MMF and AAM. With six artists on his management roster, Malik operates within a music management company, collaborating with a co-manager.

### Adam

Adam is a thirty-three-year-old male who has worked as an artist manager for sixteen years, he is not a member of any music management organisations. He was once a member of the MMF but is no longer affiliated. Adam started in the industry by creating his own music management company and partnered with two other people which helped to run the company. Adam currently has two artists on his roster, one he has managed for a year and the other for four years.

### Emily

Emily is a twenty-three-year-old female who has worked in the industry for one and a half years, she is not affiliated with any music management organisations. Emily began her career in artist management as an admin assistant for a music manager and then got promoted to Junior Manager for an A&R department. The company Emily works for currently manages six artists. She has worked with this company for over a year, but they have been managing some of the acts on their roster for over a decade.

### Ava

Ava is a sixty-five-year-old female who has been an artist manager for three years, she is also a member of the MMF. While Ava has been an artist manager for three years, she has worked in the music industry for over forty years. Ava began in the live industry sector, working as a DJ and producer. Ava is currently managing one artist and has been managing this artist for three years.

### Isabella

Isabella, a thirty-year-old female and MMF member, boasts a seven-year career as an artist manager. Originating in the live music industry as a promoter, Isabella

predominantly manages two artists and serves as a career coach for fifteen additional artists.

### *Morgan*

Morgan, a thirty-nine-year-old female and MMF member, brings seven years of experience to the music management industry. Transitioning from a personal assistant to independent artist manager, Morgan's diverse background includes a 10-year hiatus working for a music publishing company and a record label. Morgan currently manages three artists and has been working with them for six months.

### *Chloe*

Chloe, a twenty-seven-year-old female and MMF member, has accrued four years of experience as a music manager. Originating as an artist manager for a band she was a fan of Chloe continues to manage this band, now with a three-year collaboration history.

### *Liam*

Liam, a sixty-one-year-old male, holds fifteen years of experience in the music management industry without affiliation to any management organisations. Initially an office manager, Liam organically transitioned into artist management after discovering an artist he was passionate about. As the owner of a music management company, Liam currently oversees a roster of seven artists, managing them for durations ranging from two to eight years.

### *Taylor*

Taylor is a twenty-three-year-old female who has worked as an artist manager for two years, she is not a member of any music management organisations. Beginning a career initiated by attending shows of artists she admired, Taylor presently manages three artists, with collaborations ranging from a few months to one year.

### *Joe*

Joe is a twenty-nine-year-old male who has worked in the music management industry for seven years, he is not affiliated with any music management organisations. Originating as a session musician, Joe transitioned into music management, currently operating as an independent artist manager. With a roster of four artists, his collaborations span from a few months to two years.

## 4.4    SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS

Following the initial inquiry into participants general demographic characteristics, they were provided with a sequence of seven comprehensive questions. These questions were designed to enquire into their understanding of the existing mental health resources accessible to artists, their encounters within the artist manager relationship domain, and the obstacles encountered in their present efforts to aid artists dealing with mental health issues.

Questions one, two, and six in the semi-structured interviews were designed to establish an initial understanding of the knowledge and awareness levels of UK music managers regarding current mental health resources. Subsequently, questions three, four, and five focused on the broader implications stemming from the presence or absence of knowledge about artists mental health, providing a comprehensive exploration of this critical aspect. Questions one, two and six purposely investigated into their awareness of external training programs, personal tools used by managers, and a general assessment of their involvement in supporting the mental well-being of the artists on their roster.

The initial in-depth interview question explored the evolution of mental health support within the music industry over the past two-five years, prompting participants to reflect on the origins of this growth. Aiming to address the current mind-set of artist managers to gauge where the change has derived from.  Notably, 42% of participants attributed the positive shift to increased discussions on mental health catalysed by social media, while 33% cited various other factors, such as external pressures or changes in other industries. Adam stressed the issue's growing prominence, stating, 'It became such a big problem that it couldn't be ignored anymore.'

The second question focused on participants depth of involvement in understanding the mental health of their artists, incorporating a one-ten scale to quantify their overall engagement. A subsequent sub-question investigated whether discussions about mental health were separate from or integrated into routine business conversations. Estimating the perceived extent of participant involvement in addressing mental health concerns within the context of their professional roles.

Responses varied among participants, with some assigning different levels for each artist under their management. While numerical values fluctuated, none of the

participants indicated a level lower than four in terms of mental health involvement. John expressed a diminished level of engagement over time, they even went on to describe that when they were highly involved, they at times felt like a 'parent rather than manager.' Other participants, such as Maria, Ava and Taylor highlighted an increasing involvement of mental health awareness that correlated with the duration of their management relationships. To review each participants responses to the second interview question, see Table Ten.

Table 10: Participants Level of Involvement

| Participant Name | Level of Involvement |
|---|---|
| John | 5 |
| Maria | 5-10 |
| Malik | 7-8 |
| Adam | 10 |
| Emily | 7 |
| Ava | 5-10 |
| Isabella | 8 |
| Morgan | 10 |
| Chloe | 10 |
| Liam | 7 |
| Taylor | 4-8 |
| Joe | 7 |

The final question relating to collecting knowledge of UK music managers awareness of mental health resources was question six, which directly asked their awareness of mental health training programs. Among the twelve participants, 75% could identify at least one mental health organisation or training program that provides mental health assistance. A notable 41% mentioned the MMF as the sole organisation, while all participants who identified an organisation cited the MMF as a key resource for mental health training. Malik and Isabella demonstrated the highest awareness,

mentioning four or more organisations. For a detailed list of the training organisations mentioned by managers, please refer to Table Eleven.

Table 11: Training Resources

| Training Resources |
| --- |
| MMF - Mental Health Training |
| Mental Health First Aid |
| Association of Artist Managers Australia (AAM) |
| Help Musicians U.K. |
| Musicians Union |
| Kooth Mental Health Services |
| Tonic Mental Health |
| Youth Music |

The remaining questions in the semi-structured interview, outlined as questions three, four, and five, were formulated to produce an examination of the potential implications arising from the possession or absence of knowledge concerning artists mental health. These questions aimed at exploring the multifaceted ways in which such awareness, or the lack thereof, might influence and shape the dynamics inherent in the artist manager relationship.

Question three explored participants responses to challenges arising when the artists under their management encounter mental health difficulties. The majority of respondents, 58%, articulated their preference to seek external support. Examples of these support systems included reaching out to entities such as the MMF, hotlines, therapists, and expressing a general need for professional assistance. Notably, 50% of the participants explicitly stated that they considered themselves not to be therapists when discussing the prospect of seeking external assistance. In contrast, Adam and Morgan offered insights into their utilisation of specific tools within the artist manager relationship. Adam outlined a two-step approach involving first 'hitting pause' and then re-evaluate and asses what has gotten the artist into this state. Morgan highlighted the creation of a 'safe space' as a valuable method, fostering an environment where artists feel comfortable sharing their issues in the first place.

Next, participants were questioned on how they manage boundaries between professionalism and socially driven interactions. First, 42% of the participants articulated a preference for well-defined boundaries within the artist manager relationship. A quarter of managers discussed how their artist manager relationship is more like a friendship. Half of participants managed people that were once their friends. Conversely, another 25% of respondents stressed the importance of striking a balance between the professional and friendly dimensions within the relationship. Liam described the variability in relationships with artists, noting that some leaned more towards a friendship dynamic, while others remained strictly business oriented.

The final in-depth question from interviews questioned UK artist managers on the main challenges they currently face in addressing artists mental health needs. Subsequently, participants were invited to provide examples if appropriate. A portion of 42% of managers expressed that the main issues artists face stem from industry-related factors such as heightened pressure, the male-dominated nature of the industry, burnout, and broader issues pertaining to accessibility. A quarter of participants identified external factors as the main influencers affecting artists, naming aspects of the artists home life, prevailing financial conditions, and age-related considerations contributing to overall vulnerability. Adam and Joe highlighted the challenge of fostering openness among artists regarding their current mental health-related issues as the central issue they grapple with in their managerial roles. To view a full list of issues artists are facing from the viewpoint of their management see Table Twelve.

Table 12: Main Issues Artists Face

| Main Issues Artists Face |
| --- |
| Past Traumas |
| Pressure (Internal & External) |
| Results |
| Financial Issues |
| Burnout |
| Label Pressure |
| Social Media (Comments) |
| Personal Issues (Family & Relationship) |
| Male-Dominated Industry |

Following the administration of eight demographic and six in-depth questions, participants were offered an open-ended opportunity to articulate additional insights or perspectives that may not have been expressly addressed within the semi-structured interview framework. Allowing participants to contribute supplementary information, enriching the understanding of their experiences and perspectives.

While 50% of managers had nothing to add, 50% shared additional information. Out of the 50% of participants that chose to add onto the discussion, all but one shared the need for more attention on those behind the scenes, more specifically artist managers. Maria, Isabella, Morgan, and Chloe all specifically shared that they think there should be more focus on the artist manager and their mental health. Isabella stated that 'being an artist manager has become a thankless job in so many ways.' Morgan echoed this sentiment by sharing that 'there is no one talking about mothers in management.'

Following the collection of data through semi-structured interviews, a system of codes was devised to guide the identification and categorisation of themes and sub-themes. Aligning with the principles of reflexive thematic analysis, where the systematic examination and interpretation of the data facilitated the discernment and elaboration of overarching themes and their respective sub-components (Braun and Clarke, 2021). A categorisation of themes sub-theme and codes derived can be viewed on Table Thirteen.

Once data was familiarised, codes were generated and then combined into themes and named, themes and their codes can be reviewed on Table Fourteen. Following the accumulation of codes, a mind map was created to compose the relationships between themes and sub-themes. The mind map can be viewed at Figure Five. Leading to the establishment of themes and sub-themes used for the reflexive thematic analysis, to review the themes and sub-themes along with an illustration quote, see Table Fourteen.

Table 13: Themes, Sub-Themes, and Codes Derived from Data Set

| Themes | Sub-Themes | Codes |
|---|---|---|
| The Manager as Therapist | Role Specification<br>Collaborative Support<br>Personal Support | • Stating that they are not a therapist.<br>• Alluding to the need for professionals when artists are facing mental health issues.<br>• Participants own mental health issues. |
| Power Dynamics | Imbalanced Power Descriptors<br>Professional Boundaries | • Describing their artist manager relationship as a parent/child.<br>• Describing their artist manager relationship as a romantic partner.<br>• Sharing negative experiences managing friends. |
| Role Dissonance | Female Presence<br>Zone of Willingness<br>Occupational Discouragement | • Working as a female in a male dominated industry.<br>• Artists willingness to discuss mental health issues.<br>• Issues within role (Commission/money, lack of label involvement, nature of relationship, industry issues). |
| Normalising Mental Health Considerations | The Internet Era<br>Industry Development | • Social media (positives and negatives).<br>• Widespread industry change.<br>• Decline of stigma/taboo.<br>• The next generation: Gen Z |

Figure 5: Mind Map Connecting Themes and Sub-Themes
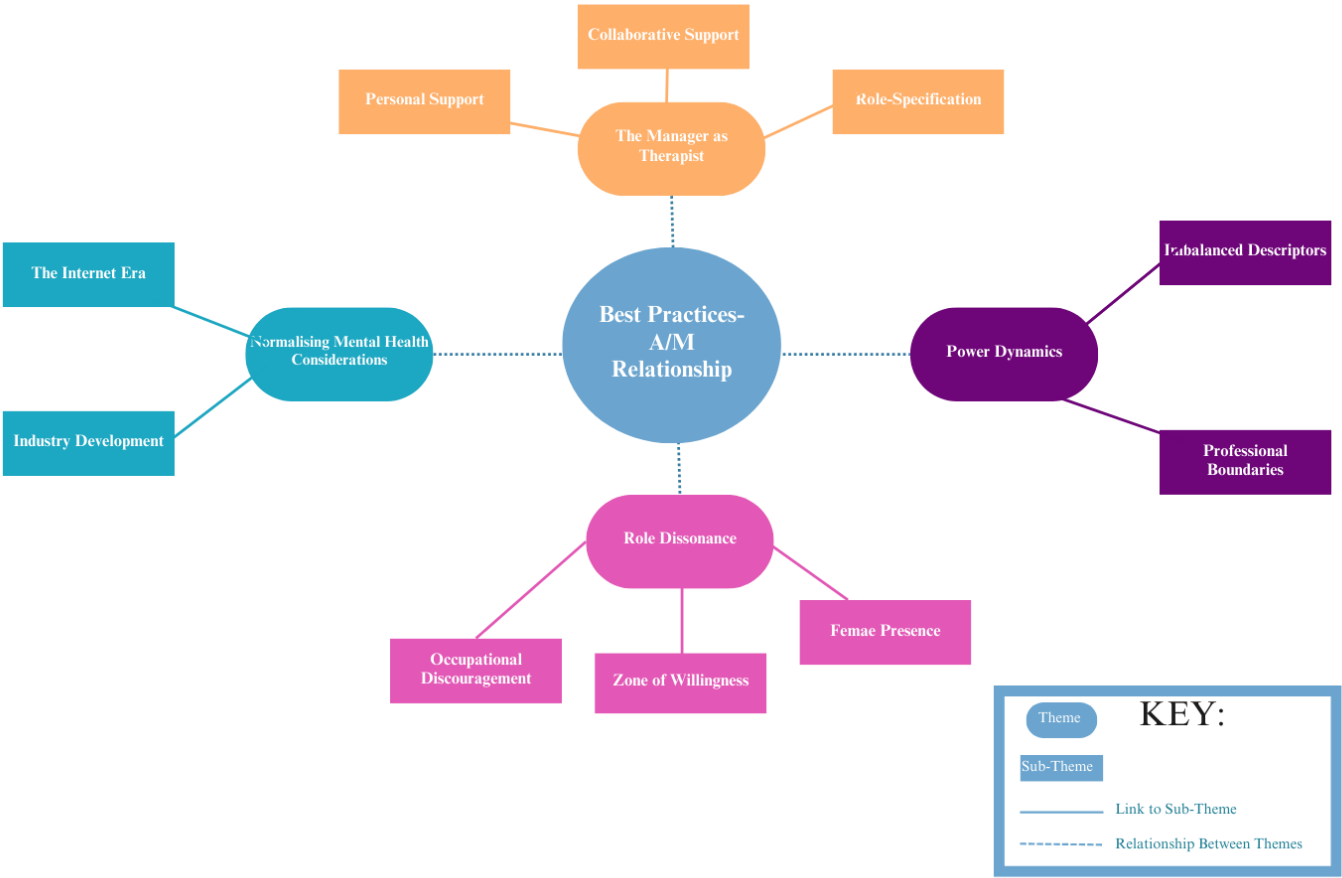
Table 14: Table of Themes Derived from the Analysis

| Themes | Sub-Themes | Illustration Quote |
|---|---|---|
| The Manager as Therapist | 1. Role Specification<br>2. Collaborative Support<br>3. Personal Support | • "I am not your therapist, I want you to go see a therapist." (John)<br>• "I've made sure that every artist I have has a therapist jsut becuase it is a chaotic world. It is a scary world, especially when you are young and upcoming." (Chloe)<br>• "Sometimes when I am going through my own struggles, it is difficult to put myself in their shoes and try to direct them." (Taylor) |
| Power Dynamics | 1. Imbalanced Power Descriptors<br>2. Professional Boundaries | • "There is a big differentiation in being a parent and being a manager. It's taken me eyars to learn the proper differences." (John)<br>• "We became friends before we started working together and I could see that one of her main issues, for example, was that she had phases." (Maria) |
| Role Dissonance | 1. Female Presence<br>2. Zone of Willingness<br>3. Occupational Discouragement | • "No one is talking about what it means to be a mother in music." (Morgan)<br>• "I think it's really, really important that I am aware, not necessarily of reasons, or even details, if they don't want to be open with that." (Adam)<br>• "The artist management job is a very lonely one that, you know, there's not really many other people who can understand or relate to." (Malik) |
| Normalising Mental Health Considerations | 1. The Internet Era<br>2. Industry Development | • "So that weird subculture of memes and oversharing that actually has been creating an idea in peoples minds that what we are experiencing is not special to them [...] they are not alone." (Isabella)<br>• "I think that the conversations increased because of unfortunate events that have happened because of mental health diseases." (Emily) |

## 4.5    ANALYSIS OVERVIEW

Themes emerged from the research reflecting the seven HRM principles. The themes identified related to the managers perceived role as a therapist, power dynamics within the artist manager relationship, role dissonance within working conditions, and the growing normalisation of mental health considerations in the UK music industry. An overview of themes and sub-themes derived from the analysis can be seen on Table Fourteen.

Human Resource Management principles were applied, influencing the research design, data collection, reflexive thematic analysis, and discussions. These principles assessed the impact of HRM practices on employee well-being, specifically focusing on the artist manager relationship. Top-down processing was implemented, where themes are derived from previously existing concerns (Cassell et al., 2021). The process of thematic analysis considers the HRM principles and uses top-down processing to analyse this theory and its relation to the data derived.

Human Resource Management was employed to provide insight into the mental health and well-being of artists from the perspective of artist managers. Using the guidance of HRM, information has been gathered on the current knowledge of music managers in the UK on mental health resources and benefits, and the risks they might anticipate if they increased communication regarding these areas with their artists. The data transcribed from the participant's one-to-one semi-structured interviews were organised and analysed through reflexive thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's six phases of a thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2021).

Critical Realism shaped the research paradigm, exploring dynamics within the UK music industry's music management sector. The application of CR on artist manager relationships aligns with its core principles, recognising the dynamic interplay of influences within the social structure. CR influenced entire analytical process by encouraging a dynamic exploration of underlying structures and mechanisms within the data. The CR perspective encouraged an exploration of not only the observable content within the narratives of artists and managers but also the deeper, often hidden, structures that influence these narratives. Critical realism explores what the derived themes reveal about the deeper reality of artist manager

relationships in the UK music industry. Considering the power dynamics, institutional influences, and cultural factors that contribute to the emergence of specific themes.

Results highlighted the potential of HRM practices to enhance well-being and foster a sense of worth within artist manager teams. Research emphasised the significance of recognising individual needs, emphasising the positive impact of self-direction, informed expectations, and involvement in decision-making on employee morale. The findings directly informed the development of the artist manager approach categories and subsequent AMMHTK, which aims to implement these insights and address the challenges identified. Aiming to address the diverse approaches managers take to their artists mental health care and offering personalised support. Offering practical implications for enhancing the mental health support system through the artist manager relationship. Contributing to HRM literature in creative industries, evaluating its application and existence in the music management industry, providing benchmarks for managers experiences, management styles, and employee satisfaction.

### 4.5.1 Research Questions

Data analysis provides a comprehensive understanding of the state of mental health support systems for UK music managers and their implications for the artists they manage, while considering the influencer of membership in official music management organisations and the overall well-being of artists by addressing the following questions and sub-questions.

The following research questions that directed the course of the reflexive thematic analysis (1) What are the current support systems for UK music managers to implement constructive mental health outcomes for the artist's they manage? (2) What is the status of music managers in the UK regarding awareness of mental health resources for their artists? Including sub-question (a) How does this knowledge, or lack thereof, influence the artist manager relationship and impact artist's overall well-being? (3) How does membership in an official UK music management organisation provide support systems for stakeholders to suggest constructive mental health resources?

The deductive use of HRM, through its principles, guided the formulation of research questions that aimed to address the core principles regarding the music management industry. Upon collecting data through semi-structured interviews, the

research transitioned to an inductive approach through reflexive thematic analysis. Qualitative analysis method allowed for the emergence of themes and sub-themes directly from the participants responses, without predetermined categories. Reflexive thematic analysis facilitated an exploration of the intricate dynamics within the artist manager relationship, providing an understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by music managers in the UK industry.

The analysis of the provided demographics reveals several interesting findings related to participants awareness and their length of time in music management. To summarise the results related to awareness and length of time in management, participant management experience ranged from two to fifteen years. A notable, 58% of participants have worked in the U.K music management industry for five plus years, while 42% worked in the industry less than five years. Liam worked in the live music industry for over thirty years and has managed for the last fifteen.

Data analysis found noticeable differences in the approaches adopted by artist managers to address the mental health needs of their artists. A quarter of the participants, constituting 25%, emphasised the significance of creating a safe and open environment encouraging open discussions concerning artists mental health concerns. Equally, a proportion of managers, also amounting to 25%, supporting the establishment of trust as a foundational concept in the artist manager relationship, serving as a pivotal factor in the manager's effectiveness in offering mental health support.

Concurrently, an equivalent 25% of participants expanded on the necessity of allowing artists an appropriate degree of personal space, avoiding the imposition of unnecessary pressure. In a differing perspective, 16% of participants suggested that the act of managers sharing their own personal struggles could potentially create a climate in which artists might be more inclined to reciprocate in sharing their own mental health challenges. Despite the variations distinguished in the providing of mental health assistance, an even distribution emerged where 50% of participants unmistakably expressed that they did not assume the role of therapists. Conversely, the remaining 50% implied the imperative of professional intervention when artists struggled with mental health concerns. Participants exhibit a spectrum of attitudes, ranging from respecting artists autonomy and personal space to considering professional intervention as essential. A diversity of perspectives highlights the need

for open dialogue and clear communication between artists and managers, as well as a multifaceted understanding of the varying needs and preferences of individuals within the music industry.

Inconsistently, while most managers, 75%, exhibited an awareness of at least one available mental health resources, a uniform framework guiding artist managers in effectively addressing the mental health of their artists was noticeably absent. Alongside this shortage, three managers recounted challenges encountered to their own mental health when attempting to provide support to artists confronting mental health issues.

Seven out of twelve participants were members of music management organisation, all seven were a part of the MMF, while Malik is a member of both MMF and AAM. Out of the twelve participants interviewed, 75% named at least one mental health organisation or training program that provide mental health training assistance for the artists they manage. Additionally, 41% of participants only mentioned one organisation, the one organisation mentioned by these five participants was the MMF and 75%, all participants that mentioned an organisation mentioned the MMF as a resource to provide training for mental health support. Participants Malik and Isabella mentioned the most organisations with four or more total. Information highlights the prevalence of MMF membership among participants, indicating its significance within the UK music management landscape. The information presented in this demographic analysis helps to contextualise the participants backgrounds, affiliations, and awareness levels. To see a full list of the training organisations mentioned by managers see Table Eleven.

A noteworthy observation pertains to the MMF, which emerges as a prominent position in providing mental health assistance. Not only extending aid to managers in supporting the mental well-being of the artists they oversee but also its reach to encompass the managers own personal mental health management and assistance. Illustrating a comprehensive approach to the diverse facets of mental health within the UK music management industry.

## 4.6   SUMMARY OF THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

The next section presents a comprehensive summary of emergent themes and sub-themes from semi-structured interviews with UK artist managers. The exploration

encompasses managers mental health challenges, power imbalances, role dissonance, and the development of mental health considerations within the music management industry. Following a summary of each theme an intricate examination of the four recognised themes that surfaced through the process of reflexive thematic analysis will be provided.

## 4.7   THEME 1: THE MANAGER AS THERAPIST

The initial theme emerging from the data revolves around artist managers potential reluctance to assume the role of providing mental health support for the artists they manage. Sub-themes within this context include a general acknowledgment of the need for professional mental health support and managers expressing personal challenges with mental health.

### 4.7.1 Sub-Theme 1.1: Role-Specification

The initial sub-theme, 1.1, focused on participants statement of non-affiliation with the role of a mental health professional. Although not explicitly prompted, a substantial proportion, 50%, of participants denied identifying as mental health therapists, while 25% semantically stated, 'I am not a therapist,' emphasising their awareness of the distinction between their roles and that of mental health professionals. Participants such as John and Maria articulated clear boundaries, highlighting the importance of seeking professional help for artists mental health needs. John discussed his stance on mental health involvement through the following statement:

> It's taken me years to learn the proper differences. But now through trial and error and my artist comes to be struggling, I am more blunt about it I guess, I wouldn't say less caring, I want the best for them, but I do not in any shape or circumstance want to be involved in the healing process, I am not your therapist. I want you to go see a therapist. (131-135)

Morgan shared a similar sentiment and semantically stated their differentiation from the mental health profession:

> I have a duty of care from a professional standpoint, so then signpost them to various areas that can provide professional help because I have a vested interest in mental health, but I'm not a trained counsellor or therapist, so I wouldn't want to sort of give out any specific advice. (165-168)

### 4.7.2 Sub-Theme 1.1: Analysis

Of the twelve participants who underwent interviews, a noteworthy observation emerged concerning their perspectives on their relationship with the role of a mental health professional. Stressing the participants awareness of the differentiation between their own identities and that of a mental health therapist.

John shared his detailed thoughts about understanding his artists mental health needs when he first started in his career. He also makes his stance on mental health support clear by saying, 'I am not your therapist. I want you to go see a therapist.' This straightforward statement emphasises that he wants to establish clear limits and highlight the importance of seeking professional help when needed. Maria talked about how she handles mental health issues in a unique way. She specifically said, 'I'm not a therapist [...] I will try to help more as a friend than a manager.' Highlighting a change in approach, suggesting she leans towards being understanding and friendly rather than just acting as a manager. Results emphasise that the artist manager relationship is complex and encompasses diverse approaches to caring for mental well-being.

The assertion made by 25% of the participants, may signify an underlying degree of reluctance towards assuming a role obligating them to provide mental health support for the artists they manage. Implying aversion towards the notion of managerial responsibility extending into the discussion of mental health support. While the artist manager should not be the only means of help for an artist who is experiencing issues with their mental health or overall well-being, an unfamiliar nature could lead to managers avoiding the topic altogether. Illustrating that both managers and artists would benefit if an artist manager was provided information on the appropriate level of involvement and how this may benefit the artist manager relationship and the artists overall well-being and success.

### 4.7.3 Sub-Theme 1.2: Collaborative Support

Sub-theme 1.2 examines into the implicit dimension of sub-theme 1.1, where participants, instead of explicitly disclaiming the role of a therapist, indicated a recognition of the need for professional assistance. Over half, 58%, of participants acknowledged the aided involvement of trained professionals in addressing artists mental health difficulties.

Divergent opinions emerged on the extent of managerial involvement to access professional support, with some, like Malik, Morgan, and Chloe, actively promoting and facilitating professional mental health support. Malik shared how most artists on his roster are actively seeking professional support 'We also have a couple of artists who have their own therapists who they regularly see.' Chloe detailed how, from negative past experiences, she aims to ensure every artist they work with has a professional mental health support set into place, 'I've made sure that every artist I have has a therapist.' John, exhibited a shifting dynamic over time, expressing a desire to avoid involvement in the healing process and further emphasis on finding professionals to aid in artists mental health support. John stated, 'I do not in any shape or circumstance want to be involved in the healing process.'

### 4.7.4 Sub-Theme 1.2: Analysis

Managers displayed varying approaches when addressing the topic of securing professional mental health assistance. Malik and Chloe emphasised the importance of professional support, characterising it as a key resource for artists. These statements reveal their proactive approach to prioritise artists mental well-being through encouraging artists to seek support.

Conversely, a subset of managers exhibited a lesser inclination toward providing a role in the professional support of their artists. John, for instance, recounted a shifting dynamic over time in their engagement with the mental health difficulties of the artists they manage. John articulated the progression, through sharing their perception on the role of managers and mental health support.

> Through trial and error […] I am more blunt about it I guess; I wouldn't say less caring, I want the best for them, but I do not in any shape or circumstance want to be involved in the healing process. (131-135)

This viewpoint the level of management involvement changing overtime, due to negative experience, was reiterated in the narratives of Isabella and Morgan, who similarly recounted periods of withdrawing from their managerial responsibilities due to the adverse impact of such involvement on their own mental well-being. To figure out how much support is appropriate, Isabella took the initiative to talk to a mental health expert, who is a therapist and a close friend of Isabella. She explained, 'Her answer has always been, that's not your job and you shouldn't.' Morgan recounted on her experience to find support for her own mental health problems by sharing, 'I've

invested a lot of time and money over the last few years to essentially build myself back up again because I've, I did hit rock bottom.'

In the domain of artist managers interviewed, 58% of managers recognise the significance of providing mental health assistance to the artists they oversee. However, a noticeable lack of consensus exists regarding the ideal extent of involvement that can optimise the artists mental well-being and safeguard the managers own equilibrium. Uncertainty is rooted in the complex interplay between supporting artists mental welfare and the potential consequences for managerial mental health.

### 4.7.5 Sub-Theme 1.3: Managing Manager's Mental Health

The final sub-theme explores the impact of managerial roles on the mental well-being of managers. A significant proportion, constituting 66% of the participants, conveyed instances where they encountered personal mental health challenges. Instances predominantly revolved around the consequences caused by their managerial roles upon their own mental well-being. Participants expanded upon the interplay between their mental health status and their involvement in aiding artists in navigating their own mental health concerns. When reflecting on the need for personal self-care, Morgan shared:

> I think a lot of it comes down to just making sure that, you know, you know, I am in a good space personally, which I do find challenging because it's a constant work in progress. (237-239)

Conversations regarding negative working conditions affecting mental well-being align with Sub-Theme 3.1.3 'Occupational Discouragement'. Participants discussed the delicate balance between involvement in artists well-being and the potential depletion of personal resources necessary for self-care. Joe stated that 'Sometimes when I'm going through my own struggles, it is difficult to put myself in their shoes and try to direct them.'

### 4.7.6 Sub-Theme 1.3: Analysis

A portion of participants, 41%, unveiled conversations pertaining to the diverse causes by which their role as an artist manager interfaces with their own mental well-being. This sentiment emerges through John, who remarked, 'There have been times when I thought, is the money really worth it? (chuckle) the rewards? You know, for my mental health'. Participants, 33%, engaged in discussions concerning the opposing

implications stemming from their active engagement in attending to the well-being of the artists they manage. Participants experiences shed light upon the correlation between an elevated degree of involvement in their managerial responsibilities and the subsequent exhaustion of personal resources necessary for self-care. Morgan discussed how her personal mental health was negatively impacted while working closely with assisting with the well-being of an artist stating that 'I hit rock bottom because the artist that I was working with had quite severe mental health issues, […], and I just took it all on.' Morgan later went on to share how these personal mental health issues were worsened due to the notion that she did not want to share these struggles with the artist 'I am not sure I want them (the artist) really knowing my mind zones and vice versa in my personal life.' This phenomenon was found to diminish levels of mental well-being among participants Isabella and Morgan.

Isabella and Morgan extended their narratives to state that they took a break from their managerial duties due to the detrimental effects that such involvement exerted upon their own mental well-being. A recurring idea emerged where the two managers, in acknowledgment of their own vulnerabilities, opted to restrain their degree of involvement in the mental well-being of their artists. When discussing this Morgan shared that:

> Making sure that my own mental health is at a point where it's consistently in a good place. Because, you know, the analogy of, you know, the being on an airplane or putting on your facemask before anybody else. […] You have to help yourself first before you will be able to help other people. (219-223)

After time off to deal with their own mental health struggles, Isabella adopted a distinct business model as a strategic adaptation, while Morgan continued her managerial responsibilities with a reduced roster. Isabella stated:

> The reason why I felt as a manager I need to change my business model is because of how involved I've been in their mental health. It I find it draining. I find the emotional connection that's projected onto me very crippling at times. (159-161)

The analysis of the provided information sheds light on the complex dynamics between artist managers mental well-being and their roles in supporting artists mental health. The findings indicate that the demands of managerial responsibilities, regarding safeguarding the mental health of artists, and working conditions, can negatively affect

managers mental well-being. Which, in turn, can influence the quality of the artist manager relationship. Information provides a realistic insight on the practical adjustments to ensure a reasonable equilibrium between the management of artistic well-being and the safeguarding of managerial mental well-being.

## 4.8    THEME 2: POWER DYNAMICS

The second major theme of the reflective analysis revolves around exploring the inherent power dynamics in the artist manager relationship. Sub-theme 2.1 discusses the varied language used by participants to describe their relationships with managed artists. Sub-Theme 2.2, 'Professional Boundaries,' explores managing individuals with pre-existing friendships and general attitudes towards a friendship versus business focused management style.

### 4.8.1 Sub-Theme 2.1: Imbalanced Descriptors

Sub-theme 2.1 explores the distinctive language employed by three participants to characterise their connections with the managed artists. John compared the relationship to that of a parent and child, while Maria and Isabella drew parallels to a romantic partner. John, recalling significant involvement in artists mental health, acknowledged the imbalance created by assuming a parental role, recognising the need for clear distinctions between parenting and managing. In contrast, Maria likened the relationship to a romantic partner, revealing emotional intimacy and the responsibility for the artist's well-being. Maria stated, 'It's not like a (romantic) partner, but it gets really close.' Isabella, experiencing misinterpretations, shifted to managing only males in committed relationships, highlighting blurred boundaries and potential detrimental power dynamics.

### 4.8.2 Sub-Theme 2.1: Analysis

Throughout different questions, three participants used peculiar language to describe their relationship with the artists they manage. John compared the artists to a child, while Maria and Isabella compared the artists they manage to a romantic partner.

When questioned regarding their level of involvement with the mental well-being of the artists under their management, John explained a past partiality to be significantly involved in the mental health aspects of his artists. A high level of

involvement prompted feelings akin to assuming a parental role. John elaborated by stating:

> But it wasn't healthy, because then I would end up being in agony and you become the parent. And there is a big differentiation in being a parent and being a manager. It's taken me years to learn the proper differences. (129-132)

This comparison offers an interesting insight from a managerial point of view, shedding light on how prolonged involvement in artists mental health can foster an imbalance, potentially leading the manager to perceive an exaggerated responsibility for the well-being of the artists they manage.

In a distinct juxtaposition, when presented with the same question, Maria drew a parallel between the relationship with the artists under her purview and that of a romantic partner. Maria illustrated this analogy by stating, 'It gets to a point that it's not like a partner, but it gets really close, because then you're able to know so much about their life, and you want to also make sure that they are okay.' This correlation highlights a scenario where a manager might be inadvertently assuming an excessive degree of responsibility for the artist's life, exceeding the managerial role's intended scope.

Aligned with Maria's perspective, Isabella described instances where, as a female manager overseeing male artists, she encountered situations where her caring responsibilities were occasionally misinterpreted as having romantic undertones. Isabella provided comprehensive insight into this phenomenon by sharing:

> You put them first, you put their career before you, because their success is going to be your success, right? So, when you're in that situation, it creates this emotional intimacy, or at least I've experienced that because that's my style. And some of those are because of my personal shortcomings and lack of boundaries may be something I'm working on, but I've found that even though they have been married, men who obviously aren't actually interacting, engaging in an intimate relationship with me, they see me as their number one supporter because it's so rare for them to have somebody except their wives believe in them and believe in their career and what they can achieve and push them in a way that they don't have anyone else. (176-186)

Subsequently, Isabella conveyed a revised approach, opting to manage only males in committed relationships before contemplating managerial involvement.

Participant's articulated experience assumes particular significance in the exploration of the nuanced dimensions of the artist manager relationship, signifying how blurred boundaries can lead to adverse managerial encounters. Illuminating the potential for detrimental power dynamics to manifest among both managers and artists.

Narratives stress the challenges of establishing and maintaining boundaries in the absence of clear guidelines. A lack of established guidelines can lead to managerial practices that fluctuate between excessive involvement, potentially harming both parties, and unregulated emotional engagement, which may compromise professional efficiency and emotional well-being. The narratives emphasise the need for industry-wide conversations and perhaps even parameters that outline the expected norms and boundaries within the artist manager relationship, encouraging an environment that fosters a healthier and more sustainable dynamic for both managers and artists in the music industry.

### 4.8.3 Sub-Theme 2.2: Professional Boundaries

The next sub-theme, 2.2, analyses managing individuals with pre-existing friendships and general attitudes towards a business versus friendship-based approach to management. Morgan and Taylor shared negative experiences with managing people they had pre-existing relationships with, prompting them to establish boundaries and refrain from managing friends. Maria, reflecting on a friend with mental health challenges, revealed difficulties in delineating personal and professional roles.

> When I opened the company at first, I had my first signed artist was my best friend at the time, and that really didn't work because it is so difficult to separate between the professionalism and the social kind of relationship that we have. It's difficult. So right now, what I do is I will only sign someone that I don't know. (125-129)

Morgan also discussed her experience with managing an artist that came close to a friendship and how her perspective has changed from this negative experience.

> During COVID, I was there to really support my artist, and you know, they would be telling me more about their personal things happening, their personal life then as well as, you know, running an essentially helping them to run the business. I think that my most recent clients, I have consciously created more

of a. Boundary with that I think so for protection of my mental health as well.
(177-182)

### 4.8.4 Sub-Theme 2.2: Analysis

An unsuspected underlying sub-theme surfaced, shedding light on the managerial dynamics associated with overseeing individuals' managers had pre-existing friendships. Half of the participating individuals shared negative occasions. Managers displayed varying degrees of directness when conveying their viewpoints on these relationships.

Morgan and Taylor each described incidents from their professional past where they assumed managerial roles with friends. However, these instances turned out to be adverse, prompting a shift in their management approach by refraining from overseeing individuals they once had a friendship with. The narratives of these two participants reflect a potentially controversial but valuable preference for steering clear of such relationships in their managerial roles. Morgan offered an account describing a former situation where she undertook the management of a close friend. The participant expressed the complexities that arose from the linking of their friendly bond and their professional obligations. She shared:

> We are friends. […] I was there to really support my artist, and you know, they would be telling me more about their personal things happening, their personal life then as you know, essentially helping them to run a business. I think that my most recent clients, I have consciously created more of a boundary with that […] for protection of my mental health. (177-183)

Taylor shared a similar account by stating:

> When I opened the company at first, I had my first signed artist was my best friend at the time, and that really didn't work because it is so difficult to separate between the professionalism and the social kind of relationship that we have. It's difficult. So right now, I will only sign someone that I don't know. (125-129)

Maria went through a similar experience, marked by a noticeable sense of irritation, while reflecting on her association with a friend navigating mental health challenges. Her narrative began by acknowledging the pre-existing personal bond she shared with this individual, Maria shared an illustrative perspective, 'She does too much. She doesn't know how to put a stop into a certain week and say, this is enough,

and she will then go through phases of just being the broken or falling ill.' Subsequently, the participant contemplated the evolving lens through which she perceived this situation, transitioning from a role as a friend to that of a manager. Their introspective observation summarised this perspective 'I guess, I could understand her as a friend before starting to work with her as a manager.' Evident in her recollection is the recognition that, while their pre-existing friendship gave her insights into her friend's emotional struggles, the managerial role required an altered vantage point for addressing the matter.

Participant narratives on these experiences illustrate the challenges of building personal connections with professional responsibilities, particularly in situations with mental health difficulties. These accounts further highlight the importance of setting boundaries and managing expectations to ensure both the success of the professional relationship and the well-being of the managers. Along with this, this information also provides insight into the transition from a friendship perspective to a managerial perspective. These insights contribute to a deeper increase of the cognitive and emotional considerations that inform managerial decision-making within this unique relational framework.

## 4.9 THEME 3: ROLE DISSONANCE

The next section examines the challenges encountered by music managers in their professional roles, with a prevalence of grievances expressed during interviews. Among these criticisms, three recurrent sub-themes emerged, pertaining to the challenges of operating as a woman in a predominantly male-centric industry, the restraint of artists in disclosing their mental health difficulties, and overarching challenges inherent to the managerial role. Collectively, these factors have led managers to articulate the presence of adverse working conditions within the environment of the music management sector.

### 4.9.1 Sub-Theme 3.1: Female Presence

Sub-Theme 3.1 explores challenges faced by female professionals in the music management industry. Of the participants, 58% identified as female, with 33% discussing maltreatment and marginalisation within a male-dominated atmosphere. Instances of abuse, voiced by Malik and Ava, highlight the need for heightened awareness of gender-related challenges, emphasising their impact on mental health and

professional trajectories. Malik discussed research being done out of Australia that focuses on abuse women face in the music industry, they shared that there is 'Lots of bullying and harassment issues.' Ava shared her personal instances of mistreatment in the industry during her time working in the live music sector, she went on to share how they not only experienced instances of negative treatment but also perceived invisibility. Ava shared:

> There so few females' musicians on our stages. There's plenty of female singers, but no musicians and artists. And I do still notice that sometimes where there just seemed to be a belief that male musicians that for whatever reason, female musicians aren't at the same level. (236-239)

Of the total participant population, 58% identified as female. Within this subset of participants, comprising seven individuals, their careers within the music management realm ranged from two to over seven years. Ava displayed an extensive history of employment within the live music sector for more than four decades, her work specifically within the management industry amounted to three years. Intriguingly, 33% of the respondents engaged in discussions concerning challenges encountered while operating as female professionals within an industry predominantly characterised by male presence. The issues brought forth by these participants were centred on around instances of maltreatment and the manifestation of a sense of marginalisation within the confines of a male-dominated atmosphere.

### 4.9.2 Sub-Theme 3.1: Analysis

A cohort of three participants discussed instances of abuse encountered by female individuals within the music industry. The first use of the term abuse in the participant's responses was shared by Malik. In the final phase of the interview, when prompted for any supplementary input, Malik proactively introduced a topic of discussion pertaining to the challenges encountered by female artists within the music industry.

> I don't know if your study touches on abuse very much, but it's definitely worth looking into the interaction between that and mental health, I think is huge in music industry. (339-340)

Ava offered an extensive account regarding her negative encounters while working in the live music domain for a substantial span of four decades. Her description encompassed a discourse on instances of maltreatment and the sensation

of being marginalised, ultimately exerting notable implications on her emotional stability. In addition, she expanded on her observations of other female musicians she encountered throughout this duration, particularly focusing on female vocalists embedded within predominantly male musical ensembles. These collective experiences catalysed a shift in her professional trajectory, prompting a transition from active involvement in live music creation and promotion to the pursuit of managerial responsibilities. Reflecting on this, Ava articulated her sentiments with the following statement:

> It was only then that I started to realise how it has impacted on my mental health being alone on a tour bus with sometimes 15 men. It's unbelievable just how much it impacted on my mental health. And I can only assume that for other women because I'm sure there has been we tend to be completely invisible. How much it impacts on women being in an industry that's predominantly run by men for men. (71-77)

Morgan and Isabella accumulated extensive work experience within the music management sector, each exceeding a duration of seven years. In their respective accounts, both participants offered narratives detailing adverse encounters tied to their gender identity within the music industry, frequently citing instances where they felt overlooked or disregarded. When elaborating upon their experiences as women within this environment, Isabella primarily emphasised challenges associated with establishing and maintaining professional boundaries while managing male artists. She went on to recount a distressing episode during a tour, where she found herself subject to unwelcome advances from a former artist she worked with. Considering this and other undisclosed incidents, Isabella outlined a specific managerial approach they adopt when handling cisgender heterosexual male artists. In her words:

> I've always made sure that the people that I'm working with, especially if they're men, if they're cis men, I have always made sure that, you know, that they're there in a relationship. […] I'm not the number one sort of outlet for their emotional needs. (161-165)

Morgan provided an insightful perspective that enriches the discourse on women's encounters in the music industry. She illustrated her unique experience as a mother operating within this domain. Morgan brings attention to a critical observation, stating, 'No one's talking about what it means to be a mother in music.' This

observation highlights the significant lack of dialogue concerning the complex implication of motherhood within the context of the music industry, exposed a valuable aspect that Morgan believes has remained largely unaddressed in current discussions.

The examined sub-theme investigates the multifaceted experiences of women within the music management industry, casting light on the gender-related challenges encountered by female professionals. From instances of abuse and maltreatment to challenges stemming from gender dynamics, these narratives stress the need for heightened awareness and conversation on the intricacies of operating within male-dominated areas and the potential impacts on mental health and professional trajectories.

### 4.9.3 Sub-Theme 3.2: Zone of Willingness

The next sub-theme 3.2, involves 42% of participants discussing the influence of artists willingness to address mental health challenges. Open communication is encouraged, with Liam underlining the benefits of artists openly discussing mental health. Liam specified that they were 'lucky' that all of the artists on their roster feel comfortable sharing their problems. However, John adopts a contrasting view, suggesting a potential aversion to artists sharing personal grievances. John expressed this sentiment by stating that 'I'm not there to off load upon.'

### 4.9.4 Sub-Theme 3.2: Analysis

Composing of the 42% participants that engaged in discussion regarding the influence of an artist's willingness to address the challenges pertaining to their mental well-being, participants explained the beneficial outcomes that originate within the context of the artist manager dynamic when artists exhibit an openness to conversing about their mental health concerns. Managers further expanded upon the adverse consequences that result when artists refrain from feeling at ease to disclose their mental health struggles.

Liam expressed appreciation for the artists he collaborates with, highlighting his willingness to openly address and discuss mental health issues as they emerge. In response to an inquiry regarding the foremost challenge in assisting support for artists mental well-being, he shared, 'Initially I'd ask them if they wanted to share their problem with me, which I'm lucky that all of my artists have spoken to me openly.'

Morgan explained additional complications that arise when an artist decides to not openly addressing their mental health concerns. In response to the same question regarding mental health assistance for artists, the participant dove into the issues arising from situations where artists exhibit reluctance in expressing their struggles, 'First and foremost if they're honest, you know, some people could be in denial about what their challenges are.'

Within the discussion concerning the significance of artists feeling empowered to communicate their mental health struggles, these five participants collectively emphasised the values of such openness. John, however, offered a contrasting viewpoint, manifesting a sense of aversion towards the notion of artists choosing to divulge their personal grievances through such sharing. The participant's perspective is summarised when they stated:

> If you want to talk with me about how that is helping you. That's great, but
> I'm not there to off load upon because that's a whole different thing. I am here
> to help you with your career. But in yourself that is a journey for you to go on,
> it is always good to talk, don't get me wrong. (135-138)

This analysis stresses the dual perspectives within the artist manager relationship regarding discussions around mental health. On one hand, there is a recognition of the benefits of open communication, which can foster a supportive environment. On the other hand, there's an acknowledgment that some managers may prioritise the professional aspects of the relationship and feel less equipped to handle artists personal challenges. Additionally, this evaluation highlights the complexity of mental health discussions in creative contexts. It showcases the degrees of support, where some participants discuss the holistic well-being of artists, others draw clearer boundaries between their roles as career supporters and personal confidantes. The divergence of viewpoints reflects the intricate nature of managing artists mental health within the broader context of their artistic careers.

### 4.9.5 Sub-Theme 3.3: Occupational Discouragement

'Occupational Discouragement,' encompasses 50% of participants expressing negative feelings towards aspects of their role as artist managers. Issues included financial constraints, limited label involvement, working as a creative for a creative, and broader industry challenges. Limited label involvement is linked to increased

workload, impacting power dynamics and potentially deterring managers from engaging in mental health support.

Several participants, including Ava, Isabella, and Chloe, highlight the under appreciation and thanklessness associated with the role of an artist manager. Isabella shared further issues within the differences in the artist manager relationship and how it can be one-sided, she identified that 'It's very difficult for somebody to understand that for you. That's your job. Because for them, it's their entire life. They're a musician. They're creative.'

### 4.9.6 Sub-Theme 3.3: Analysis

Both Maria and Malik discussed complications regarding the effects of limited label involvement, which they observed to be significantly impacting their managerial responsibilities by demanding an increased workload in the absence of label support. Malik expanded on the complex influence this reduced label engagement exerts on the power dynamics between artists and managers. He remarked:

> Effectively the record label would control many parts of the artists career, and they would dictate the pace of things and what needs to be done. They are really controlled by an organisation as a whole rather than an individual that's responsible for that. That's a different power dynamic. (39-43)

These managers collectively conveyed that in the absence of label participation, the responsibilities that were traditionally handled by the label now fall squarely on their shoulders or, alternatively, on the artist. While the limited involvement of the label may offer certain financial advantages, a comprehensive evaluation is required to determine whether the monetary benefits align with the added workload and responsibilities. Further exploration is warranted to determine the equilibrium between financial gains and the offsetting of managerial burdens resulting from reduced label participation. A potential concern for managers ability or willingness to future mental health involvement could be deterred by the amount of time and workload resulting from lack of label involvement.

Four participants shared that they began working in the music industry as an artist. Within this set of managers, each of them discussed frustrations that arise as a creative who is working with a creative, where their creative control is limited. Ava expressed these difficulties by sharing, 'If I'm not involved in the creative process

within a few weeks, I will become mentally ill, will become depressed, you know?' This perspective offers valuable insights when considering potential implications within the artist manager relationship, particularly in scenarios involving two creative minds working closely together. Traditionally, managers are not primarily hired for their creative talents; however, it is currently thought to be within the discretion of the artist to determine the extent of creative input managers can contribute to the artistic process.

Three participants provided detailed insights into their perceptions of the challenges within the music management industry and the consequent effects on the overall mental well-being of managers. These challenges encompass issues that commonly arise in the role of artist managers. Multiple participants highlight the pressures faced by artist managers and the intrinsic value of their role in supporting artists. However, they also emphasised that the impact of their work significantly outweighs the impact on themselves as managers. Morgan articulated this sentiment by remarking, 'It's very difficult for somebody to understand that for you. That's your job. Because for them, it's their entire life. They're a musician. They're creative.' Isabella echoed this perspective by stating, 'You're managing their career that career is their life.'

In addition to the previous points, it is noteworthy that Isabella and Chloe elaborated on the inherent lack of recognition associated with the role of an artist manager. Isabella conveyed this sentiment by stating, 'Being a music manager has become a thankless job in so many ways.' Chloe echoed this notion, expressing, 'I feel like this is a very thankless industry and people are use like machines.' This shared perspective stresses the pervasive issue of under appreciation within the music management field, where the efforts and contributions of artist managers may not receive the acknowledgment, they feel that they deserve. Such perceptions can have implications for the morale and satisfaction of those working in this industry and warrant further consideration in discussions about the music management profession.

## 4.10  THEME 4: NORMALISING MENTAL HEALTH CONSIDERATIONS

The conclusion of the reflexive thematic analysis indicates an overall positive outlook on the development of the music management industry and the broader music sector. The primary theme is supported by two distinct sub-themes that examine

managers perspectives on the impact of social media on artists mental health and their perceptions of the industry's holistic progression.

### 4.10.1 Sub-Theme 4.1 The Internet Era

Sub-Theme 4.1 investigates participants opinions on the increased awareness of artists mental health, with half attributing it to social media. While many managers view social media positively, nuances emerge. Chloe and Liam express concerns about its adverse effects on artists mental health. Liam discussed how it is sometimes necessary to 'pump the breaks' on social media and not post at all if the negative impacts are too harmful for the artists mental health. Isabella adopts a dualistic viewpoint, acknowledging both positive and detrimental impacts, emphasising the need for a multifaceted understanding of social media's role in shaping mental health within the music industry.

### 4.10.2 Sub-Theme 4.1: Analysis

At the start of the interview, participants were questioned about their opinions regarding the reasons for the increase in conversations and awareness surrounding the mental health of artists. Half of the participants reported that increased awareness was due to social media and the fact that musicians had a platform to speak on their struggles with mental health.

Although a substantial segment of managers held a favourable perspective on the impact of social media, a dynamic perspective emerged with regards to its influence on artists mental well-being. Chloe and Liam articulated adverse consequences resulting from social media engagement on the mental health of the artists under their management. Isabella underscored a dualistic viewpoint, acknowledging that social media can employ both positive and detrimental effects on artists mental health, introducing a more complex dimension to the discussion. Isabella stated, 'That whole sharing culture and sometimes the oversharing culture. I think it's done both positive and negative things for mental health.'

This dualistic viewpoint recognises that while social media can foster a culture of sharing and openness, it can also enable an 'oversharing' culture that may have both positive and negative effects on mental health. In essence, social media serves as a double-edged sword in the context of artists mental well-being, emphasising the need

for a comprehensive understanding of its role in shaping the mental health landscape within the music industry.

### 4.10.3 Sub-Theme 4.2: Industry Development

The final sub-theme reflects a prevailing optimism among managers regarding ongoing and prospective improvements in the industry. Half of the participants note transformations in the acknowledgment of mental health issues and increased resources for artists well-being. However, some managers stress that these shifts are reactive and not necessarily indicative of a genuine concern for well-being within the industry. Ava discussed how the music industry has 'rubbed off' from improvements that have taken place within the film industry. Adam believes that the music industry had 'reached a breaking point where we didn't have a choice.' The delayed attention to emotional support and well-being in the music industry is underscored by participants, signalling room for improvement.

### 4.10.4 Sub-Theme 4.2: Analysis

A notable 50% of the participants considered the transformation permeating the industry. Transformation is particularly evident in the enhanced acknowledgment of mental health issues and the expanded availability of resources tailored to the well-being of artists. Correspondingly, an equal proportion of managers, also totalling 50%, reported evident shifts in the landscape of societal perceptions. Over the past two to five years, these managers have observed a marked reduction in the stigma associated with, and the taboos surrounding, open conversations concerning mental health within the music industry.

While these changes have been observed by most participants, some hastened to underscore that these shifts were not necessarily indicative of a genuine industry concern for the welfare of those involved. Ava articulated that the industry's progress toward gender equality has been largely spurred by the advancements made in other sectors, remarking that, 'Because women are moving forwards in life in many other industries, you know, it's bound to finally rub off on the music industry as well on the conversation.' Adam echoed a similar sentiment, proposing that the industry's evolution has been primarily reactive:

> I think that it just reached a breaking point where we didn't have a choice. But
> to talk about it. I think that so many people suffered. and were suffering at the

hands of it that one it. It became such a big problem that it couldn't be ignored anymore. And a lot of the people that were originally ignoring it, were starting to suffer themselves. (70-76)

Emily echoed this sentiment through sharing:

I think that the conversation's been increased because of unfortunate events that have happened as a result of mental health diseases or like illnesses in the management and the artist side of things. (62-64)

These accounts from managers collectively highlight the notion that the music industry's attention to well-being and emotional support appears to have been considerably deficient and delayed in comparison to other sectors.

## 4.11 ARTIST MANAGER APPROACHES

The investigation revealed significant variations in managerial approaches to artist mental health support. Participants demonstrated a spectrum of involvement levels, with managers like John establishing firm boundaries by explicitly stating they were not therapists and directing artists to professional help, whilst others like Maria adopted a more empathetic, friend-like approach.

Practical differences emerged in how managers facilitated professional support, with Malik and Chloe actively connecting artists with mental health resources, while other participants retained distance from the therapeutic process. Personal mental health management also varied substantially, with managers like Morgan acknowledging their own challenges and adapting their managerial approach accordingly, whilst Isabella implemented more fundamental changes to her business model in response to the emotional demands of intense artist involvement. The interview findings also uncovered diverse conceptualisations of power dynamics, with some managers drawing parallels between their artist relationships and familial or romantic connections. Influencing boundary-setting practices, exemplified by Taylor's deliberate avoidance of managing personal friends to preserve professional integrity.

These variations highlight the absence of standardised protocols for mental health support in artist management and highlight the need for industry-wide discourse on role expectations and boundaries (Calkins et al., 2023; MMF, 2019). These lack of resources can be attributed to the unique nature of creative industries, which presents challenges for well-being or HRM related applications (Dean, 2007; Jogulu et al.,

2017; Throsby and Zednik, 2011; Wang, 2024). The music management industry presents further elements which maintains a difficulty in applying long-term standardised practices for mental health support and application of HRM strategies. Wang (2024) describes the sui generis theory of management, which regards artist management as entirely separate from general management organisations. Within this theory is 'The Loop', a project-product cycle requiring managers to alternate between non-linear and linear strategies based on the artists stage, 'blurring the line between a musician being in the project form and a musician being in the product form' (Wang, 2024 p. 33). Wang (2024) notes that there is a lack of 'clear definitions of responsibilities, goals, targets, strategies' (Wang, 2024 p. 236). Decreasing the ability to apply HRM practices that are regulated in general management organisations, necessitating managers to consistently adapt their approaches. Providing further difficulties in developing standardised practices to support artists well-being. This reflects the data derived from the reflexive thematic analysis on the varying managerial approach types. In response, research provided empirical evidence for developing the AMMHTK, which recommends evidence-based approaches derived from established HRM research whilst maintaining flexibility to accommodate individual management styles.

The reflexive thematic analysis led to the identification of three distinct approach categories, 'Involvement', 'Action', and 'Relationship-Type.' Approach categories were given titles based on their questions. Question two, which examines managers preferred intervention level, is termed Involvement; question three, which explores their action plan in case of a mental health crisis, is labelled 'Action', and question four, focusing on the nature of their relationship with artists, is called 'Relationship-Type.' These categories were developed by aligning participant data with the seven established HRM principles. Alignment provided the structural foundation for developing a flexible framework that accommodates varying levels of managerial participation in artists mental health.

These categories were then correlated with corresponding HRM principles aimed at addressing employee well-being. Each category of managerial approach types was aligned with two HRM principles that relate. To view a table that outlines all connections between the survey questions, participant responses, categories, managerial approach types, and HRM principles view Table Fifteen. Within each

artist manager approach there is an approach type or category that is suggested by the AMMHTK. Based on past HRM research that provides evidence of general management strategies that can promote employee well-being. While each approach type provides specific recommendations, the tool kit's aims approach the suggested or highest empirically supported approach type. This will be discussed further in Chapter Five.

The following sections explore these findings in greater depth. Section 4.11.1 offers clear definitions for each category and its associated managerial approach types, participant data to highlight the complexities of managerial involvement in mental health care, and a discussion on these results. These insights not only demonstrate the varied nature of management practices but also lay the foundation for the subsequent development of the AMMHTK, as detailed further in Section 5.5.

Table 15: Qualitative Interview Question, Approach Category, Response Options, and HRM Principle

| Semi-Structured Interview Question | Category | Approach Type & Response Options | Human Resource Principle |
|---|---|---|---|
| *What level of involvement do you have in the knowledge of your artists mental health (1-10 scale, 1 being no involvement and 10 being severe involvement)* | Involvement | • Low = *0 - 5*<br>• Varied = *Different for each artist/group*<br>• High = *5-10* | • Two-Way Communication<br>• Work-Life Balance<br>• Employee Involvement |
| *If an artist expresses, they are having difficulties with their mental health, how do you go about addressing these needs?* | Action | • No Action = *No Action Plan No Action = Participant does not have a plan of action.*<br>• Active Action = *Participant has a plan of action.*<br>• Personal Action = *Participant shares personal experiences.* | • Motivation and Encouragement<br>• Transformational Leadership |
| *How are the boundaries between professionalism and socially driven interactions managed? Friendship vs. Business relationship.* | Relationship Type | • Friendship = *Relaxed relationship similar to a friendship.*<br>• Mixed = *Both friendly and professional relationship.*<br>• Business = *Stricly professional relationship.* | • Social Interactions<br>• Organisational Culture |

## 4.11.1 Approach Definitions, Results, and Discussions

The following section provides definitions for each category and the approach types, reviewing participants responses and providing an illustrative quote. Section 4.11.1 will also discuss these results and their connection to HRM principles.

*Involvement*

This approach, derived from responses to the second question of the semi-structured interview, assesses the extent of managers involvement in mental health support on a scale from one to ten. The types of Involvement, 'Low', 'Variable', and 'High', offered a refined understanding of how involved managers are in their artists mental health. Informing the AMMHTK's emphasis on two-way communication, work-life balance, and artist involvement. The varied levels of mental health involvement among managers suggest a lack of consensus on the precise level of involvement necessary to cultivate a mutually healthy relationship.

'Low Involvement' managers prefer a less invasive level of mental health, they responded with a level between zero and five. These managers tend to avoid deep association in mental health issues, focusing more on the artists careers. Variable describes managers whose involvement varies depending on the artist. These managers adjust their level of engagement based on the specific needs and the duration of their relationship with each artist. 'High Involvement' refers to managers with an elevated level of mental health involvement, scoring between five and ten. These managers actively integrate mental health considerations into their planning and interactions with artists.

A managers preferred level of mental health participation can have an impact on the artist manager relationship and the artists overall well-being. This involvement also impacts the ways in which the manager operates within the relationship. These varying levels connect with three areas of HRM research, two-way communication, work-life balance, and employee involvement. The degree to which a manager involves themselves in an artist's mental health plays a critical role in shaping both the quality of communication, the artist's work-life balance, and the artist's level of active involvement.

A manager's willingness to engage in discussion about mental health fosters a culture of openness and honest communication. Past research has presented that two-way communication fosters trust and a mutual understanding, reducing stress and burnout (Andreu Perez et al., 2022; Singh and Singhi, 2015; Snyder, 2009). When both the artist and manager feel comfortable discussing their challenges, successes, and concerns, ensures a two-way commutation channel.

The extent of a manager's mental health involvement can also affect the artist's ability to maintain a healthy work-life balance. Human resource management research provides evidence that a healthy work-life balance mediates the relationship between work culture and employee well-being (Disking et al., 2021a). Modern musicians are facing issues relating to maintain a work-life balance due to the impacts technological advances have had on their workload such as increased self-promotion demands through social media (Allen, 2022; Anderson, 2014; Elberse, 2013; Gamble et al., 2018; Musgrave, 2023; Smith and Teague, 2015). A manager who is knowledgeable of an artist's needs and current well-being can intervene if the artist is experiencing burnout or a mental health crisis. Managers who are involved are better positioned to recognise these issues and advocate for adjustments in their workload.

Employee involvement has a positive impact on well-being and strengthens commitment to an organisation (Bond and Bunce, 2011; CIPD, 2019; Dobson et al., 2009; Landsbergis and Vivona-Vaughm, 1995). Involvement suggest that a manager recognises the positive aspects of an employee's contributions and does not dismiss their ideas (Clerkin et al., 2016; Cross et al., 2003). An artist's manager role requires the ability to develop a strategy that recognises the artists goals to promote their career development (Morrow, 2018). By involving the artist, the manager can not only have a better sense of their goals but understand any well-being related needs. Additionally, when an artist's needs are clearly expressed a manager can more easily review areas where an artist's workload can be decreased in case their workload impacts their well-being.

Unfortunately, there is also a risk associated with an excessively involved stance. Managers who frequently over-communicate mental health concerns, assume responsibilities beyond their professional remit, or over-extend themselves in supporting an artist's well-being may encounter several adverse consequences. Imbalance may ultimately compromise the quality of both the manager's performance and the artist's well-being.

Within theme four, derived from the reflexive thematic analysis, the first sub-theme demonstrated differing perspectives of social medias impact on artists well-being. Social media often creates an expectation for artists to be constantly active and visible online, which can blur the lines between work and personal time. The constant demand for engagement can lead to burnout or decreased well-being. For managers,

this presents a challenge in balancing the artist's professional obligations with their need for downtime and mental health care. Participants discussed how it is their responsibility to be aware of both the positive and negative effects of social media and take an active role in managing their artists online presence.

*Low Involvement*

Low involved managers have minimal involvement in their artists mental health, scoring between one and five. For example, John, who chose level five on involvement, emphasised his role in the artist's career rather than their mental health, indicating that past negative experiences and fear influenced his current stance.

> I am here to help you with your career. […] I just have that fear of when you are so close to the matter and the people within it that it can get muddied. And it is my responsibility for the business and when all of this happens it is just a s*** show. [..] I learned a lot of lessons. (136-143)

Only one manager fell under this category. John, who recounted that in the past, he was more involved, but over time this caused him significant distress. Now, John remains at a distance and focuses on the artist's career. John later discussed an artist he used to work with who was open about their mental health but dealt with drug and alcohol issues. He believes the artist used mental health as an excuse and John noted the negative impact it had on their team. John shared:

> There has been, one artist who was very open with his mental health, but I believe that they […] were lazy in dealing with the business side. Of course, we wanted them to get better, but they were going through a very bad period, and we were in the middle of album campaigns, the offers were there to stop everything, as your mental health comes first. But they would say 'oh no, we will crack on.' Then you would engage teams when everyone else has done all the work and you'd have a meeting, and they would say 'ah this is too much.' […] People's jobs and livelihoods and this and that and the other thing, so if you are lying to yourself and to us, it is not a healthy situation to be in. (153-165)

While this category represents a small percentage of participants, John's experience is valuable. His case illustrates how initial high involvement in mental health issues can lead to professional burnout and withdrawal, stemming not from a

lack of concern but from a protective measure against burnout. John's experience underscores the need for early-career support mechanisms for managers.

Two other managers, who did not fall into this category, discussed negative impacts of elevated mental health involvement. Isabella and Morgan, recounted periods of withdrawing from their managerial responsibilities due to the adverse impact of such involvement on their own mental well-being. Both stepped away from management and re-directed their management approaches and mental health involvement levels.

Isabella also discussed positives and negatives of social media and the impact this has on an artist's professional role. She identified that we live in an 'oversharing culture' arguing that this could lead to blurred boundaries between the artist's personal life and professional image. Managers must be mindful of this, helping artists maintain control over what they share publicly and ensuring they protect their mental health from the pressures of overexposure.

Managers like John might avoid discussing mental health issues not because they do not care, but due to past negative experiences. Better support mechanisms early in their careers could help managers maintain a healthier balance. Implementing mental health training, providing access to professional resources, and fostering a supportive community among managers could help them navigate the emotional demands of their role more effectively.

*Varied Involvement*

Managers in this category have different levels of involvement for each artist they manage. Taylor, for example, manages three artists with varying degrees of involvement based on the duration of their relationship.

> I have three different artists and it's a bit different for each one of them, I feel like. For two of them, it would definitely be between six and eight. However, the newly signed artist, as it has been such a short period of time, we are still working on getting, you know, trusting each other in that sense. So, I would say around the four or five. (96-99)

A quarter of participants indicated that their levels of involvement varied for each artist. Maria noted that trust develops over time, particularly after working with an artist for several years. Similarly, Ava described how her involvement differs

between the two artists she manages. Ava's level of involvement is a five with the artist who is less communicative about their mental well-being, while it is a ten with the artist who actively engages in discussions about their mental health.

Managers who adopt a 'Variable Involvement' approach tailor their involvement in mental health support to the specific needs and history of their relationship with each artist. Flexibility allows managers to provide personalised support, potentially fostering stronger relationships and better mental health outcomes for artists. However, the challenge lies in determining the optimal level of involvement that balances support with professional boundaries. Further research could help identify best practices and guidelines for managers to effectively navigate this adaptable approach.

*High Involvement*

This approach type categorises participants who stated that their level of involvement was from five to ten, indicating a high level of mental health involvement. Illustrated through Malik who shared:

> The mental health is part of the planning process and integrated into each conversation wherever it's possible. And we're always looking out for warning signs. (115-116)

This was the most common approach type within this section, with 66% of participants. Managers like Morgan, who identified a level ten involvement, prioritise mental health within their management practice, aiming to empower creatives without compromising their own well-being. Adam, who also specified their level of involvement was ten, discussed that other than himself the only people who were more aware about his artists mental health was their therapist or close family member. However, this high level of involvement can be emotionally draining. Isabella describes it as draining, for example, she shared that the emotional connection projected onto her can become crippling.

Managers within this category may also place an importance on artists maintaining an active social media presence. Social media offers managers a way to leverage these platforms to enhance the artist's visibility and fan engagement, contributing to their career growth. On the other hand, social media can also expose artists to constant public scrutiny, which may negatively impact their mental health. Negative comments, online trolling, and unrealistic beauty standards can increase feelings of inadequacy or anxiety. Participants like Chloe and Liam were aware of this,

with Liam specifically mentioning that sometimes it is necessary to take a step back and 'pump the brakes' on social media activity. Managers must recognise the signs of social media fatigue or distress in their artists and intervene by encouraging breaks or limiting engagement with harmful online interactions.

Managers in this category often have plans in place for mental health assistance. However, without adequate resources and personal boundaries, they might eventually experience burnout like those in the 'Low Involvement' category. To mitigate this risk, it is vital for managers to establish clear boundaries and access external resources or support systems that can help them sustain their mental health while assisting their artists. These managers may also be actively involved in the artists social media presence. Managers can support this process by guiding artists on how to use these platforms responsibly, creating a healthy balance between personal expression and professional image.

*Suggested Approach Type: Varied Involvement*

Managers displayed a range of preferred mental health involvement levels. Past HRM research and data from the interviews highlight the positives and negatives of mental health involvement within a management context and the connection this has with communication and employees work-life balance.

Past research on artist management discusses the value of communication within the artist manager relationship (Morrow, 2018; Watson, 2002). Human relations management research also provides evidence that effective two-way communication and work-life balance can positively impact employee well-being (Disking et al., 2021a; Rita Men and Qin, 2023). Modern musicians are dealing with issues relating to work-life balance and industry changes due to technological advances (Allen, 2022; Anderson, 2014; Elberse, 2013; Musgrave, 2023; Smith and Teague, 2015). Negative impacts of high levels of mental health involvement were portrayed from artist managers like John, Isabella, and Morgan.

Managers play a fundamental role in helping artists navigate the complexities of social media engagement. As demonstrated by the differing perspectives of participants like Chloe, Liam, and Isabella, managers must be aware of both the positive and negative effects of social media and take an active role in managing their artists online presence. Involving setting boundaries, encouraging breaks when necessary, and fostering a healthy relationship with social media.

This spectrum of involvement levels observed among participants can be further understood through Wang's (2024) framework of 'The Loop's' flexibility. As artists move through the project-product cycle their mental health support needs fluctuate between emotional intimacy required for creative work and the professional boundaries necessary for market success (Wang, 2024).

Based on the triangulation of information, the suggested approach type derived is 'Varied Involvement', which recommends the artist manager to increase involvement over time. Information reviewed in Wang's (2024) research on 'The Loop' further supports 'Variable Involvement' as the most effective approach, allowing managers to adapt their level of engagement to match artists needs within each stage of 'The Loop's' cycle. Compared to the other sides of the spectrum of approaches, a low involvement can lead to lack of communication and work-life imbalance, while a high level of mental health involvement can impact the artist manager's work-life balance and ability to communicate their needs to the artist.

### *Action*

This approach, related to responses to the third question from the semi-structured interview, focuses on how managers react to mental health issues when they arise. The types of Action include, 'No Action', 'Active Action', and 'Personal Action', provided information on how modern managers react to a mental health crisis.

Managers who fall under the category of 'No Action' do not have an action plan in place in case an artist undergoes a mental health crisis. They prefer to give artists space to handle their issues independently. 'Active Action' managers have a set plan in place. These managers typically follow a structured approach, including initial conversations with the artist, determining the severity of the issue, and signposting to professionals if necessary. 'Personal Action' managers do not have a set plan but instead share their personal experiences when an artist is facing a mental health crisis or well-being issues.

Whether or not a manager has an action plan in place for their artists and what that plan is will have an impact on the artists well-being. Preparation also provides evidence on the managers overall management styles and goals. Differing levels of preparation within artist management reflects two areas of HRM research, leadership styles and motivation. Managers who enter their roles with a clear, actionable plan

inherently embody the principles of transformational leadership. Not only reflecting a commitment to strategic vision but also equipping them to engage in inspirational and motivational practices more effectively.

According to HRM research, a transformational leader functions as an ethical role model providing clear communication and employee support, and genuinely cares about the employee (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978; Charoensukmongkol and Puyod, 2021; Lavigna and Paarlberg, 2010; Trottier et al., 2008; Udin, 2024). Incorporating a transformational leadership style can impact employee well-being and work-life balance (Bass, 1985; Bass and Riggio, 2006; Berson et al., 2015; Charoensukmongkol and Puyod; Chen et al., 2003; Klug et al., 2018). Transformational leadership can increase employee trust, which is a vital aspect of the artist manager relationship (Diskienė et al., 2021b; Gaudesi, 2016). To provide employee support, promote trust, and communicate clearly to the team, transformational leadership style aligns with the notion of curating a support plan in case a crisis arises and having resources available such as hotlines or psychiatric processionals. A detailed action plan enables a manager to communicate clear goals, and the steps required to achieve them, providing inspirational motivation and allows the manager to tailor motivational initiatives to the unique needs of each artist.

A manager's level of preparation for a mental health crisis also connects to their motivation and satisfaction. When artists understand exactly what is expected and how their progress will be monitored, they are more likely to feel secure and motivated to achieve those targets. Research points to the positive relationship between employee motivation and well-being (Davidson and Yan, 2013; Ghosh and Satyawadi, 2012; Kuo, 2013; Patwardhan et al., 2013; Udin, 2024). Incorporating motivational initiatives both within and outside of the workplace can also substantially contribute to heightened motivation and job satisfaction (Kuo, 2013; Patwardhan et al., 2013). The music industry is highly competitive, which encourages further the need for motivation initiatives within the artist manager relationship (Musgrave, 2014). By integrating motivational initiatives into a comprehensive crisis preparation strategy, managers not only establish clear expectations and accountability but also cultivate a secure, resilient environment that empowers artists to navigate and recover from mental health challenges while thriving in a competitive industry.

*No Action*

Managers employing a 'No Action' prefer to give artists space, allowing them to determine their next steps independently. Emily illustrated her perspective:

> When an artist is in that kind of situation, you should give them space and let them decide the next steps in their careers. And when they feel ready to come back, then make them make the most for them to be comfortable coming back. And if they want to talk about it and let them talk about it, and if they don't want to talk about it, you just give them space. (101-105)

Two managers, Emily and Joe, represented this category. Emily recounted a specific instance involving a well-known artist from her management company who left the industry due to substance abuse issues. After providing the artist with time and space, the artist eventually achieved sobriety and made a comeback. From this experience, Emily concluded that it is best to allow the artist to determine their own path rather than intervening. Similarly, Joe expressed a preference for giving the artist space and allowing them to initiate discussions about their issues.

While managers in this category are concerned about their artists mental health, they may not consider themselves best suited to provide direct support. They might avoid seeking resources, believing they are not the most qualified to offer them. Although this method may be informed by positive past experiences, such as Emily's, it is crucial that managers have a contingency plan in case their artists face severe mental health challenges. This approach can be beneficial in respecting the artist's autonomy and promoting self-directed recovery. However, it is essential for managers to recognise their limitations and ensure they have a contingency plan for severe mental health crises. Without such plans, artists may not receive the necessary support in critical moments. Establishing connections with mental health professionals or organisations and having clear protocols can help managers provide appropriate support when needed.

*Active Action*

An 'Active Action' response involves managers having a specific plan in place for addressing mental health issues as they arise. Managers, like Morgan, provided information on their plans of action if a mental health concern arises:

> I suppose in the first place is that if they feel that they are in a position to share that it's just to yeah, just to listen and then, you know, I have a duty of care

from a professional standpoint, so then signpost them to various areas that can provide professional help because I have a vested interest in mental health, but I'm not a trained counsellor or therapist, so I wouldn't want to sort of give out any specific advice. (162-167)

This was the most prevalent approach, with 42% of participants. These managers had established protocols to support artists mental health. The typical process involves, first, speaking with the artist to address the issue; second, determining whether the issue should be resolved internally or externally; and finally, referring the artist to a relevant organisation or professional if needed. Managers like Malik and Morgan acquired these action steps from mental health training courses. Other participants, such as Taylor, Liam, and Morgan, had affiliations with specific mental health organisations. Taylor collaborated with BlueRhythm, Liam worked with Tonic Music, and Morgan referred artists to an in-house therapist at her artists record label.

Managers in this category either received mental health training or researched effective methods for assisting artists with mental health issues. They may also have external resources to support their efforts, as exemplified by Morgan's collaboration with a record label. Ensuring that managers can respond promptly and appropriately to mental health concerns, offering initial support and referring artists to professionals when necessary. Such preparedness can enhance the manager's ability to assist artists effectively while maintaining their own professional boundaries.

*Personal Action*

Managers adopting a 'Personal Action' do not have a specific plan in place and do not reach out to external resources. Instead, they address issues collaboratively with the artist, sharing their own mental health experiences when relevant. Ava illustrated this approach:

I just talk to them, I talk to them through and offer solutions I've used in the past, like meditation. (190-191)

In this response type, two managers indicated that they would share their own experiences. Both Adam and Ava did not express a preference for seeking external help or signposting to professionals or organisations. They found it beneficial to discuss their own mental health struggles with the artist. Ava, who has worked in the live music industry for over forty years and sometimes performed as an electronic

music artist, recommended meditation, which she found vital for her mental health. Adam mentioned pausing and evaluating what led to their current situation.

Managers within the 'Personal Action' type may lack access to external resources. They rely on their own experiences to support their artists and groups. While this approach can create a relatable and empathetic support system, it may not always be sufficient for addressing complex or severe mental health issues. Due to this, it is essential for managers to complement their personal experiences with a structured plan and access to professional resources. Ensuring that artists receive comprehensive support and that managers do not overextend themselves or risk inadequate intervention.

### Suggested Approach Type: Active Action

Participant data portrayed three distinct approaches to their preparation plan, or lack thereof, for a mental health crisis. Human resource management research discusses the positive aspects of incorporating elements of transformational leadership within management styles and the benefits of implementing motivation initiatives.

A transformational leader cares about the employee, supports them, and clearly communicates goals (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978; Charoensukmongkol and Puyod, 2021; Lavigna and Paarlberg, 2010; Trottier et al., 2008; Udin, 2024). These aspects positively impact employee well-being (Bass, 1985; Bass and Riggio, 2006; Berson et al., 2015; Charoensukmongkol and Puyod; Chen et al., 2003; Klug et al., 2018). There is also a relationship between employee motivation and well-being (Davidson and Yan, 2013; Ghosh and Satyawadi, 2012; Kuo, 2013; Patwardhan et al., 2013; Udin, 2024). Within the highly competitive music industry, management preparation and artist motivation are key (Musgrave, 2014). A majority of participants, 42%, had an action plan in place. Two managers, Emily and Joe did not have a plan, and two other managers, Adam and Ava did not express a preference for seeking external help or signposting to professionals or organisations. They found it beneficial to discuss their own mental health struggles with the artist.

Based on the three options provided by participants, it is recommended that an artist manager has an action plan in place in case of a mental health crisis, which is the approach titled 'Active Action.' The 'Active Action' approach aligns with Wang's (2024) discussions on the managers requirement to adapt at handling complexities, due to 'The Loop's' non-linear effects. Having a structured plan provides the stability

needed to navigate the informality that characterises artist management, while allowing for the flexibility required when a mental health crisis occurs within the unpredictable project-product cycle. Additionally, managers are not advised to incorporate personal advice when professional intervention is required.

### *Relationship-Type*

This approach, derived from question four, examines the nature of the manager artist relationship, whether it is more business or friendship oriented. It includes three approach types, 'Friendship', 'Mixed', and 'Professional'. The first approach type describes managers who view their relationship with artists as more of a friendship, they maintain an open and emotionally supportive connection with their artists. Mixed approach managers describe their relationship as a blend of business and friendship. They balance professional responsibilities with personal support. Professional approach type managers maintain a strictly professional relationship. They focus on business aspects to protect both their own and the artists well-being.

An artist managers preferred relationship type shapes the patterns of social interaction and overall organisational culture experienced by their artists. Social interaction and organisational culture can both play part in an artist well-being. Managers who favour a collaborative or 'Active Action' type are more likely to engage in frequent, open dialogue with their artists. The type of relationship an artist and manager have sets a precedent for the broader organisational culture.

Human resource management research examines how increased social interaction and teamwork positively impact an employee's well-being (Atkin and Brooks, 2021; Lappalainen et al., 2024). Establishing a sense of belongingness produces a positive work culture, contributing to a more satisfying and meaningful work experience and worker well-being (Lappalainen et al., 2024). The social interaction between artist and manager is central in the artists well-being and overall career trajectory (Gaudesi, 2016; Hull, 2021).

Human resource management also places an importance on creating an environment where employees can be creative and take risks (Miles, 1965; Punyanunt-Carter and Wrench, 2012). A positive work culture is critical to employee well-being (Crawford et al., 2010; Dutton and Heaphy, 2008; Jarden et al., 2017). Three elements are critical within promoting a positive organisational culture including physical

working conditions, job aid, and performance feedback (Brenner, 2004; Cavanaugh, 2004; Opperman, 2002). The artist manager relationship can be seen as a microcosm of organisational culture. Working together, the manager and artist are the centre of the artists business relationships (Watson, 2002). This culture is unique without set office hours, formal hiring, or specific qualifications (Allen, 2022; Morrow, 2018). Due to this, it is necessary for an artist manager to ensure that physical working conditions, job aid, and performance feedback are integral elements of the artist manager relationship.

*Friendship Relationship*

Participants who described their relationships as more friendship-based shared insights into this approach. Adam illustrated this perspective:

> I tend to work with artists that you can be really open and friendly with, and
> have a great relationship with, because it's for up to the artists to know the
> time and place to listen to the advice they're being given. (168-170)

A quarter of participants reported that their relationship with their artists was more like a friendship than a business relationship. Adam discussed how his strategy evolved from maintaining strict boundaries to a more relaxed approach over time. Both Adam and Joe shared that they only work with artists they can get along with as friends.

Isabella highlighted the emotional intimacy fostered by a friendly relationship, creating a family atmosphere that helps navigate difficult periods. However, she also noted the downside of inadequate boundary setting, which eventually led her to transition to a consultancy-based management role. She elaborated on the challenge of balancing the pursuit of the artist's dreams with personal aspirations. John expressed concern that a friendship-based relationship might lead to a loss of respect for the manager. Ava added that a friendly role made it harder to persuade artists to complete tasks.

Managers who see their relationship with artists as more friendship-based often foster strong emotional bonds. Managers who adopt a friendship approach have fewer strict boundaries in their relationships with artists. Openness can facilitate a strong emotional connection, providing artists with comprehensive access to the manager. However, the lack of strict boundaries can lead to managers feeling overwhelmed by the emotional demands placed on them. To balance the benefits of a friendship approach with the potential for burnout, managers should consider setting clearer

boundaries and accessing support systems that can help them manage their emotional load.

*Mixed Relationship*

Some participants could not categorise their relationships strictly as business or friendship, instead describing a blend of both. Liam exemplified this mixed approach:

> And then me personally, it goes anything from 80% business, 20% sweat, friendship through to 95% friendship, 5% business. I kind of I'm chameleon-ish like as a manager. (208-210)

Half of the participants described having a mixed relationship with their artists. Malik discussed how some artists might have friends better suited to handle certain situations, suggesting that managers sometimes need to maintain a professional distance. Malik characterised this role as a 'special role' with a professional priority but noted that managers are often open-hearted, and their support frequently extends beyond professional boundaries. Morgan similarly argued that a successful artist manager relationship must be both personal and professional due to the extensive time and communication involved.

Managers within this role would adapt their relationship based on the current situation or standing. In a more casual setting, the manager would take on a friendly role. During business conversations, the professional role would take on. Managers would also set semi-strict boundaries and be more flexible to adapting their schedules. Flexibility can help managers maintain a supportive yet professional relationship, adapting their engagement to the situation.

*Business Relationship*

Participants who identified their relationships as more business-oriented emphasised the importance of maintaining professional boundaries. John articulated this approach:

> Once you open that door it can become a whole other kind of relationship, and people can see you in different lights when it's friendship and they can lose respect for you when they see you in different business modes. (214-216)

A quarter of participants reported having a more business-oriented relationship with their artists. Maria argued that this type of relationship is necessary because the manager must make sacrifices and prioritise the artist's interests. Chloe recently

established a conscious boundary with her artists to protect her own mental health. She emphasised that it is important for the artist to understand the serious nature of the business, suggesting that involving the artist in business activities and maintaining these boundaries helps keep them focused.

Managers who adopt a business-oriented relationship aim to protect both their own and their artists well-being. These managers set strict boundaries and keep conversations focused on business-related topics. Helping to keep the artist concentrated on their career goals and ensuring the manager can maintain a professional distance. Strict boundaries and a focus on business topics can help managers provide effective support while avoiding emotional burnout and maintaining respect within the professional relationship. Conversely, this approach may produce a lack in emotional intimacy for the artist manager relationship.

*Suggested Approach Type: Mixed Relationship*

Results presented three different types of artist manager relationship types. Each type has varying positives and negatives that can impact an artist's well-being.

According to past HRM research increased social interaction and promoting a positive work culture positively impact an employee's well-being (Atkin and Brooks, 2021; Crawford et al., 2010; Dutton and Heaphy, 2008; Jarden et al., 2017; Lappalainen et al., 2024). Artist manager research points to the unique nature of the music industry and the influence the artist manager relationship had on the artists success and well-being (Watson, 2002). Half of the participants displayed a mixed approach while the other portion divided equally between either distinctly a friendship or business relationship type. Managers with a more relaxed relationship approach noted how the increased emphasis on friendship enhanced emotional intimacy. These managers also noted how they sometimes felt overwhelmed by the emotional demands placed on them and this led to fewer strict boundaries. Managers who aimed to have a strictly professional relationship often did so to protect the artists well-being and helps to keep them focused on their career. Conversely, this approach may produce a lack in emotional intimacy for the artist manager relationship.

Due to both the positives and negatives of relationship type and the unique nature of the artist manager relationship, managers are encouraged to portray both elements of a friendship and a professional relationship. Based on past HRM research regarding the positive impacts of increasing social interaction and promoting a positive

organisational culture support this narrative. Addressing the tension Wang (2024) identifies in artist management, which requires an imperative balance within the project-product cycle between freedom of expression and market success. By maintaining both friendship and professional elements, managers can provide necessary emotional support while establishing boundaries for business effectiveness.

## 4.12 SUMMARY

In conclusion, data collection and reflexive thematic analysis process allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and nuances within the artist manager relationship in the UK music industry. The inquiry provides a foundation for future discussions and initiatives aimed at enhancing the well-being of UK musicians.

The participants, diverse in age, experience, and gender, provided a comprehensive perspective on the challenges and opportunities within their roles. The research questions guided a structured inquiry into the knowledge levels of UK music managers, shedding light on their understanding of mental health resources, awareness of industry-related training programs, and the challenges faced when artists grapple with mental health strains.

The results presented a multifaceted picture of the current landscape, with participants showcasing varying degrees of involvement in mental health awareness and differing approaches to managing the artist manager relationship. The data collected identified key challenges faced by artists, ranging from industry-related pressures to issues stemming from external factors. The findings highlighted the need for increased attention on the mental health of artist managers themselves, a dimension often overlooked in discussions about the industry. The reflexive thematic analysis, guided by the principles of HRM, allowed for the systematic identification and categorisation of themes and sub-themes, offering a deeper understanding of the intricate dynamics within the artist manager relationship.

This chapter also provided a comprehensive discussion on the different approach's artist managers take regarding mental health support. Three primary categories were examined, managers preferred mental health involvement, level of preparation for a mental health crisis, and overall relationship type. This analysis emphasises the diversity in managerial strategies and the critical need for tailored support. Chapter Five offers a discussion of the research findings.

# Chapter 5: Discussion

## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The following chapter contains detailed discussions of results, connection to literature review, and further information regarding the implementation of varying artist manager approaches and the subsequent AMMHTK. Section 5.2 discuss the results in relation to the literature. Sections 5.3 and 5.4 discusses results related to the research questions and themes. Section 5.5 discusses how these themes have been refined into three distinct approach categories. Aligning insights with well-established HRM principles, these categories offer a flexible framework that can be adapted to suit the diverse practices of artist managers.

Section 5.6 outlines the AMMHTK. Reviewing the tool kit's development, implementation process, an example of the tool kit, and provides the personalised recommendations. These recommendations are based on participant's responses and aligns with HRM principles relating to employee well-being. Section 5.7 presents a conclusion of the chapter.

## 5.2 DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS IN RELATION TO THE LITERATURE

An artist's manager is the intermediary between the musician and the business side of the music industry and the artist's audience (Watson, 2002). Despite the evidence about the pivotal role of the artist manager relationship in an artist's success and well-being (Gaudesi, 2016; Morrow, 2013; Watson, 2002), there was a lack in research and knowledge of the current status of music managers knowledge of their artists mental health and the current resources available to assist with issues that may arise when artists face mental health issues addressed through past research (Ackerman et al., 2012; Asher and Kenny, 2016; Bjerkeset et al., 2014; Davis et al., 2004; Gross and Musgrave, 2016; Musgrave, 2014; Record Union, 2019). Past studies laid a pathway for the present research regarding music managers knowledge related to the mental health status of the artists they manage. Gross (2017) reported that many of the musician's issues stem from working conditions. Since 2017, there has been a renewed interest in mental health outcomes and working conditions within the music industry.

However, there remained a deficiency in research connected to HRM and music industry managers.

The artist manager relationship encompasses various personal, financial, and psychological elements (Allen, 2022; Coldrick, 2017; Hull, 2021; Parker, 2021). The artist manager's role is multidimensional, involving artist development, financial management, and the nurturing of the artist's career and creative process (Coldrick, 2017; Parker, 2021). This multifaceted relationship forms the foundation of an artist's professional journey and success. Artist managers have diverse roles, encompassing daily activities, big-picture ideas, and ensuring the artist's long-term success, they are involved in almost every aspect of an artist's life and career (Allen, 2022; Hull, 2021). The psychological aspect of the artist manager relationship is vital. Artist managers are often seen as caretakers, confidants, and even surrogate mothers to the artists they represent (Hull, 2021). Existing research has highlighted the multifaceted nature of the artist manager relationship (Allen, 2022; Hull, 2021; Morrow, 2018). The artist manager relationship is characterised by three elements, including personal, financial, and psychological aspects.

## 5.2.1 Literature Review Discussion

New research findings analysed from the reflexive thematic analysis shed light on the challenges and negative feelings experienced by artist managers in their roles. Specifically, identifying key issues faced by managers directly related to their responsibilities. Half, 50%, of participants expressed negative sentiments regarding aspects of their role as artist managers, such as financial constraints, limited label involvement, and working as a creative for a creative. Findings indicate that artist managers grapple with significant challenges that affect their overall job satisfaction and well-being.

The reduced involvement of record labels, which was highlighted by Maria and Malik as a significant factor impacting their growing managerial responsibilities. Reduced engagement has resulted in an increased workload for artist managers, who now shoulder more responsibilities than were traditionally handled by the label. Power dynamics between artists and managers are also affected, as managers find themselves taking on roles previously dictated by record labels. While limited label involvement may offer certain financial advantages, raising questions about the equilibrium between these benefits and the added workload and responsibilities placed on artist

managers. The added workload and responsibilities stemming from reduced label participation could deter managers from taking on further responsibilities related to artists mental health, potentially leading to burnout and reduced job satisfaction. Excessive responsibilities can influence their overall job satisfaction and willingness to take on additional responsibilities, including those related to artists mental health.

The music industry has experienced profound transformations in the last three decades, primarily driven by technological advancements that revolve around music creation and sharing (Allen, 2022; Anderson, 2014). These changes, as highlighted by Allen (2022) and Anderson (2014), introduced a host of new challenges for artists and managers. These challenges encompass issues related to illegal music sharing, intellectual property concerns, intensified competition, and the relentless progression of recording technology (Anderson, 2014; Elberse, 2013). The impact of these technological shifts has generated increased demands and complexities for both artists and their managers, influencing various aspects of their work. These ongoing changes created a challenging work environment within the music industry, one that raises concerns not only about the business aspects but also about the well-being of artists and their managers (Gross and Musgrave, 2016; Musgrave, 2014; Record Union, 2019).

This study acknowledges the role of social media in shaping the music industry and its impact on artists mental health. While social media is acknowledged as a platform for artists to openly discuss their mental health struggles, the research highlights a nuanced perspective. Isabella pointed out that social media can have both positive and detrimental effects on artists mental well-being. The 'sharing culture' it fosters can be empowering, but it can also lead to an 'oversharing culture,' which may have negative consequences on mental health. This dualistic viewpoint emphasises the complex nature of social media's influence on the mental health landscape within the music industry.

It is apparent that the ongoing technological advancements, discussed by Allen (2022) and Anderson (2014), have created an environment where artists and managers rely on platforms like social media to navigate their careers. While these platforms offer unprecedented opportunities for self-expression and connection with fans, they also present new challenges, particularly in managing mental health. The challenges

and opportunities brought by these technological changes will require an examination to address the complex dynamics at play.

Findings can be connected to the previous research conducted by Morrow (2018) on artist manager relationships. Morrow's research focused on the unique nature of artist management in the creative and cultural industries, including its informal and agile characteristics, the new research examines the application of HRM to organisational and management settings.

In the context of artist manager relationships, Morrow (2018) highlighted the tension between rules and flexibility, highlighting the agile nature of the industry. Resonating with the new research's findings that implementing HRM, can positively impact organisations. Research stresses the importance of accommodating autonomy, effective communication, and the balance between control and flexibility within management relationships (Morrow, 2018). Both bodies of research also highlight the significance of communication and understanding within these relationships. Morrow's (2018) research demonstrated that artist managers needed to be facilitators rather than controllers due to the creative nature of the industry.

### 5.2.2 Human Resource Management Discussion

The integration of HRM principles into the research design not only draws from past research but also serves as a critical link between existing literature, the theoretical framework, and the results (Guest et al., 2016; Hennink et al., 2016). Past research in the field of HRM has established a foundation for understanding how organisational practices can influence employee well-being, job satisfaction, and overall mental health (Compton et al., 2014). The deductive use of HRM guided the formulation of research questions that aimed to address the core principles of HRM within the context of the music management industry.

Building upon this theoretical framework, the study explored the dynamics of the UK music industry's music management sector. The application of CR, aligning with its core principles, facilitated a comprehensive examination of the emergent qualities inherent in the artist manager relationships (Bhaskar, 1975). CR allowed for a deeper exploration of the underlying social structures and influences shaping the interactions between artists and managers.

Past research has consistently illuminated the tension points encountered when transplanting HRM practices originally designed for more structured industries into the dynamic and often unpredictable context of creative enterprises (Opara et al., 2019). The study not only reaffirms these challenges but shares the specific hurdles faced in the unique relationship dynamics between artists and managers. These challenges range from reconciling divergent expectations to navigating the delicate balance between artistic autonomy and managerial structure.

The results provided valuable insights into the challenges faced by artists and managers, highlighting the impact of communication, leadership styles, work-life balance, and organisational culture on their well-being. These findings not only corroborated with existing HRM literature but also extended our understanding within the unique context of the music industry. Specific HRM practices were identified, such as two-way communication, transformational leadership, and recognition initiatives, that could positively influence the mental health of artists and contribute to overall satisfaction (Mayo, 1932; McGregor, 1960; Moreno, 1953).

This AMMHTK was developed by integrating diverse management approaches into three categories, Involvement, action, and preparation. These approaches were aligned with the six HRM principles, resulting in a practical resource tailored to address the critical challenges identified in the research. Its primary goal is to enhance mental health support and optimise professional interactions within the music industry.

Triangulating information from past research, HRM principles, and the results, a universal perspective emerged, forming the basis for the development of the AMMHTK. Representing a practical and actionable response to the identified challenges, providing artists and managers in the music industry with a resource designed to foster inclusivity and contribute significantly to their overall well-being. In essence, the combination of past research, theoretical frameworks, and empirical findings culminated in the creation of a tool kit aimed at catalysing positive change within the music industry, emphasising the holistic well-being of artists and managers (Opara et al., 2019).

## 5.3    DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

Findings from the inquiry reflect a diverse landscape within the realm of music management. Participants exhibited varying degrees of experience in the industry, with

some possessing extensive careers spanning several decades, while others were relatively new candidates. The data analysis revealed diverse managerial strategies in addressing artists mental health needs, with 25% emphasising open discussions, another 25% highlighting trust as foundational, and an equivalent 25% advocating for artist's personal space. Additionally, 16% suggested managers sharing personal struggles could encourage artists to reciprocate. Notably, 50% explicitly avoided assuming a therapist role, while the remaining 50% saw professional intervention as imperative. This spectrum of attitudes emphasises the absence of a uniform framework, highlighting the necessity for open dialogue, clear communication, and a refined understanding of individual needs in the music industry.

The absence of a uniform framework for addressing mental health issues signifies a potential area for development within the industry. The fact that most managers, 75%, exhibited an awareness of available mental health resources suggests that the industry has made some progress in this regard. However, the lack of a structured approach poses a challenge in ensuring consistent and effective support for artists.

### 5.3.1 Research Questions

This section will examine the findings related to these research questions, highlighting the diverse perspectives and approaches employed by music managers in addressing mental health within the music industry.

The first research question related to the current support systems for UK music managers knowledge of how to implement constructive mental health outcomes for the artists they manage. Out of the twelve participants interviewed, 75% named more than one mental health organisation or training program that provides mental health training assistance for the artists they manage. A portion of participants, 41%, only mentioned one organisation, the one organisation mentioned by these five participants was the MMF. Along with this, 75% of all participants that mentioned an organisation mentioned the MMF as a resource to provide training for mental health support. Malik and Isabella mentioned most organisations with four or more total. Table Eleven lists the training resources mentioned by artist managers.

The majority of interview responses gravitated towards an exploration of the second research question and sub-question, which gauges status of music managers in

the UK regarding awareness of mental health resources for their artists and how does this knowledge, or lack thereof, influence the artist manager relationship and artist's well-being? This inquiry investigated into the potential ramifications of such awareness or its absence on the workings of the artist manager relationship.

The emphasis on creating a safe and open environment, with 25% of participants highlighting its significance, aligns with the HRM principle of social interaction. Seeking to create cohesive work units that operate synergistically, fostering an environment conducive to individual and collective growth. In the context of the artist manager relationship, this emphasis on social interaction can contribute to a positive social environment, enabling effective communication and support mechanisms. Additionally, the 25% of managers supporting the establishment of trust as a foundational concept resonates with the HRM principle of Employee Involvement. Trust plays a pivotal role in the manager's effectiveness in offering mental health support, fostering a sense of belonging and community within the organisational context. Aligning with previous research demonstrating that establishing trust contributes to a more satisfying and meaningful work experience.

Approximately 25% of participants highlighted the importance of allowing artists an appropriate degree of personal space, aligning with the HRM principle of two-way communication. Emphasising open channels of communication and active employee involvement, fostering a workplace culture that prioritises individual voices. The dual perspective of 16% of respondents, suggesting that managers sharing personal struggles could encourage artists to reciprocate in sharing their mental health challenges, reflects the HRM's commitment to inclusive communication practices. Contributing significantly to employee well-being by promoting an environment where individuals feel comfortable expressing their concerns and experiences.

The final research question was associated with their affiliations with music management organisations. Seven out of twelve participants were members of a music management organisation, all seven were a part of the MMF, while Malik is a member of both MMF and the AAM. The prominence of the MMF as a source of support is a noteworthy observation. It not only offers assistance for artists mental well-being but also extends its purview to encompass the mental health management and support of managers themselves. Aligning with the multifaceted nature of mental health within the context of artist management.

These results highlight the dynamic nature of artist management roles, and the various approaches managers employ to address artists mental health. It underscores the need for a more structured approach to mental health support and the role of organisations like MMF.

## 5.4 THEMES AND SUB-THEMES DISCUSSION

The inquiry into the second research question is expanded through an examination of overarching themes and their associated sub-themes, derived from the outcomes of the reflexive thematic analysis. The Manager as Therapist, Power Dynamics, Role Dissonance, and Normalising Mental Health Considerations were the four significant themes that emerged related to the participants description of their artist manager relationship and how this affected the mental health and well-being of not only the artist but also the managers themselves.

The presented results shed light on the intricate interplay between HRM principles, and the challenges embedded in the artist manager relationship within the music management sector. Examining the first theme, which revolves around the relationship between artist managers and mental health roles, it is evident that implementing HRM principles faces significant hurdles. The acknowledgment that 50% of participants explicitly deny the identity of a mental health therapist underscores a reluctance among certain managers to extend their responsibilities into the discussions of mental health support. This reluctance may stem from a potential discomfort or unease surrounding the notion of manager roles encompassing mental health assistance, hinting at a resistance to the expansion of their professional boundaries.

The variation in responses regarding involving trained mental health professionals, 58%, highlights the diversity of approaches taken by artist managers. Some are proactive in securing mental health support, aligning with principles of employee well-being in HRM. However, others adopt a more hands-off approach, emphasising professional boundaries, revealing a tension between holistic support, and defined managerial roles. The intricate dance between these perspectives accentuates the complexities of balancing artists mental well-being with the need for clear managerial boundaries, reflecting the nuanced and context-dependent nature of HRM implementation.

Moving to the second theme on power dynamics, the challenges of establishing and maintaining appropriate boundaries resonate with HRM principles. The analogies drawn by managers, likening their role to that of a parent or a romantic partner, highlight potential pitfalls in power dynamics. Managers who perceive themselves as parental figures may inadvertently take on excessive responsibility, mirroring HRM challenges where well-intentioned involvement can lead to unintended consequences. Likewise, likening the relationship to a romantic partner suggests an intimate level of involvement, raising concerns about blurring personal and professional boundaries, a scenario incongruent with traditional HRM structures.

The accounts of managers managing individuals with pre-existing friendships added another layer to HRM challenges. Balancing personal connections with professional responsibilities echoes the difficulties in managing the intersection of personal and professional relationships within HRM frameworks. The need for clear guidelines and industry-wide conversations to navigate these complexities aligns with HRM principles of fostering healthy workplace relationships while respecting personal boundaries.

In Theme Three, exploring adverse encounters and challenges faced by artist managers, the findings touch upon gender-related issues. The experiences of female managers highlight gender-related challenges, aligning with HRM principles that advocate for diversity and inclusivity in the workplace. The need for increased gender diversity and inclusivity within the music management field, as emphasised by the narratives of abuse, maltreatment, and marginalisation, aligns with broader HRM goals of creating supportive and equitable work environments.

Finally, Theme Four on normalising mental health conditions reveals a nuanced perspective on the transformations in the music management industry. The recognition that social media has facilitated conversations about mental health aligns with HRM principles that emphasise the importance of communication and transparency in addressing employee well-being. However, the acknowledgment of adverse consequences, such as cyberbullying and the pressures of maintaining a curated online image, highlights the need for a holistic approach to mental health within HRM frameworks.

The positive changes in mental health acknowledgment and availability of resources in the industry resonate with HRM principles including Social Interaction,

Two-Way Communication, Motivation and Satisfaction, Employee Involvement, Work-Life Balance, Organisational Culture, and Leadership Style. The reduction in stigma surrounding mental health conversations aligns with HRM's developing focus on creating supportive and inclusive workplace cultures. However, the cautionary note about the industry's progress being relatively delayed compared to other sectors raises questions about the commitment to holistic well-being and sustainability, prompting considerations within HRM frameworks about the longevity and authenticity of organisational efforts.

These results underscore the intricate relationship between HRM principles, and the challenges faced within the artist manager dynamic, showcasing the need for nuanced approaches that align with the unique aspects of the music management sector. The application of HRM principles can offer valuable insights and guidance in navigating these complexities while fostering a supportive and healthy environment for both artists and managers.

**5.4.1 Theme 1: The Manager as Therapist**

The first theme explores the intricate relationship between artist managers and the mental health roles they assume, the power dynamics inherent in their profession, and the profound impact this has on their mental well-being. A key observation arises from the reflexive thematic analysis concerning the identity and role of the artist manager in providing mental health support. A significant proportion, precisely 50% of participants, explicitly deny the identity of a mental health therapist. Reflecting an awareness of the distinction between their role as managers and the role of a mental health professional. Severe distinction signifies a reluctance among certain managers to extend their responsibilities into the realm of mental health support. Suggesting a potential discomfort or unease surrounding the notion of manager roles encompassing mental health assistance. While another group of managers is proactive, establishing structured frameworks for comprehensive artist support. The dichotomy in responses reflects the complexity of the artist manager relationship, particularly concerning mental well-being. Discomfort may lie in the notion that some managers lack knowledge about resources and support, making it challenging for them to offer adequate assistance.

A substantial portion, 58% of participants, acknowledged the importance of involving trained mental health professionals to assist artists dealing with mental

health issues. However, opinions diverged regarding the extent of managers involvement in obtaining professional assistance. Highlighting the diversity of approaches taken by artist managers in addressing artists mental health needs. Some managers take an active role in securing mental health support for their artists, prioritising their well-being. In contrast, others adopt a more hands-off approach, respecting professional boundaries. This variation accentuates the complexities of balancing artists mental well-being with the need for clear managerial boundaries.

Most managers, 66%, shared instances of personal mental health challenges linked to their roles as artist managers. They discussed how the demands of their job, including handling artists mental health issues, could adversely affect their mental well-being. Highlighting the delicate balance that artist managers must strike between providing support to artists and safeguarding their mental health. Some managers even take breaks from their roles to prioritise their well-being. Emphasising the multifaceted nature of their responsibilities in the music management field and supporting the need for adjustments to ensure a reasonable equilibrium between managing artists well-being and safeguarding their mental well-being.

The findings from the initial theme reveal that the demands of these responsibilities can negatively impact the mental well-being of managers, subsequently influencing the quality of the artist manager relationship. Providing a pragmatic view of the adjustments required to maintain a reasonable balance between artists well-being and managerial mental well-being within the music management sector.

Results from this theme highlight the artist manager's role in addressing mental health challenges, aligns with the HRM principle of work-life balance. With 66% of participants sharing personal mental health challenges, 41% discussing intersections between their role as managers and their mental well-being, and 58% acknowledging the importance of trained professionals, it becomes evident that the demands of the artist manager role have implications for their mental health. The HRM principle emphasises supportive practices for work-life balance as strategies empowering employees to navigate work-related responsibilities and external demands effectively (Wood, 2018). Including flexible work arrangements, family-friendly policies, and stress management initiatives, all contributing to enhanced employee satisfaction and mental well-being. Consequently, integrating HRM principles related to work-life

balance can be instrumental in fostering a healthier and more sustainable work culture within the music management sector.

### 5.4.2 Theme 2: Power Dynamics

The second theme originated from the reflexive thematic analysis investigates the power dynamics inherent in the artist manager relationship, highlighting the complexity of roles and relationships within the music management sector.

The language used by managers to describe their relationships with artists significantly shapes the artist manager dynamic. Some managers draw analogies that compare their role to that of a parent, while others equate it to a romantic partner. These analogies reveal the distinctions of the roles managers assume in their interactions with artists. The comparison to a parent highlights the potential for managers to feel an exaggerated responsibility for the well-being of the artists they manage, potentially fostering an unhealthy power dynamic. On the other hand, the comparison to a romantic partner suggests an intimate level of involvement, which might exceed the intended scope of a managerial relationship.

The use of imbalanced descriptors in the artist manager relationship emphasises the challenges of establishing and maintaining appropriate boundaries. Managers who perceive themselves as parental figures may inadvertently take on excessive responsibility for the artists well-being, potentially compromising both parties' mental health and overall success. Likewise, those who see the relationship in romantic terms may blur the line between personal and professional involvement, affecting the artists lives in unintended ways.

A significant portion of managers, 50%, shared experiences of managing individuals with whom they had pre-existing friendships. These accounts revealed the challenges and complexities of balancing personal connections with professional responsibilities, particularly in the context of mental health issues. The narratives of managers who managed artists with whom they had pre-existing friendships clarify the challenges that arise when personal connections intersect with professional roles. The participant accounts highlight the difficulties of separating the personal from the professional, particularly when dealing with mental health issues. Further highlighting the importance of setting boundaries and managing expectations to ensure the success of the professional relationship and the well-being of both managers and artists.

Additionally, they provide insights into the transition from a friendship perspective to a managerial perspective, contributing to a more comprehensive view of the cognitive and emotional considerations that inform managerial decision-making within this unique relational framework.

The power dynamic and boundary management within the artist manager relationship is complex and multifaceted. The use of various descriptors and the intersection of personal relationships with professional roles add layers of intricacy to these dynamics. Clear guidelines and industry-wide conversations are needed to navigate these complexities and foster healthier and more sustainable relationships between managers and artists in the music industry.

In exploring power dynamics within the artist manager relationship, the application of HRM principles, particularly adopting transformational leadership styles, proves to be vital. Past HRM research consistently indicates the positive correlation between transformational leadership and work engagement, emphasising qualities such as understanding motivation, effective communication, and the empowerment of employees (Ali et al., 2019; Klug et al., 2018). The participants, with 42% favouring well-defined boundaries and 25% advocating for a balanced professional and friendly approach, illustrate the diverse preferences within the artist manager relationship. Diversity underscores the necessity for leadership styles that are supportive and adaptable to varied dynamics. A transformational leader, sensitive to employee's needs and capable of effective communication, aligns well with the nuanced demands of managing individuals with different preferences regarding the nature of their professional relationship. The adoption of supportive leadership styles emerges as a key factor in fostering a harmonious and effective artist manager relationship within the music management sector.

### 5.4.3 Theme 3: Role Dissonance

The third theme examines the adverse encounters that artist managers face in their professional roles. The findings indicate that the music management industry can be a challenging environment, not only for artists but also for the managers responsible for guiding their careers and well-being. The sub-themes presented in this analysis shed light on specific aspects of these challenges and offer insights into the complexities and dynamics of the artist manager relationship.

Participants, particularly Ava, shared accounts of abuse, maltreatment, and marginalisation experienced by women in the industry. These narratives highlight the need for increased gender diversity and inclusivity within the music management field to ensure the mental well-being and professional success of female professionals. The experiences of female managers in a predominantly male-centric industry reveal the presence of gender-related challenges. Instances of maltreatment and marginalisation within the male-dominated music industry raise concerns about the emotional well-being and mental health of female professionals. These narratives emphasise the need for increased awareness of gender-related issues and the promotion of a more inclusive and supportive environment. The experiences of female managers highlight the potential impacts of a lack of diversity in the music management sector.

Some participants, 42%, highlight the positive outcomes of open communication, and fostering a supportive environment. However, there's a duality of perspectives, with some managers prioritising their role as career supporters while others highlight holistic well-being. The findings stress the complex nature of managing artists mental health in creative contexts. The artists willingness to discuss their mental health issues within the artist manager relationship plays a significant role in shaping the dynamics of this relationship. This duality of perspectives further highlights the need for clear communication and boundary setting within the artist manager relationship to ensure both parties' well-being.

The final sub-theme addresses the challenges managers face in their roles, including financial constraints, limited label involvement, and the complexities of working as a creative with creative individuals. The findings suggest that a shift in power dynamics occurs when label involvement is limited, with managers taking on more responsibilities. Participants also highlighted the pressures faced by artist managers and the lack of recognition for their contributions. Raising questions about the balance between financial benefits and increased workloads for managers. The experiences of managers who transition from creative roles to managerial roles accentuates the need for a clear definition of creative control and responsibilities within the artist manager relationship. The lack of recognition and appreciation within the music management field also points to the importance of acknowledging and valuing the contributions of artist managers.

In addressing the theme of role dissonance within the artist manager relationship, HRM principles focused on motivational and satisfaction initiatives, as well as encouraging employee involvement, become pivotal. The challenges faced by artists was underlined, with 42% of managers pointing to industry-related factors, including heightened pressure, the male-dominated nature of the field, burnout, and broader accessibility issues. Concurrently, half of the participants expressed dissatisfaction with aspects of their roles as artist managers, citing financial constraints, limited label involvement, and the unique challenges of working as creatives within a creative industry. The concern raised by 50% of participants about limited label involvement stands out as a critical issue influencing power dynamics within the artist manager relationship, impacting not only the manager's satisfaction and motivation but also potentially hindering their active involvement in providing mental health support for artists. Drawing from HRM research, which highlights the interconnected nature of motivation, satisfaction, and overall well-being in the workplace, the study advocates for motivational and satisfaction initiatives and emphasises the importance of encouraging employee involvement as essential components in addressing the challenges and dissonance faced by artist managers in the music management sector (Kuo, 2013; Patwardhan et al., 2013).

### 5.4.4 Theme 4: Normalising Mental Health Conditions

The fourth and final theme signifies a favourable outlook regarding the developing and upcoming transformations within both the music management industry and the broader music sector. Findings reflect an optimistic perspective regarding transformations within the music management industry and the broader music sector, particularly concerning mental health awareness and industry development. However, they also highlight the complexities and challenges associated with these changes, underscoring the need for a comprehensive and proactive approach to address mental health issues in the industry.

A significant 50% of participants attributed the increase in conversations about mental health to social media, which provides artists with a platform to share their struggles. However, the perspective on social media's influence is complex. The nuanced view acknowledges that social media's impact on artists mental health is not unilaterally positive. Chloe and Liam pointed out adverse consequences resulting from artists engagement on social media. This may include cyberbullying, the pressures of

maintaining a curated online image, or the mental toll of constantly engaging with fans and critics. Additionally, Isabella highlighted the dual nature of social media, where it can both foster a culture of sharing and support while also enabling an 'oversharing' culture, which may not always be beneficial. It is not a simple case of it being entirely positive or negative. Instead, it highlights the need for a deeper understanding of how social media affects artists well-being.

Half of the participants discussed the positive changes happening in the industry, particularly related to mental health acknowledgement and the availability of well-being resources for artists. Another 50% reported a noticeable reduction in the stigma around open conversations about mental health in the music industry over the past 2-5 years. Ava linked the progress in gender equality in the industry to advancements in other sectors, suggesting that it's 'rubbing off' on the music industry. Adam echoed this, highlighting that industry evolution has been reactive, with issues becoming too significant to ignore. Collectively, these accounts emphasise that the music industry's attention to emotional well-being and support has been relatively delayed compared to other sectors. These perspective raises questions about the industry's commitment to the holistic well-being of artists and the sustainability of these changes over time.

These findings heighten the importance of continued efforts to destigmatise conversations around mental health and to provide resources and support for artists. While the industry's progress is positive, it is crucial to maintain momentum and ensure that these changes are not merely reactive but represent a genuine commitment to the emotional and mental well-being of those working within the music sector. Further research into the long-term impacts of these changes and the industry's response to mental health concerns is warranted.

This theme aligns with the HRM principle of organisational culture within the music management industry. As observed by 50% of participants, the recognition of transformations related to acknowledging mental health issues and increased resources for artists well-being prompts important considerations concerning organisational culture. While this shift represents a positive step towards addressing mental health concerns, two managers express caution, suggesting that these changes may be reactive rather than indicative of a genuine, sustained commitment to well-being within the industry. The acknowledgment of mental health issues and the allocation of resources for artists well-being can be viewed as integral elements contributing to a

positive and supportive organisational culture. However, the caution expressed highlights the need for a more comprehensive and proactive approach to foster a genuinely caring environment within the music management sector.

In the context of HRM principles, the establishment of an organisational culture characterised by a fundamental appreciation for values such as respect, trust, and cooperation are essential (Punyanunt-Carter and Wrench, 2012). Inherently intertwined with HRM principles, serving as a foundational element for fostering employee well-being by cultivating a positive and inclusive atmosphere. The connection between the theme and HRM principles emphasises the significance of organisational culture in addressing mental health concerns within the music management sector.

## 5.5 ARTIST MANAGER APPROACHES AND HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

Following the discussion of the overarching themes from the reflexive thematic analysis and discussion in Section 4.11, this section details the connection each approach type has with the HRM principles. By aligning insights with established HRM principles, these categories provide a flexible framework tailored to the diverse practices of artist managers. Illuminating the varying levels of managerial involvement and forming the foundation for the subsequent development of the AMMHTK.

### 5.5.1 Artist Manager Approaches Connection to HRM Principles

The reflexive thematic analysis revealed significant variations in managerial approaches to artist mental health support. As detailed in Section 4.11, these approaches were categorised into three distinct dimensions: 'Involvement', 'Action', 'Relationship-Type.' Rather than applying a single, static framework for all artist managers, this diversity highlighted the need for a flexible tool kit that could accommodate different management styles while promoting evidence-based practices.

The next section reviews how each category and approach types connect to HRM principles. These approach types and connections lead to the recommendations provided in the AMMHTK, which is discussed in detail in the following section, 5.6. Table Fifteen provides an overview the connection semi-structured interview questions, each approach category and title and related HRM principle that provides evidence for the suggested approach type.

### *Involvement*

This approach, based on responses to the second question of the semi-structured interview, evaluates the degree to which managers engage in mental health support using a scale from one to ten. Categorised into three levels, 'Low Involvement', 'Variable Involvement', and 'High Involvement.' This section of approach categories relates to HRM principles two-way communication, work-life balance, and artist involvement.

#### *Two-Way Communication*

The level of a managers preferred mental health involvement can impact the overall communication between artist and manager. Effective communication is a fundamental aspect of a manager's role within HRM (Andreu Perez et al., 2022; Miles, 1965; Punyanunt-Carter and Wrench, 2012; Zheng, 2015). Two-way communication, in the workplace helps reduce stress among employees, which positively influences levels of job satisfaction and helps prevent burnout (Singh and Singhi, 2015; Snyder, 2009). Effective communication is essential in artist management, as it fosters trust, collaboration, and mutual understanding between the manager and the artist (Andreu Perez et al., 2022). If a manager and artist are not communicating effectively, a manager may not be aware that an artist is undergoing a crisis. Without effective communication the manager may be unaware of signs leading to a mental health crisis. The manager's role is to essentially communicate the artists vision to the world, without communication within the relationship the artists overall success can be impacted negatively (Morrow, 2018; Watson, 2002). The AMMHTK discusses establishing transparent communication channels, allowing artists and managers to express concerns and actively participate in decision-making processes, aiming to foster a sense of inclusivity.

#### *Work-Life Balance*

A manager will not be able to assist with balancing an artist personal and professional life if they are not involved in their mental well-being. Organisations that cultivate a flexible work environment contribute to employee satisfaction and well-being (Wood, 2018). Maintaining a reliable work-life balance is a significant challenge for modern musicians due to the multidimensional nature of their career (Smith and Teague, 2015). While a manager may not prefer to be highly involved with an artist's mental health, this involvement can lead to managers having a better understanding of

what actions are stopping an artist from maintaining a healthy work-life balance. The AMMHTK highlights the value of implementing policies that promote work-life balance, contributing to overall satisfaction and well-being. The tool kit recommends setting specific work hours and distinguishing contact hours for artist manager interactions.

*Artist Involvement*

A manager's overall involvement level of an artist's mental well-being can impact the level of decision-making in the artist manager relationship. Involving an employee in work-related decision enhances well-being (Bond and Bunce, 2011; CIPD, 2019; Dobson et al., 2009; Landsbergis and Vivona-Vaughm, 1995). The nature of the artist manager relationship itself is collaborative, where the artistic vision and career development of both intersect to create a shared creative and personal strategy (Morrow, 2018). Despite this, managers tend to avoid involving the artist in business related discussions, this avoids the opportunity for an artist to in strengthen an individual's sense of well-being (Bond and Bunce, 2011; Landsbergis and Vivona-Vaughm, 1995; Dobson et al., 2009). The AMMHTK encourages managers to incorporate artists in decision making areas that can benefit their well-being through ensuring goals are shared and reflects their current workload.

### Action

This approach, related to responses to the third question, focuses on how managers react to mental health issues when they arise. 'No Action', 'Active Action', and 'Personal Action' provided information on the ways in which managers provided mental health care for their artists. Information was employed within the AMMHTK's recommendations based on HRM principles relating to motivation and transformational leadership.

*Motivation and Satisfaction*

Human resource management research acknowledges a fundamental relationship between employee motivation, satisfaction, and overall well-being within the workplace (Davidson and Yan, 2013; Ghosh and Satyawadi, 2012; Kuo, 2013; Patwardhan et al., 2013; Udin, 2024). Elements such as motivation and satisfaction are key facets of the   artist   manager   relationship,   especially within a   highly

competitive industry where access to external motivation can often be limited (Musgrave, 2014). A manager's preparedness for a mental health crisis correlates with a manager's ability to provide an artist with motivation initiatives. A manager who is not prepared for a mental health crisis, may also have a lack of preparation regarding initiatives to motivate artists. Participants motivations and incentives are based on the expectations of the artist manager relationship. Artists expect managers to support them through hard times, even at a personal cost. This dedication, while commendable, stresses the need for balanced approaches that safeguard the well-being of both artists and managers. The AMMHTK discusses varying recommendations for managers on how to motivate artists based on their level of preparation for a mental health crisis.

### Transformational Leadership

Employees behaviours originate from their supervisors' actions (Mayo, 1932). Artist managers should aim to align with aspects of a transformational leader. Aspects of a transformational leader include understanding motivation and behaviour, being sensitive to employee's needs, communicating effectively, and to encourage and empower employees (Bass, 1985; Bass and Riggio, 2006; Berson et al., 2015; Chen et al., 2003; Klug et al., 2018). In artist management, a collaborative and trust-based approach serves as a cornerstone, fostering an environment conducive to the artist's professional growth and long-term success (Gaudesi, 2016). A manager's level of preparedness for a mental health crisis correlates with leadership, a transformational leader has an action plan in place in case of a mental health crisis. The AMMHTK illustrates adopting aspects of a transformational leadership style. Leading to managers becoming more aware of their artists needs through effective communication. A transformational leadership style can encourage a healthy level of mental health involvement for managers.

### **Relationship-Type**

This category, derived from the fourth question, explores the nature of the artist manager relationship, assessing whether it is predominantly business-oriented, friendship-based, or a mix of both. Incorporating three approach types in the artist manager relationship, 'Friendship Relationship-Type', 'Mixed Relationship-Type' and 'Business Relationship-Type'. These approaches guide the tool kit's integration of social interaction and organisational culture.

*Social Interaction*

Social interaction and collaboration are an essential element within HRM research and well-being (Atkin and Brooks, 2021; Lappalainen et al., 2024). Human resource management research advocates for managers to encourage teamwork and consistently seek opportunities where teams can have increased autonomy and influence over their tasks and decisions (Miles, 1965; Punyanunt-Carter and Wrench, 2012). The social interaction between artist and manager is central in the artists well-being and overall success, it is vital that the artist and manager work closely together (Hull, 2021). The relationship type preferred by an artist manager directly reflects the amount of social interaction in the artist manager relationship. Managers who align with a 'Friendship Relationship-Type' prioritise social interactions outside of the workplace more than a Business Relationship manager. The AMMHTK discusses incorporating activities and sessions that encourage interaction. Assisting managers to build stronger, more trusting relationships with their artists. The tool kit provides varied approaches tailored to managers individual engagement levels.

*Organisational Culture*

A positive work culture or organisation, inherently intertwined with HRM principles, is critical to employee well-being and performance, employees working in positive organisation experience better mental health and lower burnout (Crawford et al., 2010; Dutton and Heaphy, 2008; Jarden et al., 2017). In artist management, there are not set office hours, formal hiring, or specific qualifications, this can lead to challenges like issues of artistic autonomy (Allen, 2022; Morrow, 2018). Creating safe working conditions, providing necessary support, and offering constructive feedback is vital for the artist's well-being and success. An artist manager relationship incorporating these values fosters well-being by cultivating a positive and inclusive atmosphere. The AMMHTK recommends prioritising job aid, physical working conditions, and performance feedback.

In summary, this section outlined how artist manager approaches to mental health were categorised into three areas, 'Involvement, 'Action', and 'Relationship Type.' Drawing on HRM principles, these categories reflect the varying levels of engagement, communication styles, crisis preparedness, and relational boundaries observed across participants. The next section presents the AMMHTK, where each

category contributes directly to the personalised recommendations, offering a customisable framework for supporting artist well-being in practice.

## 5.6    ARTIST MANAGER MENTAL HEALTH TOOL KIT

This section presents the AMMHTK, a flexible framework developed from the research findings. Rather than a singular solution, this tool kit is designed to be personalised for each manager. It consists of three sections, which reflect the questions in the survey that will guide their recommendations. The tool kit is underpinned by a core set of principles derived from past HRM research, which indicate that a particular approach may be more effective in fostering a healthy, sustainable relationship between artist and manager. While the tool kit offers a range of recommendations tailored to varying management styles, its development ultimately guides managers towards what research identifies as the suggested approach type.

Section 5.6.1 provides an overview of the AMMHTK's development and connection to broader research. Section 5.6.2 provides information on the tool kit implementation process. The next section, 5.6.3, outlines an example tool kit and its organisation. The final section, 5.6.4, reviews the recommendations section of the tool kit in detail, explaining its connection to data uncovered through reflexive thematic analysis, artist manager approaches, and HRM principles.

### 5.6.1 Artist Manager Mental Health Tool Kit Development

The AMMHTK was developed through the integration of three distinct research domains. First, the identified absence of HRM frameworks tailored to creative industries informed the development of the seven HRM principles. Second, empirical findings from the reflexive thematic analysis that provided contextual insights that shaped the AMMHTK's design. Third, established methodological approaches to tool kit development within research that guided the overall framework construction.

This AMMHTK was established based on research that examines the complex and dynamic nature of the music industry, where traditional HRM applications can be challenging to implement (Costello and Oliver, 2018; Burgess et al., 2021; Hennekam, 2022; Okechukwu, 2023; Opara, et al., 2019).

Existing HRM frameworks available for creative industries primarily cater to general management organisations, overlooking the distinctive nature of artist

management (Glow, 2010; Morrow, 2018). Unlike traditional corporate environments driven by financial productivity, creative industries operate on emotional, cultural, and artistic values, creating unique challenges that conventional HRM approaches fail to address (Davidson, 2004; Jogulu et al., 2017). The prevalence of short-term funding structures, project-based work, and the emotional labour demands inherent in creative work further distinguish these industries from traditional corporate settings (Cunningham, 2011; Throsby and Zednik, 2011).

Despite the expansion of HRM practices in major media firms such as Universal Music Group, Warner Music Group, and Sony Music Entertainment, smaller sectors like music management remain critically underrepresented in HRM research (Burgess et al., 2021; Okechukwu, 2023). This deficiency has resulted in calls for tailored HRM guidelines that better address the realities of creative work (Costello and Oliver, 2018).

In response, seven HRM principles specifically tailored to artist management in the music industry were developed from a review of approximately forty studies. These principles bridge conventional HRM theory with the unique operational characteristics of creative industries, acknowledging the distinct challenges of creative labour, fluctuating career stability, and the emotional demands of artistic work (Davidson, 2004; Glow, 2010; Jogulu et al., 2017; Throsby and Zednik, 2011). The principles serve as the theoretical foundation for the AMMHTK's recommendations, ensuring that each intervention is grounded in both established HRM research and the specific contextual needs of artist manager relationships within the music industry.

Two HRM terms were changed from the original HRM principles list to reflect artist management. Employee engagement was changed to artist engagement. Leadership styles was changed to transformational leadership to reflect the recommendations providing supportive a transformational leadership style.

Data from the reflexive thematic analysis also directly informed the AMMHTK's design. The interviews revealed a range of approaches that managers adopt when addressing artist mental health. Participants, such as John, described establishing firm boundaries. Others, like Maria, adopted a more empathetic approach. Differences also emerged in the ways managers facilitated professional support. Chloe and Malik shared how they connect artists with mental health resources, other managers preferred to distance themselves from the therapeutic process John stated, 'I am not a therapist.'

Managers expressed differing perceptions of their roles. Maria and Isabella drew parallels to a romantic partnership. In contrast, John shared how he felt like a 'parent rather than manager.' Boundary-setting issues were also described when the relationship become too friendly, this was discussed by Taylor and Morgan who avoided managing personal friends. Several managers also discussed their own mental health management. Isabella and Morgan both shared that due to extensive mental health support, they had to withdraw from the industry and then reformat their approach to management.

These variances established a framework for the artist manager approach type categories, 'Involvement', 'Action', and 'Relationship-Type.' These approach types shaped the AMMHTK's personalised recommendations design section and content. Customisation ensures that managers receive support strategies aligned with their preferred style and current circumstances, enhancing the tool kit's relevance and practical utility. The approach types were developed by drawing on three guiding questions from the semi-structured interviews and were aligned with both the adapted HRM principles and key findings from artist management literature. Each principle was cross analysed with the interview data to identify patterns and ensure that the resulting recommendations were grounded in both empirical evidence and relevant organisational practices.

The format and inspiration for the AMMHTK evolved from previous qualitative research that sought to develop tool kit resources from data findings. Tool kits are a commonly developed from qualitative research (Gkeredakis et al., 2017; Harwood et al., 2018). In 2018, a team of researchers developed a 'Living Well Toolkit' based on research that aimed to explore the perspectives of people with a long-term neurological condition, and of their family, clinicians and other stakeholders through two-way communication, self-management and coordination of long-term care and enhance their quality of their care processes. The format used a prompt-card format, which encouraged the use of incorporating elements of the AMMHTK which reviewed situations where mental health care can be incorporated in a real-world setting. The tool kit underwent a pilot trial, where feedback was used to simplify language and enhance context relevance (Harwood et al., 2018). The pilot trial encouraged the use of a two-part pilot study to enhance the AMMHTK.

Through semi-structured interviews, a 2017 qualitative study of redesign projects in NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups produced evidence of distinct 'capabilities' needs. Data was used to develop a tool kit aimed at improving the use of research evidence, data, and other forms of knowledge to make informed decisions and targeted to a certain demographic to provide care that was absent, which is reflected in the AMMHTK through providing specific recommendations (Gkeredakis et al., 2017). The 2017 tool kit was developed through two workshops with stakeholders to be revised to enhance clarity and relevance. This process was also reflected through the two-part pilot study conducted to enhance the AMMHTK.

### 5.6.2 Tool Kit Implementation Process

The implementation of the AMMHTK follows a structured three-step process. The first step involves an entry survey consisting of three questions. These questions assess a manager's preferred level of mental health involvement, the presence of an existing action plan, and their relationship style with the artist.

This process was tested with a UK artist manager, and findings from the two-part pilot study highlighted the necessity of a personalised approach to the AMMHTK's implementation. Initially, the tool kit was envisioned as a self-guided digital application that would generate recommendations based on a manager's responses. However, the process revealed that managers required clarification and discussion throughout the process, particularly regarding implementation. As a result, it became evident that the tool kit is most effective when facilitated through a guided discussion with a trained professional rather than relying on automated recommendations.

To ensure this level of support, the entry survey will be conducted in person or via an online platform such as Zoom. Following this, managers will receive their customised AMMHTK, which is structured around pre-curated responses linked to their survey answers. Each question offers three response options, with corresponding recommendations designed to align with the manager's approach and provide actionable steps to enhance their mental health support strategies. Once the tool kit has been provided, two follow-up sessions will be scheduled to address any questions, assess progress, and refine the implementation process. Responses from managers will also be collected and analysed to further enhance the tool kit's effectiveness over time.

Importantly, managers will not be explicitly informed of the specific category they fall into, to prevent any negative perceptions that may arise from labelling, particularly in cases where a manager's approach is classified as having limited prior involvement or preparation. Instead, the focus remains on providing constructive recommendations tailored to their current practices, ensuring that the AMMHTK serves as a supportive resource rather than a judgmental assessment.

The next section outlines the AMMHTK in its entirety and provides details on its organisation and contents.

### 5.6.3 Artist Manager Mental Health Tool Kit Example and Organisation

The AMMHTK is a comprehensive four-page resource designed to provide structured guidance and support for artist managers. The core component of the tool kit, presented on the first page, consists of tailored recommendations based on HRM principles related to employee well-being. These recommendations are categorised into three key areas, 'Involvement', 'Action', and 'Relationship-Type.' The content of this section is dynamically generated based on a manager's responses to the entry survey, ensuring a personalised approach aligned with the most relevant HRM principles.

The development of this section was guided by a triangulation of HRM principles, artist management research, and results from the reflexive thematic analysis. It is the only section that incorporates original data, while the subsequent sections provide additional research-based information and practical tools for implementation. The example page provided outlines recommendations that would be provided for a manager that falls under the suggested categories, 'Varied Involvement', 'Active Action', and 'Mixed Relationship-Type.'

The second page of the AMMHTK expands on the transformational leadership style, which is referenced throughout the tool kit. Given its relevance to effective artist management, this section provides a detailed explanation of transformational leadership characteristics and their practical applications (Bass, 1985; Bass and Riggio, 2006; Berson et al., 2015; Burns, 1978; Chen et al., 2003; Klug et al., 2018; Lavigna and Paarlberg, 2010; Trottier et al., 2008; Udin, 2024).

The third page introduces a five-part action plan. Which is informed by two primary sources, MMF's 'Music Managers Guide to Mental Health' (2021), which

outlines an eight-step approach for supporting artists experiencing anxiety or depression, and qualitative findings, which revealed that managers who had an existing action plan followed a similar structure (Parker, 2021).

The fourth page of the AMMHTK provides a comprehensive directory of UK mental health resources for artist managers. Including charitable organisations, music industry-specific mental health practitioners, and a dedicated text support line for musicians, ensuring managers have direct access to relevant professional support services.

A sample AMMHTK can be viewed on the following pages in Figures Six through Nine. Since the first section is personalised to each manager's responses, the example tables illustrate the recommended approach the suggested management style, serving as a reference point for best practices.

The next section outlines the specific recommendations provided to artist managers based on their responses.

Figure 6: Artist Manager Mental Health Tool Kit Example Page One

**Involvement**

**Artist Manager Mental Health Tool Kit**

**Two-Way Communication**

- Establish transparent communication channels, allowing artists express concerns.
- Establish regularly scheduled well-being check-in meetings to discuss artist's work load.
- Hold initial check-in at beginning of management. Increase these check-in's over time. Every 6 months for new artists and every 2-3 months for artists you have been working with 2+ years.

**Work-Life Balance**

- Work alongside artist to ensure they are trying to maintain a healthy work-life balance.
- Address workload decrease when needed.
- Look out for warning signs of stress impacting the body. See Page 3.
- Empower artist's to take ownership of their mental health through coping strategies that resonate with them personally.

**Artist Involvement**

- Involve artists in developing strategies for their mental health support to ensure their current workload and objectives align with their career goals.
- Foster collaborative decision-making processes to discuss shared goals and establish join accountability.
- Encourage artists to participate in discussions about decisions that affect them and their well-being.

**Transformational Leadership**

- Display aspects of a transformational leadership style. See Page 2.
- Formalise action plan in case of mental health crisis.
- Engage in pre-emptive conversations regarding potential triggers.
- Develop a shared framework for managing these challenges and professional career.
- Provide artist with mental health resrouces if necessary. See Page 4.

**Motivation and Satisfaction**

- Implement initiatives to recognise artists contributions.
- This can include an a handwritten note or small gift when an artist overcomes and objective or career achievement.
- Provide constructive feedback but also engage in behaviours that actively support the artist.

**Action**

**Relationship Type**

**Social Interaction**

- Incorporate shared activities such as outings to a concert or art exhibition.
- Increase social engagement with artist's over duration of working relationship.
- Ensure that along with social interactions, boundaries are set around business discussions. Set work-hours where you are available for work-related conversations.

**Organisational Culture**

- Promote a culture of transparency and support by encouraging conversations about mental health support and well-being.
- Adjust relationship type for setting. Adapt to a more friendly tone for social settings and vice versa.
- Establish clear boundaries between professional and social discussions/settings.

Figure 7: Transformational Leadership Definition

> **Transformational Leadership**

| **What is a transformational leader?** |
| --- |
| A transformational leader functions as an ethical role model through communicating a vision for the future, challenges employees to be more motivated. Aspects of a transformational leader include understanding motivation and behaviour, being sensitive to employee's needs, communicating effectively, and to encourage and empower employees. Incorporating a transformational leadership style into the artist manager relationship can significantly benefit the artist's overall well-being. |

Source: (Bass, 1985; Bass and Riggio, 2006; Berson et al., 2015; Burns, 1978; Chen et al., 2003; Klug et al., 2018; Lavigna and Paarlberg, 2010; Trottier et al., 2008; Udin, 2024).

Figure 8: Five-Part Action Plan

> **Action Plan**

| **Five-Part Action Plan** |
| --- |
| 1. *Recognise early signs of distress:* Emotional withdrawal, sharing that they feel overwhelmed, sudden lack in motivation. <br> 2. *Create Space for Conversation:* Schedule time to discuss potential mental health distress and express concern. <br> 3. *Assess Situation:* Ask open-ended questions, determine if issue can be resolved internally, such as changes in workload, scheduled check-ins or other manager supported adjustments. <br> 4. *Evaluate Capacity & Identify Your Scope:* Address issues that can be resolved internally, discuss if serious mental health issues are arising (E.g. Persistent distress, trauma or harm). <br> 5. *Signpost to Mental Health Professional:* If issues cannot be solved internally, have a list of trusted mental health resources available (E.g. Therapists, counsellors, or mental health charities). |

Source: (Parker, 2021)

Figure 9: UK Mental Health Resources for Artists and Managers

| | **UK Mental Health Resources** | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **TITLE** | **TYPE** | **DEFINITION** | **CONTACT** |
| Music Minds Matter | Support Line and service | Help Musicians dedicated mental health support line and service for the whole UK music community. | 0808 802 8008 |
| Help Musicians UK | Charity Organisation | Leading UK charity for musicians of all genres, from starting through to retirement. | 020 7239 9101 |
| Music Industry Therapist Collective | Therapist Collective | All of their practitioners previously worked in the music business before retraining as health professionals. | info@musicindustry therapists.com. |
| Key Changes | Charity Organisation | The music industry-focused mental health recovery services in hospitals and the community for musicians affected by mental health conditions. | 020 7633 0533 |
| SHOUT | Text Support Line | Support is delivered by volunteers who are trained to offer an immediate response. | Text MUSIC to 85258 |

### 5.6.4 Artist Manager Mental Health Tool Kit Recommendations

The following section presents the recommendations that are included on the first page of the AMMHTK. These recommendations are derived from HRM principles, existing research on artist management, and results from the reflexive thematic analysis. Recommendations are categorised based on management approach type and the corresponding HRM principle to ensure alignment with established best practices in artist support and well-being. Initially, an overview will be presented that outlines the tool kit's general suggestions. Then, personalised recommendations are presented for each section of the tool kit based on each approach type.

### *Section One: Involvement*

The first section of the AMMHTK provides recommendations based on the managers responses to question one from the entry survey. This question aimed to

gauge managers overall preferred mental health involvement levels. Based on managers responses, different recommendations are provided under section one of the first page of the tool kit. Within this section, there are three areas that provide recommendations. These areas are based on HRM principles, the first area is two-way communication, the second is work-life balance, and the third is artist involvement. These recommendations all centre around the managers level of involvement with the artist's mental health and can impact the ability to initiate effective communication in the artist manager relationship, impact the artist's work-life balance, and enhance the artist's overall involvement.

The first area of the first section of the AMMHTK, under two-way communication highlights the necessity of establishing transparent communication channels that can significantly enhance both individual and collective productivity. To achieve this, managers are encouraged to facilitate consistent check-in meetings specifically designed to address various aspects such as artists well-being, workload management, and the alignment of shared goals. These check-in meetings be routine and thoughtfully structured with a clear and concise agenda. The structure serves to encourage artists to express their concerns or provide feedback on the managerial approach in a constructive manner. By doing so, an environment of mutual respect and understanding is cultivated, which is essential for effective teamwork and professional growth.

The second area of the 'Involvement' section of the AMMHTK addresses artists work-life balance. Establishing a strong work-life balance is imperative in artist management to prevent burnout and sustain long-term creative output. Managers play a key role in shaping an artist's schedule, ensuring rest periods, and accommodating personal needs. Including setting clear boundaries, offering flexible work arrangements, and proactively preventing overcommitment. The tool kit highlights the necessity of adapting work-life balance strategies to the nature of the artist manager relationship. Different management styles require different approaches to maintaining well-being, ensuring both professional efficiency and emotional support.

The third area within the first section of the AMMHTK discusses artist involvement. Incorporating artists in decision making processes is an important aspect in enhancing the overall artist manager relationship and the artists success. The tool kit encourages managers to incorporate the artist into the role but set clear distinctions

for each member of the relationship. Managers are also encouraged to engage artists with decision-making to enhance their knowledge of the artist's workload and goals to ensure these elements are aligned. Additionally, the kit promotes providing opportunities for artists to actively contribute to shaping and resolving issues, empowering them, and strengthening their commitment. It is recommended that an artist manager has an action plan in place in case of a mental health crisis, which is the approach titled 'Active Action.'

Within the differing approaches, the suggested approach type is 'Varied Involvement', which is when the artist manager to increase involvement over time. Compared to the other sides of the spectrum of approaches, a 'Low Involvement' can lead to lack of communication, work-life imbalance, and artist involvement while a high level of mental health involvement can impact the artist manager's work-life balance and ability to communicate their needs to the artist.

The next section reviews the personal adaptations to each recommendation based on the managers responses the entry survey.

*Low Involvement*

These managers tend to avoid deep involvement in mental health issues, focusing more on the artists careers. The AMMHTK recommends they do this through gradually increasing their mental health participation. By doing so, they can build a supportive environment that acknowledges and addresses the mental health concerns of their team members, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and understanding workplace culture.

Two-Way Communication: The AMMHTK suggests that even in a less involved approach, maintaining an open line of communication is essential. For these managers, the tool kit recommends managers to create opportunities for artists to initiate conversation. Including establishing regular check-ins or suggesting non-intrusive methods for artists to reach out, such as anonymous feedback forms or designated 'mental health hours' where they can speak freely without fear of judgment. The aim is to ensure artists feel supported while knowing they have the autonomy to share when they are ready. By doing so, the manager can respect the artist's need for space while ensuring that the artist knows support is available if needed.

Work-Life Balance: Engaging in active conversations with artists about their workload is vital for managers with 'Low Involvement.' Managers who have less involvement with artist's well-being may lack awareness of artist's current workload which will impact their work-life balance. Lack of mental health involvement can impact the artist through lack of awareness of an increased workload or personal situations that may impact their professional work. Without this involvement, awareness of a mental health crisis may not be present for a manager within this category. Managers within this category should schedule in discussions regarding workload to ensure artists needs are met.

Artist Involvement: The AMMHTK encourages 'Low Involvement' managers to include artists in discussions about their roles and responsibilities, aiming to foster a sense of ownership and engagement. This could be done through facilitating collaborative decision-making processes, such as developing joint goals or shared accountability systems, which can foster a more engaged and motivated working relationship. Involvement can enhance motivation and satisfaction by ensuring that artists feel valued and heard, despite the manager's more distant approach to mental health. Encouraging artists to actively participate in discussions about their roles and mental health needs can significantly enhance their sense of ownership and accountability.

*High Involvement*

'High Involvement' refers to managers with an elevated level of mental health involvement, scoring between five and ten. These managers actively integrate mental health considerations into their planning and interactions with artists. These managers are encouraged to optimise mental health conversations to ensure their well-being is not negatively impacted by a high level of involvement.

Two-Way Communication: Managers within this category could designate specific times for mental health discussions and limit access outside of those hours unless in crisis situations. Creating a structured framework for support while ensuring the manager's own mental health is prioritised, allowing them to be fully present and effective when they do engage with the artist. 'High Involvement' managers would benefit from this style by providing limits to their involvement that can cause them distress. Having a high level of engagement may cause emotional distress to the manager and this could ultimately impact the artist's ability to access support or hinder

the artist manager relationship. Prior to these sessions, managers should prepare by researching relevant resources such as local mental health services, workshops, or self-care strategies to provide tangible support.

Work-Life Balance: Managers within the 'High Involvement' category are encouraged to ensure that an artist is actively maintaining their work-life balance. Managers in this category are likely to have conversation with artists relating to their mental health. Incorporating this information could better assist with the artists care and addressing their needs. These managers may find themselves feeling overwhelmed through active involvement, due to this they are recommended to ensure that work-life balance is not overwhelmed by mental health initiatives. For example, a manager may suggest to an artist numerous recommendations when they need time off from their professional roles.

Artist Involvement: Managers with a high level of mental health involvement may already be involving artists in decision-making processes. These managers are encouraged to continue these conversations but monitor which are most important to the artist. A manager in this category will want to involve artists but this involvement could cause them distress over time. Ensuring a balance within artist involvement is essential under this management type.

### Varied Involvement

'Variable Involvement' describes managers whose involvement varies depending on the artist. These managers adjust their level of involvement based on the specific needs and the duration of their relationship with each artist. As the suggested approach type, managers are provided with recommendations that underline HRM principles relating to two-way communication, work-life balance, and artist involvement.

Two-Way Communication: Varied managers are encouraged to exhibit two-way communication within the artist manager relationship. Effective two-way communication can enhance conversations regarding the artist's well-being. Managers in this category are encouraged to schedule check-in meetings regarding artist's well-being that increase over time working with the artist. Managers are also recommended to change this duration based on the artist. For example, if an artist has underlying mental health conditions these check-ins should be more regular. Managers are encouraged to have an initial well-being check-in at the start of the relationship to

address needs and any well-being related goals. The AMMHTK recommends managers hold a well-being check-in every six months for an artist within the first two years of management. As the artist manager relationship and artists career progress meetings are suggested to be conducted every three months. By engaging in active conversations regarding well-being that increase over time, managers can be actively aware in the artists ongoing needs that change as their career develops.

Work-Life Balance: Managers can ensure that they are in the best position to maintain a healthy work-life balance. Assessing and addressing an artist's work-life balance is vital for artists at an early and later relationship stage. Along with enhancing two-way communication through well-being check-ins, variable managers should actively work towards addressing musician's well-being needs. These needs may be addressed in the check-in meetings, despite this artist managers should be aware of warning signs. The AMMHTK provides information regarding signs and symptoms of stress impacting the body. Including becoming irritable, headaches, shallow breathing, and avoiding difficult situations (Parker, 2021). Awareness of signs, mental health resources, and regular well-being check-in's provides managers with ongoing support for artists. Additionally, managers should empower artists to take ownership of their mental health by encouraging them to explore coping strategies that resonate personally. This could be supplemented by workshops on self-care practices, mindfulness techniques, or stress management that the artist can choose to engage with, reinforcing a culture of support and resilience.

Artist Involvement: Involving artists in the development of their mental health support strategies fosters a shared sense of responsibility, which enhances their motivation and commitment to their own well-being. A collaborative approach could involve creating joint action plans or goal-setting sessions where artists outline their mental health needs and preferences. The AMMHTK recommends that managers foster collaborative decision-making processes, such as setting shared goals or establishing systems of joint accountability. Strengthening engagement and motivation within the working relationship. Encouraging artists to participate in meaningful discussions about decisions that affect them can enhance their awareness of how they perceive the connection between workload and work-life balance. Ensuring that artists have an active role in shaping decisions that impact their careers and overall well-being.

***Section Two: Action***

The second section of the first page of the AMMHTK is titled 'Action' and this portion provides managers with recommendations based on the second entry survey questions, which aimed to identify managers preparation level for a mental health crisis.

In section two of the first page of the AMMHTK there are two areas that provide recommendations based on the HRM principles, these areas are transformational leadership and motivation and satisfaction. The preparation of a manager in case of a mental health crisis reflects the managers overall leadership style and the support of providing artists with motivation incentives.

Within the artist manager relationship, a transformational leadership style involves promoting trust, open communication, and a shared vision, fostering a supportive and growth-oriented dynamic. By aligning with the elements of HRM principles managers can adopt aspects of transformational leadership to enhance their artist's well-being while maintaining professional boundaries (Bass, 1985; Bass and Riggio, 2006; Berson et al., 2015; Chen et al., 2003; Diskienė et al., 2021b; Klug et al., 2018). Wiseman and McKeown's (2010) concept of the 'Multiplier' reinforces this approach by encouraging leaders to amplify the strengths of others, fostering safe yet intellectually demanding environments, and promoting open contribution without fear of failure. Artist managers who embrace this mindset act not only as strategic leaders but also as 'Talent Magnets,' recognising and naming their artists unique capabilities.

Transformational leadership within the artist manager relationship enhances communication, supports mental health, and nurtures artist growth while safeguarding the well-being of both the manager and the artist. By understanding and implementing these strategies, managers can not only improve their leadership capabilities but also contribute to a healthier, more productive workplace environment for themselves and their team members.

The AMMHTK discusses the implementation of initiatives to recognise artists and managers contributions and addresses factors contributing to motivation, aiming to enhancing overall well-being (Bond and Bunce, 2011; Dobson et al., 2009; Landsbergis and Vivona-Vaughm, 1995). This can take many forms, from acknowledging an artist's creative milestones to providing personalised

encouragement. Managers should actively integrate elements of rewards and demonstrate appreciation in their practice.

Within the three varied approach types, it is recommended that an artist manager has an action plan in place, which is 'Active Action.' This approach aligns with aspects of transformational leadership and promotes management styles that incorporate motivation initiatives to enhance artist motivation.

*No Action*

Managers who fall under the category of 'No Action' do not have an action plan in place in case an artist undergoes a mental health crisis. They prefer to give artists space to handle their issues independently. Managers should have a strong plan in place to address any mental health issues that the artist might bring up, which should include a list of local mental health resources and emergency contacts to share during these discussions. Preparation can alleviate anxiety for both parties and promote a more constructive dialogue.

Transformational Leadership: This leadership style encourages managers to inspire and motivate their artists through shared visions and supportive actions. By consistently communicating their commitment to the artist's overall well-being, even during times of reduced engagement, managers can foster a sense of security. This approach might involve developing a personalised mental health action plan with the artist, outlining potential triggers and coping strategies, which the artist can refer to independently when needed. Having prepared action plans and clear follow-up steps will also ensure that managers can provide immediate support if issues arise.

Motivation and Satisfaction: Since these managers may not have established frameworks for mental health intervention, actively recognising and celebrating milestones provides a sense of stability and encouragement, compensating for the lack of structured emotional support. These managers should focus on low effort but meaningful gestures, such as verbal praise during meetings, spontaneous messages of encouragement, or social media acknowledgments. Additionally, managers should consistently recognise and celebrate the artist's achievements through personalised acknowledgements or public recognition during meetings. For example, a manager can write a note to congratulate an artist on completing an album, this would acknowledge the significance of the accomplishment and reinforce the artists motivation. By prioritising motivation and job satisfaction within the artist manager dynamic,

managers can help foster an environment that sustains an artist's enthusiasm, resilience, and long-term career fulfilment. Fostering a positive working relationship and reinforcing the importance of mental health and well-being as integral components of the artist's journey.

*Personal Action*

'Personal Action' managers do not have a set plan but instead share their personal experiences based on what has worked for them in the past when an artist is facing a mental health crisis or well-being issues. While this approach can foster a strong, empathetic connection, it may also risk overstepping boundaries or imposing the manager's perspective on the artist. The AMMHTK advises that while personal advice can be valuable, it should be balanced with the artist's own perspectives and needs. Encouraging artists to share their thoughts and proposed solutions not only promotes motivation and engagement but also strengthens the collaborative nature of the relationship.

Transformational Leadership: While a manager may not have an action in place, they may still be displaying transformational leadership strategies. Regardless, managers are advised to follow the action plan that is detailed in the AMMHTK and signpost to professionals if needed, which are also supplied in the tool kit. Elements of a transformational leader include genuinely caring about an employee and prioritising goals. Having a plan in place to address any mental health issues will demonstrate to the artist that their concerns are taken seriously and cared for, fostering trust and a sense of safety. Through preparing for a potential crisis a manager can implement elements of a transformational leadership style.

Motivation and Satisfaction: 'Personal Action' managers base their approach on instinct and past interactions rather than structured planning. While this can lead to strong personal relationships, it may also result in inconsistencies in motivation and support, particularly when an artist requires a more tailored or evolving approach. Since their strategies are experience based, they may unintentionally overlook the evolving motivational needs of different artists. Integrating personalised rewards ensures their support remains dynamic and relevant rather than solely dependent on past methods. These managers should incorporate handwritten notes, personalised video messages, or exclusive celebrations, such as a dinner when an album is completed. Since they already rely on personal connection, these intimate and

individualised acknowledgments will reinforce motivation without feeling forced or transactional.

*Active Action*

These managers have a set plan in place. These managers typically follow a structured approach, including initial conversations with the artist, determining the severity of the issue, and signposting to professionals if necessary. Having an action plan in place is the suggested approach, managers are provided further recommendations to ensure preparation for artists well-being.

Transformational Leadership: Having an action plan in place displays characteristics of a transformational leader. The AMMHTK builds on this by encouraging managers to formalise these strategies, ensuring that they are not just reactive but also proactive. This can be achieved by initiating pre-emptive conversations about potential mental health triggers or stressors that artists might face, setting a tone of openness and trust. Establishing a shared framework for managing these challenges, such as developing a mutual understanding of signs indicating when support may be needed, allows for a more responsive environment. Managers should also make use of the tool kit to assess mental health concerns regularly and, when necessary, provide the artist with information about professional resources available in the local area, demonstrating a proactive commitment to their well-being.

A fundamental aspect of this leadership style involves managers actively engaged in their artists mental health yet recognising the importance of setting boundaries to prevent personal distress. Balance ensures that their involvement remains supportive and does not impact their personal well-being. Encouraging a culture of mutual respect and accountability within the artist manager relationship helps in maintaining a healthy equilibrium between professional duties and personal well-being. Balance is not only essential for the artist's growth but also for the manager's ability to lead effectively without compromising their own mental health. By integrating key principles of transformational leadership, such as trust, sensitivity, and inspiration, these managers can foster a nurturing work environment.

Motivation and Satisfaction: 'Active Involvement' managers already demonstrate a proactive leadership style and likely have clear mental health intervention strategies in place. However, a structured approach can sometimes feel overly procedural, and artists may benefit from additional efforts to make motivation

feel more personal and emotionally engaging. Ensuring that encouragement feels personal rather than a management strategy helps sustain genuine motivation and long-term satisfaction. For example, a handwritten note when an artist overcomes a personal objective relating to their career or a small gift for achieving a personal milestone. Along with motivating artists, managers should consistently provide constructive feedback but also engage in behaviours that inspire and motivate the artist. For example, if an artist is struggling with a project, the manager might offer encouragement and suggest creative approaches to overcome obstacles, demonstrating a commitment to the artist's growth and well-being.

These managers should implement scheduled milestone recognitions, such as structured reflection meetings after major career moments, dedicated social media appreciation posts, or surprise rewards such as a plaque to note a major achievement. These structured but thoughtful recognitions help sustain motivation while complementing their existing organised management style. Encouraging a culture of mutual respect and accountability within the artist manager relationship can help maintain a healthy balance between professional responsibilities and personal well-being.

### Section Three: Relationship-Types

The final section of the first page of the AMMHTK reviews managers overall relationship type. Within this section there are two correlating HRM principles, social interaction and organisational culture. The relationship type between artist and manager impacts their amount of social interaction outside of the workplace and the overall culture of the artist manager relationship.

The varied levels of mental health involvement among managers highlight a significant challenge, there is no clear understanding of the optimal level of involvement necessary to maintain a mutually healthy relationship between managers and artists. The AMMHTK, drawing from these insights, highlights the importance of defining clear boundaries within the artist manager relationship. Which is essential for creating a sustainable and supportive environment where both parties understand their roles and expectations. Establishing boundaries ensures that both the artist and manager know the limits of their responsibilities, preventing potential misunderstandings or conflicts.

The AMMHTK recommends that interaction with artists beyond the business setting. Outings or teambuilding activities foster a sense of community and trust. These activities allow artists to learn more about managers and humanise their roles. Bonding can occur in various settings, from lunch to cooking classes or escape rooms. Managers should regularly discuss non-business topics, such as personal lives, in unique environments to promote positive social interactions. Recognising varying levels of mental health involvement, the tool kit recommends specific activities to enhance social interaction between managers and artists.

To promote a healthy organisational culture within the artist manager relationship, managers should provide artists with support within and outside of the business setting, it is important for managers to maintain professional boundaries, while offering personal support when personal issues affect the artist's professional life. Promoting healthy working conditions is also important, relating to the artist's workload and scheduling demands. When an artist is in mental health distress, the manager should have accessible resources to provide adequate job aid when necessary. Promoting a positive organisational culture within the artist management relationship can encourage an environment where and artist feels safe to express their concerns and share in their overall career goals. Prioritising physical working conditions and job aid creates a positive and inclusive atmosphere for artists and managers. The AMMHTK discusses prioritising physical working conditions, job aid, and performance feedback, creating a positive and inclusive atmosphere for artists and managers.

The suggested approach for an artist manager is to blend the roles of friend, employee, and superior. This involves balancing professional responsibilities with a personal comprehension of the artist's needs. Since a mixed relationship may lead to unspoken expectations, managers should initiate regular conversations about stress levels and adjust workloads accordingly. Managers should maintain a clear schedule but allow for adjustments based on the artist's personal needs. Due to both the positives and negatives of relationship type and the unique nature of the artist manager relationship, managers are encouraged to portray both elements of a friendship and a professional relationship. Based on past HRM research regarding the positive impacts of increasing social interaction and promoting a positive organisational culture support this narrative.

*Friendship Relationship-Type*

Managers within this category have a friendly relationship with their artists and are likely to engage in more social interactions outside of the business setting. The AMMHTK suggests establishing boundaries like specific work hours and contact times. Structure provides managers with safeguards to protect their mental well-being while maintaining the relationship dynamic.

Social Interaction: Friendship-based managers often operate in a highly personal, informal dynamic where work and personal life blend. Managers are encouraged to set specific office hours and establish boundaries to ensure a clear distinction between personal and professional interactions. While the artist and manager may already spend personal time together, the AMMHTK recommends incorporating non-work activities that promote relaxation self-care, such as a hike or have a non-work-related jam session. Setting clear boundaries regarding work hours and communication times is crucial in maintaining a professional atmosphere. Establishing specific 'office hours' for work-related discussions while allowing for more flexible personal interactions can help ensure that the personal connection does not interfere with business-related tasks. For instance, managers might agree to limit work-related texts or emails outside of designated hours, while still maintaining a friendship through informal chats or social outings. Boundaries help to prevent the overlap of personal and professional spheres, ensuring that both aspects are respected.

Organisational Culture: Managers within the friendship approach should focus on job aid initiatives and performance feedback in addition to focusing on interpersonal dynamics. It is essential for managers to concentrate on the professional development of the artist. Including providing access to workshops, mentoring opportunities, and resources for skill enhancement, which contribute to the artist's growth and career progression. Conducting regular performance reviews that focus on constructive feedback and growth rather than solely on business metrics can further reinforce the importance of professional development within a friendship-based relationship. Such feedback should be framed positively, focusing on the artist's strengths while addressing areas for improvement in a supportive manner. Nurturing the professional capabilities of the artist and maintaining mutual respect, ensuring that the relationship remains productive despite its personal dimensions.

*Business Relationship-Type*

Professional approach type managers maintain a strictly professional relationship. They focus on business aspects to protect both their own and the artists well-being. Managers with a business-oriented relationship are likely already setting boundaries within their interactions. In a strictly professional relationship, managers might find it beneficial to engage in occasional non-business-related discussions to build emotional rapport. For these managers the challenge lies in fostering trust and clear communication without a foundation of friendship.

Social Interaction: These meetings can be structured to include a mix of formal agenda items, such as career progression and upcoming projects, with casual activities like team-building exercises or creative workshops. A dual approach fosters a sense of companionship while allowing space for more informal discussions that might reveal underlying issues. For example, incorporating activities such as brainstorming sessions for new music or fun challenges can stimulate creativity and conversation, encouraging artists to express any non-work-related stressors in a more relaxed setting. Managers who may naturally distance themselves from team interactions, it is beneficial to schedule regular meetings and engage in low-pressure activities. Such initiatives can help them maintain ongoing connections with their artists, ensuring they remain approachable and informed about their team's well-being. These activities might include team lunches or casual check-ins, which can create a more relaxed atmosphere conducive to open communication.

Initiating casual conversations about topics of mutual interest such as hobbies, current events, or shared passions can help create a foundation for trust and open communication. For instance, managers could take the initiative to share personal anecdotes that relate to broader industry experiences, which can humanise them and encourage artists to share about their experiences in return. Additionally, the AMMHTK recommends managers to schedule regular meetings that include discussions about workload, creative pacing, and stress management, rather than relying on informal check-ins. Instead of relying on personal rapport to assess exhaustion, these managers should use a policy-driven approach, such as mandating rest days following intense work periods.

Organisational Culture: Business-oriented managers should ensure artists experience positive physical working conditions and develop trust with their managers. A lack of friendship in the artist manager relationship might lead to a lack of closeness, potentially impacting the organisational culture and the artist's comfort in sharing concerns about their physical work environment. Ensuring that artists have positive physical working conditions is vital, even within the confines of a more formal, business-focused relationship. Managers should strive to create a workspace that is not only conducive to productivity but also promotes well-being, such as ensuring comfortable working environments and access to mental health resources. This could involve providing quiet spaces for relaxation, promoting a healthy work-life balance through flexible scheduling, or facilitating access to professional mental health services. By establishing an environment of trust and reliability is key; managers can accomplish this by maintaining clear communication about expectations, deadlines, and support mechanisms. Clarity helps artists feel secure in their roles, encouraging them to approach their managers with any mental health concerns, knowing they will receive appropriate and timely support.

Without this personal connection, artists may struggle to understand the manager's needs, and their own vision may not be effectively conveyed. Unlike managers who mix business with friendship, these managers may not have the same informal check-ins or emotional rapport to naturally identify when an artist is struggling.

*Mixed Relationship-Type*

Mixed approach managers describe their relationship as a blend of business and friendship. They balance professional responsibilities with personal support. Participants who described a mixed approach naturally embody elements of the AMMHT's recommendations for social interaction and organisational culture. These managers adapt their approach depending on the situation.

Social Interaction: Incorporating shared activities, such as outings to concerts or art exhibitions, can significantly enhance emotional closeness and create a safe space for artists to express their thoughts and concerns. Gradual increase in contact can help to create an atmosphere of comfort and security, encouraging artists to share personal challenges as they feel more at ease. These interactions can additionally help maintain consistency and provide a foundation for adjusting their involvement as needed.

The key aspect of this recommendation is for these interactions to grow as their management time with the artist increases. Building a consistently growing routine of communication can help them establish a steady presence within their team, fostering an environment where team members feel comfortable discussing their mental health needs. Additionally, managers can base social interactions on artists preferences. For example, if an artist feels most productive at night, shift workload commitments accordingly. Establish professional communication hours while also respecting the informal, friendship side of the relationship. Set boundaries like no work-related discussions during social hangouts to prevent work from overtaking personal interactions.

Organisational Culture: Participants with a mixed approach might already be fostering a strong organisational culture. A blend of friendship and business can enhance emotional intimacy, which in turn strengthens trust between the manager and artist. Duality allows for an environment where artists feel comfortable sharing personal concerns while knowing that their professional needs are also being attended to. Managers should actively promote a culture of transparency and support by encouraging open discussions about mental health and well-being during both formal and informal interactions.

This relationship adaptation is advised to be applied in business and informal settings. During formal meetings focused on strategy or performance, adopting a more professional tone can help reinforce the business aspect of the relationship. Conversely, in more informal settings, such as creative brainstorming sessions or social outings, a friendlier and relaxed tone can foster deeper connections. Managers might also consider setting specific times for business discussions and other times dedicated to casual catchups, creating a structured yet flexible framework for interactions that respects both friendship and professionalism. Establishing these boundaries can mitigate any potential confusion regarding the nature of the relationship, ensuring that both parties are clear about expectations.

## 5.7  SUMMARY

In conclusion, research conducted not only deepens understanding of the complex relationship between the music industry and mental health but also points the way forward, suggesting that a proactive approach rooted in the HRM principles can

lead to a more equitable and supportive environment for artists and managers, ultimately enhancing their well-being and job satisfaction within the profession.

Findings not only validate but substantially advance understanding of the music industry's relationship with mental health, uncovering the multifaceted challenges and complexities. Additionally, the data provided accentuates the critical role of music managers in artists mental well-being. By acknowledging the significant role of music managers and the challenges they face, the industry can move toward a more supportive and equitable environment for all stakeholders, ultimately contributing to improved well-being and job satisfaction within the profession. The findings emphasise the shared responsibility of the industry in fostering a healthier, more sustainable environment for both artists and managers. Recognising the impact of subpar working conditions on these vital industry figures highlights the collective efforts required to address and improve these conditions.

Recognising the complexity and variety in approaches to artist mental health care, the AMMHTK was designed to offer personalised and actionable recommendations. This approach acknowledges the difficulties in aligning HRM principles with the creative and dynamic nature of the music industry. By organising the different manager approaches within the framework of HRM principles, the tool kit offers targeted guidance that can be customised to fit each manager's unique style and situation, providing a structured solution to an otherwise fragmented area of practice.

# Chapter 6: Two-Part Pilot Study

## 6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a two-part pilot study with a UK artist manager that tests the AMMHTK's real-world effectiveness and identifies gaps between theory and practice. Part one assesses practical implementation, while part two analyses participant usage and evaluates refinements made from initial findings to prepare for future large-scale research.

The single-case approach allows observation of how an artist manager implements tool kit recommendations, revealing unforeseen challenges absent from the theoretical development. These challenges include geographical constraints, gender-specific recommendations, navigating conversations with recently onboarded artists, and monetary impacts to workload decreases and label involvement. This method enables tool kit refinements based on actual implementation experiences, potentially exposing limitations in initial assumptions while building on primary research findings.

Human resource management principles provided the analytical framework for developing the AMMHTK from interview findings. The tool kit addresses key issues including inconsistent mental health boundaries, manager's personal struggles, and risks from prolonged involvement in artist's well-being. With 66% percent of managers reporting personal mental health challenges and many describing unhealthy responsibility patterns from sustained artist involvement, the findings demonstrate the need for clear boundaries and structured guidance.

The first part of the pilot study, beginning in Section 6.2, tested the reflexive thematic analysis results in a practical context. Aiming to confirm which elements of the AMMHTK are useful and practical and refine sections that are lacking. Challenging trends found in the initial qualitative inquiry by examining how artist manager scenarios would progress with the right tools provided.

Following analysis of the first portion of the pilot study, this chapter presents the systematic refinements made to the AMMHTK based on participant feedback and identified barriers. Section 6.3 begins with a comprehensive review of the adjustments

implemented to address issues identified in the pilot study analysis, followed by the presentation of a refined tool kit with its enhanced features and improved functionality.

Section 6.4 details part two of the pilot study, which tracked AMMHTK usage over two and a half months. This phase analysed continued engagement patterns, evaluated the enhanced tool kit's usability, and identified remaining limitations before broader deployment in a large-scale study with UK artist managers.

This pilot study represents a critical bridge between theoretical development and practical application. Without real-world testing, the AMMHTK would remain an untested academic construct, potentially containing flaws that could undermine its effectiveness when deployed with artist managers facing genuine mental health challenges. The iterative refinement process ensures that the tool kit not only addresses theoretical gaps identified in the literature but also functions effectively in the complex, unpredictable environments where artist managers operate. This testing and validation phase is necessary for establishing the credibility and practical value of the research before broader implementation in a wider context for post-doctoral investigation

## 6.2 PILOT STUDY: PART ONE

The following section presents the initial phase of the pilot study with a UK artist manager. Section 6.2.2 presents the study's research design. The next section, 6.2.3 provides an overview of the pilot application and its process. Sections 6.2.4 and 6.2.5 will review the results and provide an analysis and discussion. The final section, 6.2.6, provides concludes by discussing strengths, limitations, and contributions.

### 6.2.1 Research Design

The research design assesses the initial effectiveness of the AMMHTK and to identify potential new hypothesis regarding artist manager relationships. A pilot study is an essential first step in testing the practical application of the tool kit and refining its use in a practical setting (Davis et al., 2011). It can be defined as a small-scale study conducted before the full implementation of a new intervention or tool, with the goal of evaluating its feasibility, refining its application, and identifying necessary adjustments before wider use (Eldridge and Kerry, 2012).

### *Aims and Objectives*

The first part of the pilot study applied the AMMHTK with a UK music management company founder, focusing specifically on practical application challenges and short-term impacts not identified during theoretical development. This approach directly addressed findings from the research that revealed varied manager involvement in artist mental health support, which were limited by financial constraints, time pressures, and uncertainty about professional boundaries. Research development could lead to a support system for managers that assess their management approaches and provides them with personalised recommendations tailored that their preferred mental health involvement, relationship type, and provide them with mental health resources that are needed.

The primary objective was to evaluate the effectiveness and relevance of the AMMHTK by tailoring it to the needs of an artist manager and assessing its real-world application. The evaluation process involved tailoring the tool kit to the manager's specific needs through a three-question survey that classified her management style based on her ideal level of mental health involvement, approach to mental health crisis, and the participant's preferred artist manager relationship dynamic.

Following personalisation, Sarah implemented the recommendations with one artist over a four-week period. The implementation included structured check-in meetings to monitor progress, document challenges, and collect real-time feedback. Identifying practical limitations in initial assumptions while testing the tool kit's effectiveness in addressing the inconsistent approaches to mental health boundaries highlighted in the primary research.

### *Research Questions*

The research questions are designed to evaluate the AMMHTK's effectiveness and usability within an artist manager's practice, while also exploring how the manager applied the tool kit and its perceived value.

1. How were the AMMHTK recommendations applied?

2. Did the artist manager alter their approach?

3. Was the tool kit deemed useful by the manager?

The first research question examined which elements of the AMMHTK were implemented by the manager. This question is explored by assessing both the completeness of application and the consistency of usage. Completeness of application focuses on whether the manager engaged with all relevant sections of the tool kit, a measure derived from the documentation templates where the manager listed the AMMHTK sections employed along with brief descriptions of their usage. Consistency evaluates how regularly the tool kit was applied over the four-week period, as reflected in the weekly check-in meetings and the corresponding documentation (Balain, 2007). Together, these elements provide a quantitative view of the tool kit's adoption in a real-world setting.

The second research question investigated how the manager adapted their approach to artist management as a result of the AMMHTK's recommendations. Question two explores both changes in managerial behaviour and the influence on decision-making processes. Changes in behaviour refer to shifts in the manager's day-to-day methods and professional practices, while the analysis of decision-making focuses how the tool kit shaped the manager's strategic choices. Data for this question was gathered through self-reported changes documented during the weekly check-in meetings, where specific examples of new strategies were discussed (Barker et al., 2015). Combining qualitative insights with illustrative examples to explain the rationale behind the observed changes.

The third research question assessed the perceived usefulness of the AMMHTK. This question is evaluated by exploring the tool kit's practicality, relevance, and its impact on artist well-being. Practicality is measured by how easy the tool kit is to understand and implement, relevance reflects the applicability of the tool kit to the manager's everyday challenges, and impact focuses on whether the manager believed the tool kit enhanced the overall support provided to the artists (Gschwend et al., 2007). These factors were captured through a final post-implementation interview, where the manager provided a numerical rating for practicality on a scale from one to ten, as well as feedback regarding relevance and impact.

In summary, each research question was designed to offer a comprehensive analysis of the AMMHTK from different angles. The first question quantifies usage, the second explores adaptive changes in managerial practice, and the third evaluates

the overall utility of the tool kit, providing a holistic view of its effectiveness in practice.

### *Methodology*

The first part of this pilot study employed qualitative methodology. Allowing for an inclusive examination of the intricacies within the artist manager relationship, encouraging an open-ended dialogue where participants can articulate ideas or difficulties related to their dynamic (Steudel and Yauch, 2003). The methodology used is built upon findings from the results from the reflexive thematic analysis that led to the design of the AMMHTK. The kit utilises the terms 'Involvement, 'Action' and 'Relationship-Type' to categorise artist manager approaches relating to the HRM principles. These categories provided personalised recommendations for artist managers.

### *Method*

Qualitative semi-structured interviews were used to gather data, with questions drawn from the initial interview questions (Anderson, 2013; Hagan, 2019). Specifically, these questions correspond to questions two, three, and four of the initial semi-structured interview questions.

#### *Entry Survey Questions*

1. What is your preferred level of mental health involvement? (Scale of 1-10, with 1 being low and 10 being high)

2. Do you have a plan of action for a potential mental health crisis? If so, what is it? If not, do you share personal experiences?

3. What is your artist manager relationship type: friendship, professional, or both?

To ensure consistency and capture meaningful feedback from participants, four semi-structured check-in meetings were established throughout the study. The need to understand the practical application of the AMMHTK in a practical setting, as well as the manager's impressions of its usefulness, guided the creation of the following questions (Balain, 2007). The questions were structured to elicit specific insights into how the tool kit was being implemented, how the recommendations were perceived, and what further components might be considered for future use. Supporting an

ongoing evaluation of the AMMHTK's practicality and effectiveness in the context of artist management. The questions were as follows:

*Check-in Meeting Questions*

1. Which aspects of the AMMHTK have you applied in your management approach this week?

2. How did you implement these tool kit recommendations?

3. What components of the AMMHTK you are planning to implement in the future?

4. What are your current impressions of the AMMHTK's practicality and overall usefulness?

### Participant Selection

Purposive criterion sampling was employed to ensure the participant met the selection rationale and ensure the effective use of research resources (Duan et al., 2013; Shuttleworth and Wilson, 2008). Selection was based on the manager's prior participation and their artist management experience. Of twelve potential participants from the previous research, selection criteria prioritised willingness to participate, prior knowledge of the research boundaries, and genuine investment in the AMMHTK's potential. These factors were helpful for ensuring adequate implementation and sufficient data collection, particularly given the challenges in securing willing artist managers for such specialised research.

A key consideration was that the selected manager should have more than two clients on their roster. Ensuring the participant had the opportunity to apply the AMMHTK to multiple artists, allowing for a more multifaceted evaluation of its effectiveness. Additionally, the ideal participant would have more than five years' experience in the music management industry. Initially, the selection process hosted a range of experience levels, but it was essential that the pilot study participant had worked in the UK music industry for enough time.

The manager should work independently or own their management company to ensure full autonomy in applying the AMMHTK. Managers within larger companies may lack authority to implement key recommendations such as scheduling mental health meetings or outsourcing to professionals. The manager must also work without

a co-manager, as shared responsibilities would dilute and possibly confuse the pilot study results.

The initial semi-structured interviews took place in 2021, eight of those participants have worked in the industry for more than five years. Five of these participants do not work within a management company or with a co-manager. Out of these five, two participants owned their own management company. These two participants were chosen as the ideal options for the pilot study. The first participant contacted volunteered to take part in the study. The chosen manager is a female with more than five years of management experience in the UK. Their pseudonym, to provide anonymity, is Sarah.

### Data Collection

Data was collected through two primary sources, the manager's self-reported usage of the AMMHTK through a documentation template, and the check-in meeting framework, completed by the researcher after each meeting (Barker et al., 2015). The participant completed documentation templates for each tool kit section, discussing them during weekly check-ins where the researcher recorded additional insights. These templates, meeting reflections, and discussions formed the pilot study's core data.

The effectiveness of the AMMHTK was assessed through two sets of criteria, the research questions and tool kit success indicator. Employing a structured indicator to measure success ensures systematic tracking of progress and potential emerging issues or barriers (Gurfinkel et al., 2022). The research questions aimed to assess the consistency of use, the manager's adaptations, and the usefulness of the tool kit as reported by the manager. The AMMHTK success indicator measured three key factors, the percentage of the tool kit used, the artist's report of feeling supported, and the manager's rating of the tool kit's usability on a one through ten scale. The success indicator can be found below on Table Seventeen.

The data collection captured both AMMHTK application and the manager's practical experience through baseline, intervention, and post-implementation phases, following rigorous implementation research standards (Finley and Hamilton, 2020). Documentation templates assessed tool kit usage scope, while weekly check-ins tracked consistency and adaptations to the manager's approach. A final post-

implementation interview captured reflections on usability, relevance, and impact on artist well-being support.

To ensure thoroughness in tracking the AMMHTK's use, a reflection document was developed to record usage, adaptations, and any encountered barriers. The transcriptions of all meetings, along with the completed documentation templates and meeting reflections, form the comprehensive data set that underpins the subsequent analysis of the tool kit's effectiveness. The AMMHTK meeting reflection can be found below on Table Sixteen.

Table 16: Artist Manager Mental Health Tool Kit Meeting Reflection

| Category | Question | Reports |
|---|---|---|
| Sections Used | Which parts of the tool kit did the manager use? | |
| Adaptations | Did the manager modify, skip, or add anything? | |
| Barriers | Any challenges in using the tool kit? | |

Table 17: Artist Manager Mental Health Tool Kit Success Indicator

| Indicator Type | Success Measure |
|---|---|
| Adoption | Percentage of tool kit sections used |
| Impact | Artist reports feeling more supported. |
| Sustainability | Would manager use the tool kit in the future? |

### Data Analysis

Data for analysis comprised the documentation templates, meeting reflections, transcriptions of weekly meetings, and the final post-implementation interview. Data was analysed through qualitative content analysis to examine the content and meaning of the manager's responses. Content analysis focuses on what is said and done within the data, considering the context in which decisions are made and the reasoning behind them. Rather than reducing qualitative data into quantifiable variables, this method is used to enhance understanding of the manager's experiences and perspectives within the real-world industry setting (Eriksson and Kovalainen 2015).

The analysis process was designed to address the research questions concerning the application of the AMMHTK, the adaptations in management approaches, and the perceived usefulness of the tool kit. Qualitative content analysis examined the behavioural adaptations and decision-making impacts reported during weekly check-in meetings, as well as the final interview feedback on practicality, relevance, and the tool kit's influence on artist well-being (Eriksson and Kovalainen 2015). Additionally examining the completeness and consistency of tool kit use through assessing the extent and frequency of usage.

A success indicator was also developed to evaluate overall effectiveness by integrating measures of adoption, impact, and sustainability (Markless and Streatfield, 2012). Adoption reflected the degree to which the tool kit was used, impact examined the influence on artist's experience, and sustainability reviews if the manager will continue to use the AMMHTK. Comprehensive analysis provided a detailed understanding of both the operational application of the tool kit and the manager's experiences.

To review a table that outlines the data collection and analysis process for the research questions and AMMHTK success indicator see Tables Eighteen and Nineteen.

Table 18: Research Questions Pilot study Data Collection and Analysis

| Research Questions | Evaluation Factors | Data Collection | Data Analysis |
|---|---|---|---|
| How were the tool kit recommendations applied? | Completeness and Consistency | Manager tracks data on Tool Kit Documentation Template | Qualitative content analysis of managers reflections |
| Did the artist manager alter their approach? | Behavioural adaptation and Decision-Making Impact | Self-reported changes from manager in check-in meetings | Qualitative content analysis to identify management adaptations |
| Was the tool kit deemed useful by the manager? | Practicality, Relevance, and Impact on Artist Well-Being | 1-10 scale and self-reported accounts from manager in final meeting | Qualitative content analysis discussing managers percieved usefullness |

Table 19: Artist Manager Mental Health Pilot Study Data Collection and Analysis

| Success Indicator | Evaluation Factors | Data Collection | Data Analysis |
|---|---|---|---|
| Adoption | Percentage of tool kit sections used | Manager tracks data on Tool Kit Documentation Template | Qualitative content analysis of usage patterns (which sections were used most/least) |
| Impact | Artist reports feeling more supported | Managers self-reported data on artist's responses to utilisaiton of tool kit recommendations | Qualitative content analysis to discern positive or negative responses from artists |
| Sustainability | Would artist manager use the tool kit in the future | Manager discusses the potential utilisation of the toolkit beyond the conclusion of the case study | Qualitative content analysis analysing managers discussions on future use |

### *Timeframe*

The first stage of the single-case pilot study took place over two months. The first month included two meetings. The first meeting introduced the AMMHTK and personalised it to Sarah's management style, while the second provided her with the customised tool kit and guidance for its implementation. In the second month, Sarah

applied the tool kit over a four-week period with her artists. Following this, the collected data was analysed, focusing on Sarah's immediate feedback and her responses to the AMMHTK's effectiveness and relevance to her practice.

### *Participant Consent*

The participant was provided with a detailed consent form outlining the purpose, procedures, potential benefits, and any risks associated. Obtaining informed consent is imperative, especially in studies that could potentially cause mental strain, to safeguard participants. (Morin, 2020). To review the consent form, see Appendix G. Participation was voluntary, and the participant retained the right to withdraw at any point without consequence. To protect the identities of the artist manager and the artists, pseudonyms were employed. All data were anonymised, and any identifiable information was removed from transcripts and reports. All collected data, including interview recordings and transcripts, were securely stored on password-protected devices. Only the researcher had access to this information.

### 6.2.2 Pilot: Part One Study Overview

The following section will provide a detailed overview of the participant profile, offering insights into their background and role. Additionally, it will present a thorough examination of the first portion of the pilot study process, outlining the steps taken from initial engagement to the final evaluation.

### *Participant Profile*

Sarah was selected for both parts of the pilot study. Based on prior participation, holding more than two artists on her roster, with over five years of experience, and does not work within a management organisation or co-management. Sarah founded her own music management company in 2022, managing three artists, including one band, and providing consultancy for five others. Owning her own company allows her to implement changes in both her management style and the organisation. Working with a band and having consultancy clients expands the number of artists and relationship dynamics for applying the AMMHTK's recommendations. Sarah's roster has over 180,000 Spotify followers and 38 million streams, providing the tool kit an opportunity to impact artists with a large outreach.

As a member of the MMF, Sarah's participation aligns with results from the reflexive thematic analysis, which suggested further studies with MMF involvement.

Choosing a manager with these qualities facilitated exploring the tool kit's adaptability and personalisation in a real-world context.

### Process Outline

The first part of the pilot study began with the design and implementation of the AMMHTK, which included refining the methodology using data from the initial research. Preliminary testing allowed for the development of a tailored approach to present the tool kit to the participating artist manager.

The next step involved contacting Sarah. The first formal meeting introduced the tool kit, explaining research aims, objectives, and procedures. Sarah agreed to participate, and a second meeting was scheduled for the interview and survey process.

During the follow-up meeting, Sarah completed a three-question survey designed to personalise the tool kit based on her management style. Based on her responses, a customised version of the AMMHTK was created, and she was informed that her personalised kit would be delivered within twenty-four hours. The final part of the meeting provided guidance on how to implement the tool kit over the following four weeks.

Over the next four weeks, Sarah implemented the AMMHTK with the artists on her roster. During this time, she applied its recommendations, monitored changes in her approach, and documented any feedback or concerns. At the end of each week, a check-in meeting was held to review Sarah's tool kit documentation template and go through plans for application and track the tool kit's usefulness.

A follow-up meeting was held at the end of the implementation phase to evaluate the AMMHTK's effectiveness, discussing how Sarah applied the recommendations, the immediate outcomes, challenges faced, and her overall feedback on the tool kit's relevance and usefulness. During this time an overall rating of the usefulness of the tool kit was provided by the participant.

### Artist Manager Mental Health Tool Kit Development and Personalisation

The development of the AMMHTK was directly informed by key terms derived from the results of the reflexive thematic analysis. 'Involvement', 'Action', and 'Relationship-Type' were central to personalising the tool kit's recommendations and applications. By integrating these three approaches, the tool kit was tailored to address the diverse needs and practices of artist managers, ensuring that the recommendations

align with their individual responses and management styles. Allowing for a more customised approach to supporting mental health in the music industry. To review the connection between interview questions, approach category and type, and relation to HRM principles see Table Fifteen.

### 6.2.3 Pilot: Part One Study Results

This section summarises the key outcomes of the studies first portion, focusing on the artist manager's reflections and any changes observed throughout the process. Concentrating on the immediate benefits gained from using the AMMHTK, as well as any limitations or unintended results that arose during its application. The manager's feedback provided insights into the tool kit's impact on their practice and highlight areas for further development or refinement.

#### *Initial Meeting*

In the initial meeting, Sarah was introduced to the concept of the AMMHTK. This meeting intended to gauge her interest and denote if she was willing and able to participate. Based on Sarah's prior participation and experience she was an ideal candidate. Once the concept was shared, Sarah gave her initial thoughts. Sarah was excited at the prospect and volunteered to participate. A formal meeting was set up to go through the tool kit entry survey to determine the personalised tool kit for Sarah.

#### *Artist Manager Mental Health Tool Kit Entry Survey*

The first meeting lasted forty-five minutes and was conducted and recorded through VoIP with Zoom Video Conferencing as the chosen platform to reflect the initial semi-structured interview process (Novick, 2008; Self, 2021). During this meeting, the AMMHTK and its objectives were further examined, and research goals were outlined. Sarah was informed of data protection and that her and her artists names be kept anonymous. In this meeting three questions were asked to determine the tool kit type that Sarah would receive. These questions ensured that the artist manager receives tailored recommendations for their preferred management strategies and correspond with questions two, three, and four from the original semi-structured interview questions.

#### *Question One*

When asked about her level of mental health involvement, Sarah requested clarification on the question. Once clarified, she stated that the level of mental health

involvement varies for each artist. She detailed that with the main artist on her roster, mental health was not regularly discussed. Despite this, Sarah observed the artists body language to determine that there were warning signs of a mental health crisis. She responded to this by checking in with the artist to see if she could be of assistance or adapt their current workload. Sarah went on to discuss how a mental health crisis did occur while one of her artists were traveling for a UK tour. When this occurred, she began to hold conversations around mental health more frequently. Overall, she identified that her level of involvement varies for each artist but on average around a six or seven out of ten for mental health involvement.

Sarah's response places her under the category of 'Varied Involvement', which will recognise her varied levels of mental health involvement based on the artist she is working with and time spent working with them.

*Question Two*

Sarah discussed a mental health crisis during tour in question one. Sarah shared that at that time, she did not have a definite plan of action, this was asked directly in question two. Sarah went on to share how she does not have a plan of action and how this impacted her role as a manager while on tour. Sarah reflected on her time on tour and how she handled the mental health crisis on tour:

> We did not have one, it happened at a time that I was not able to see it happening on the spot and I was only told after it happened. What basically happened was, there were fans with them during a signing, and it was quite overwhelming. I could not always make eye contact with them and see it happening. So, obviously there was no plan in place and the not even the person who did see it did not know how to react on my behalf. (54-59)

Sarah went on to discuss how after this incident her and the artist who had the crisis came up with a 'safe word' that is only known between the manager and artist. This word will be used in future events in case another crisis is approaching. Sarah went on to discuss confusion around how to approach the topic of therapy with the artist after this incident occurred. She mentioned that at the time, it would have been great to have a tool that guided her response to this crisis. She shared:

> I did not know how to discuss this, you cannot go up to an artist and say, 'Have you tired therapy?' because they have already thought of that. […] How do you bring this up without being a therapist? […] It would be great to know

exactly what to say rather than trying to read him (the artist) […]. I was thinking, it would be so great to know exactly what to say right now. (72-81)

Sarah's response to this question placed her under the category of 'No Action', due to her lack of plan in case of a mental health crisis.

*Question Three*

The final question determined the relationship type preferred by the artist manager and whether it was closer to a friendship or business partnership. Sarah shared that it is both, the relationship type depends on the artist and the current situation. When stress is low, Sarah has a more friendly relationship. When stress is high, the professional side of the business is employed. Sarah discussed how this can be difficult. When transitioning into the business relationship type, she revealed that artists tend to demand more:

> You may not feel like everyone is doing what they are meant to be doing, it all falls on your shoulders and they are not really aware that is going on and they keep demanding more. A friend would not really do that. (99-101)

This final response put Sarah within the category of a 'Mixed Relationship' type.

### Artist Manager Mental Health Tool Kit Recommendations

Once the survey was completed, Sarah was provided with personalised recommendations. She was informed that within twenty-four hours she would receive her AMMHTK. Sarah was also instructed on the process of implementing the AMMHTK. The pilot study process was explained, and Sarah was requested to take notes during her time through her documentation template. She was also instructed to note aspects of the tool kit she used and did not use, as well as positives and negatives of their experience. The final meeting was discussed, where her notes and reactions to the tool kit would be reviewed.

*Artist Manager Mental Health Tool Kit: Sarah*

Approximately twenty-four hours following the formal meeting, Sarah was sent her AMMHTK, which consists of four parts. The first page of the AMMHTK includes the tailored recommendations based on her responses, the second page provides a definition of a transformational leader, the next page is a five-part action plan to use in case of a mental health crisis (Bass, 1985; Bass and Riggio, 2006; Berson et al., 2015; Burns, 1978; Chen et al., 2003; Klug et al., 2018; Lavigna and Paarlberg, 2010;

Trottier et al., 2008; Udin, 2024). Sarah expressed uncertainty regarding the appropriate time to implement an action plan. Subsequently, she was provided with a comprehensive list of indicators and symptoms (Parker, 2021). The action plan was based on information found in the MMF's Manager's guide to Mental Health and prior participants action plans derived from the reflexive thematic analysis (Parker, 2021). The final page delivers a list of UK mental health resources. In addition to the tool kit, the participant received a documentation template to track their use. These resources have been updated to include therapists and counsellors for musicians. Sarah's AMMHTK can be viewed in Figures Ten through Fifteen.

Figure 10: Sarah's Artist Manager Mental Health Tool Kit - Page One

**Involvement**

**Artist Manager Mental Health Tool Kit**

**Two-Way Communication**

- Establish transparent communication channels, allowing artists express concerns.
- Establish regularly scheduled well-being check-in meetings to discuss artist's work load.
- Hold initial check-in at beginning of management. Increase these check-in's over time. Every 6 months for new artists and every 2-3 months for artists you have been working with 2+ years.

**Work-Life Balance**

- Work alongside artist to ensure they are trying to maintain a healthy work-life balance.
- Address workload decrease when needed.
- Look out for warning signs of stress impacting the body. See Page 3.
- Empower artist's to take ownership of their mental health through coping strategies that resonate with them personally.

**Artist Involvement**

- Involve artists in developing strategies for their mental health support to ensure their current workload and objectives align with their career goals.
- Foster collaborative decision-making processes to discuss shared goals and establish join accountability.
- Encourage artists to participate in discussions about decisions that affect them and their well-being.

**Transformational Leadership**

- Display aspects of a transformational leadership style. See Page 2.
- Refer to Five-Part action plan on Page 4 to assist an artist in a mental health crisis.
- Review Mental Health Resources on Page 6 and provide to artists if necessary.

**Motivation and Satisfaction**

- Focus on meaningful gestures for artist support. Such as verbal praise during meetings, spontaneous messages of encouragement, or social media acknowledgments.
- Consistently recognise and celebrate the artist's achievements through personalised acknowledgements or public recognition during meetings

**Action**

**Social Interaction**

- Incorporate shared activities such as outings to a concert or art exhibition.
- Increase social engagement with artist's over duration of working relationship.
- Ensure that along with social interactions, boundaries are set around business discussions. Set work-hours where you are available for work-related conversations.

**Organisational Culture**

- Promote a culture of transparency and support by encouraging conversations about mental health support and well-being.
- Adjust relationship type for setting. Adapt to a more friendly tone for social settings and vice versa.
- Establish clear boundaries between professional and social discussions/settings.

**Relationship Type**

Figure 11: Sarah's Artist Manager Mental Health Tool Kit - Page Two

**Transformational Leadership**

**What is a transformational leader?**

A transformational leader functions as an ethical role model through communicating a vision for the future, challenges employees to be more motivated. Aspects of a transformational leader include understanding motivation and behaviour, being sensitive to employee's needs, communicating effectively, and to encourage and empower employees. Incorporating a transformational leadership style into the artist manager relationship can significantly benefit the artist's overall well-being.

Source: (Bass, 1985; Bass and Riggio, 2006; Berson et al., 2015; Burns, 1978; Chen et al., 2003; Klug et al., 2018; Lavigna and Paarlberg, 2010; Trottier et al., 2008; Udin, 2024).

Figure 12: Sarah's Artist Manager Mental Health Tool Kit – Page Three

**Action Plan**

**Five-Part Action Plan**

1. *Recognise early signs of distress:* Emotional withdrawal, sharing that they feel overwhelmed, sudden lack in motivation.
2. *Create Space for Conversation:* Schedule time to discuss potential mental health distress and express concern.
3. *Assess Situation:* Ask open-ended questions, determine if issue can be resolved internally, such as changes in workload, scheduled check-ins or other manager supported adjustments.
4. *Evaluate Capacity & Identify Your Scope:* Address issues that can be resolved internally, discuss if serious mental health issues are arising (E.g. Persistent distress, trauma or harm).
5. *Signpost to Mental Health Professional:* If issues cannot be solved internally, have a list of trusted mental health resources available (E.g. Therapists, counsellors, or mental health charities).

Source: (Parker, 2021)

Figure 13: Sarah's Artist Manager Mental Health Tool Kit – Page Four

| Signs and Symptoms |
| --- |

| Stress Impacts on the Body |
| --- |
| 1. Becoming irritable and impatient, feeling overburdened or claustrophobic<br>2. Headaches, chest pains, acute indigestion or heartburn<br>3. Shallow breathing or hyperventilating, panic attacks<br>4. Feeling disinterested in life or unable to enjoy yourself<br>5. Avoiding difficult situations or feeling unable to make decisions |

Source: (Parker, 2021)

Figure 14:  Sarah's Artist Manager Mental Health Tool Kit – Page Five

| UK Mental Health Resources |
| --- |

| TITLE | TYPE | DEFINITION | CONTACT |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Music Minds Matter | Support Line and service | Help Musicians dedicated mental health support line and service for the whole UK music community. | 0808 802 8008 |
| Help Musicians UK | Charity Organisation | Leading UK charity for musicians of all genres, from starting through to retirement. | 020 7239 9101 |
| Music Industry Therapist Collective | Therapist Collective | All of their practitioners previously worked in the music business before retraining as health professionals. | info@musicindustry therapists.com. |
| Key Changes | Charity Organisation | The music industry-focused mental health recovery services in hospitals and the community for musicians affected by mental health conditions. | 020 7633 0533 |
| SHOUT | Text Support Line | Support is delivered by volunteers who are trained to offer an immediate response. | Text MUSIC to 85258 |

Figure 15: Sarah's Artist Manager Mental Health Tool Kit – Page Six

| Tool Kit Documentation Template | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Tool Kit Section** | **Used? (Yes/No)** | **How Was It Used?** | **Why Was It Used (or Not Used)?** | **Observed Impact** |
| Two-Way Communication | | | | |
| Work-Life Balance | | | | |
| Artist Involvement | | | | |
| Transformational Leadership | | | | |
| Motivation and Satisfaction | | | | |
| Social Interaction | | | | |
| Organisational Culture | | | | |
| Five-Part Action Plan | | | | |
| UK Mental Health Resources | | | | |

### *Artist Manager Mental Health Tool Kit Implementation*

The next phase consisted of the AMMHTK implementation. This attempt was unsuccessful. While the initial meeting went over smoothly Sarah was unable to allocate the appropriate time to apply to tool kit. Due to this, a weekly check-in system was introduced. Supporting Sarah to ask questions each week and report the documentation progress of the tool kit in real time and eliminating the unforeseen inconvenience of Sarah having to monitor the implementation of the tool kit for a month-long period and gave her the opportunity to share her thoughts while they are still fresh in her mind. This change was reviewed in a follow-up meeting with Sarah four weeks after our initial meeting.

### *Check-In Introduction*

A meeting was scheduled to discuss the implementation of weekly check-in meetings. During this meeting, the AMMHTK was re-introduced, and each section was explained along with further details on the weekly check-in progress. Before the

meeting, through email, Sarah requested real-life examples for the tool kit's application. A list was prepared, and she was provided with a few during the meeting. A detailed list was sent to her following the meeting which provided further examples for each part of the 'Personalised Recommendations' section. For example, the section work-life balance would encourage a manager to help artists to plan a balanced schedule with realistic expectations. This could be followed with a suggestion from motivations and incentives and encouragement, which recommends managers to provide small gestures of encouragement after reaching a goal.

Another example was noted under the category of two-way communication which recommended to use anonymous feedback systems to let the artists share concerns safely. Sarah discussed how this recommendation may be useful within her band:

> Maybe that is something I could explore […] If I know what band and what project, if there could be anything triggering due to schedules, I do not have to know who it is in the band, so there is still some community to it. (169-173)

She shared that social interaction is something she has been thinking about doing and examples were reviewed, such as going to get a coffee, check out a museum and even larger events like laser tag. For other sections, Sarah shared that she planned to apply different aspects of the AMMHTK to different artists are different times depending on how long she has worked with them and their current needs.

At the end of the meeting, Sarah had one question regarding a conversation she had with her band on tour related to their current well-being. While her intentions were supportive, she noticed that the artists did not seem to react as she expected. The band seemed to feel somewhat taken off-guard and were not sure how to take the conversation. She provided them with a few examples, regarding her concerns, but overall left the conversation feeling as though it could have gone better. She requested guidance on future conversations and what the correct way may be to approach these types of discussions. A list was developed, and Sarah was provided with examples in our first check-in meeting, this was combined with her AMMHTK and included introductory options, ways to guide the conversation and follow-up responses that aim to schedule regular occurring mental health check-ins with the artists. These examples are discussed further in the next section, a full list can be seen on Figures Sixteen through Twenty.

Figure 16: Implementation Examples Part One

**Implementation Examples**

| Part One |
| --- |

1. *Two-Way Communication:*
    a. Set up a check-in with an artist to discuss workload and current well-being.
    b. Ensure workload, well-being, and artist's career goals align.
2. *Work-Life Balance:*
    a. Help plan a balanced work schedule with realistic expectations.
    b. Encourage the artist to take regular breaks and time off if they feel overwhelmed.
3. *Artist Involvement*
    a. Set up weekly check-ins where the artist can speak openly.
    b. Use anonymous feedback systems to let the artist share concerns safely.

Figure 17: Implementation Examples Part Two

**Implementation Examples**

| Part Two |
| --- |

1. *Transformational Leadership:*
    a. *Offer* emotional support during stressful times (e.g., tours).
2. *Motivation Satisfaction:*
    a. Publicly acknowledge the artist's achievements.
    b. Personally thank the artist with small gestures (e.g., handwritten notes).
3. *Social Interaction:*
    a. Schedule casual, non-work meetings (e.g., lunch or coffee).
    b. Attend concerts or exhibitions together to build rapport.
4. *Organisational Culture:*
    a. Encourage an open conversation around artist's well-being and provide additional support if necessary.
    b. Set a boundary in a social setting to not discuss work, or vice versa in a formal conversation.

Figure 18: Conversation Options Part One

**Conversation Options**

**Introduction Conversation Options**

1. *Opening the Door for Wellbeing Conversations:* I wanted to let you know that I am here if you ever want to talk about anything related to your overall wellbeing. Whether you are feeling stressed, overwhelmed with the current workload or just how you are feeling in general. No pressure, I want to make sure you know you are supported.
2. *Setting Up an Ongoing Wellbeing Check-In:* I would love to set up a general check-in to talk about how everything is going. Your workload, current schedule and how you are feeling overall. No agenda, just a space to chat if you are open to it. Let me know what you think.

Figure 19: Conversation Options Part Two

**Conversation Options**

**Discusion Topics**

1. *Reassuring and Encouraging an Open Conversation:* I really appreciate how you were open to having this conversation. I want you to know this is not because of any particular concern, it is important to me that you feel supported. Success matters but wellbeing comes first.
2. *Checking in on Workload and Balance:* How are you feeling about your current workload? Are things manageable, or do we need to adjust anything to make sure you are in a good place?
3. *Exploring Routine and Adjustments:* If your workload is not working let me know how we can adjust. More/Less performances, more time for creative work, time to focus on well-being?

Figure 20: Conversation Options Part Three

| Conversation Options |
| --- |

| **Follow-Up Statements** |
| --- |
| 1. *Offering Regular Check-Ins:* Would it be helpful to schedule these kinds of check-ins regularly, or would you rather keep them more informal? Whatever works best for you, I'm happy to do.<br>2. *Providing Resources and Support:* Just so you know, if you ever feel like you need additional support, I have access to resources that could help. Whether that's mental health professionals, wellness tools, or just someone to talk to. Please don't hesitate to reach out anytime. |

### Check-In Meeting One

One week later, the first official check-in meeting took place. Sarah discussed the previous week and AMMHTK implementation. Four questions guided the meeting. A meeting reflection table can be found on Table Twenty at the end of this section.

*Check-in Meeting Questions*

1. Which aspects of the AMMHTK have you applied in your management approach this week?

2. How did you implement these AMMHTK recommendations?

3. What components of the AMMHTK you are planning to implement in the future?

4. What are your current impressions of the AMMHTK's practicality and overall usefulness?

The first question refers to information collected within the tool kit documentation template. In week one, Sarah applied two sections within the tool kit, social interaction and two-way communication. Regarding question two, Sarah

implemented the first category, social interaction, through pursuing engagements with her artists outside of the business setting. For example, she invited an artist that she works with through her consultancy to a musicians showcase. She did this with a different artist on her roster as well. Sarah reported that this provided them the opportunity to discuss things outside of the realm of business. Describing this outing, Sarah shared that events such as these:

> Allows for a lot of a social side to it, like where you're grabbing food together. Just talking to them meeting other people in my circle […] So a nice way to connect in another level that isn't just like our work, you know, management. (115-123)

Sarah also stated that after this event the artist was already slightly more open about sharing personal experiences during this interaction.

The second aspect of the AMMHTK applied in week one is two-way communication. Two-way communication was applied through having an open conversation with an artist who presented warning signs to mental distress. The artist is a member of the band on her roster, their role usually entails social media management. Sarah noticed that this was not up to their usual standard of work. She reached out to see if their workload needed adjustment or if there was anything she could do to help. Sarah discussed checking in with the artist a few times but then checking in one last time with more detail and specifically asking about his workload and what is currently taking most of his energy. Sarah questioned:

> What is it that is taking up your time currently? I'm always looking into that because maybe there are areas in which I can take on or somebody else can […] I mean, their family life is taking too much time currently and they are re-doing their studio. They said it's just overwhelming because they currently have to pay a lot of invoices, so trying to find a lot more money to cover what we did last year. (133-138)

Sarah notes that while social media is their responsibility within the band, feeling overwhelmed can lead to a lack of creative motivation. To work through this, Sarah provided the artist with a list of priorities in order of importance, she assured him to only focus on these things. She stated:

> Don't even think about anything else right now. Don't get worried about what's not top priority, like tackle the first, like locking in private shows, you need that money to pay for your family and for everybody to pay bills. (147-149)

Sarah showed him an online application that is used to organise and manage social media posting to assist with ongoing organisation and goal setting.

In relation to the third question on future planning, Sarah explained that she intends to promote work-life balance by scheduling regular days off for the band members. The band is currently working to update their studio space, causing them an added element to their workload which is impacting their work-life balance. To incorporate this AMMHTK element, Sarah has planned a discussion with her band members regarding this. She shares:

> I think once the studio is done, they realistically need to book specific days where they don't have the kids, get out of the house and do not work from the house. (157-160)

Sarah shared the desire to further promote work-life balance for her band members but discussed limitations to this. She shared how difficult it can be to support artists but also maintain the accurate level of managerial responsibilities. She shared:

> Realistically as a manager you really want to help but sometimes […] it's hard because you don't want to mother them, but they do feel like sometimes they need a bit more of a structure and they go into victim mode so quickly […] it's quite hard. It feels like maybe sometimes it's not my responsibility. […] It's like how do we make it work? (178-183)

Continuing the conversation of future planning, Sarah shared an instance that presented transformational leadership, through understanding the artists needs and providing open communication. She discussed how the band members did not take on her suggestions relating to marketing. Due to this, she plans to bring in someone who has a professional background in marketing, to provide alternative ideas to the members. Rather than taking their diversions personally, she noted that the band members often prefer the opinion of someone who is an expert in their field. Sarah stated: 'I feel like they don't really listen to my suggestions a lot of times and they do it with everyone unless they are an expert in the thing.'

The final element of the AMMHTK Sarah plans to implement in the future is two-way communication by setting up regular check-ins with the artists on her roster.

Sarah decided to schedule a weekly timeframe that artists can schedule to discuss workload, scheduling, or any mental health or well-being related concerns.

The final questions discussed in the initial weekly check-in discusses Sarah's opinions of the overall usefulness and practicality of the AMMHTK. She is excited to continue to get comfortable with the tool kit but overall, she found it very organised with clear steps and objectives.  So far, Sarah reported that the tool kit was 'working nicely for her.'

One adaptation was used in week one. When implementing two-way communication, Sarah recommended an application that can assist with social media management and organisation. While other recommendations were applied from the AMMHTK, this specific recommendation was original from the participant. So far, no barriers have been noted.

Table 20: Implementation Reflection Check-in One

| Category | Question | Reports |
|---|---|---|
| Sections Used | Which parts of the tool kit did the manager use? | • Social Interaction: Invited artist on her roster to events outside of the business setting.<br><br>• Two-Way Communication: Noticed an artist was slipping with responsibilities, checked in on their well-being and workload. Manager recommended artist takes time off. |
| Adaptations | Did the manager modify, skip, or add anything? | Yes, in two-way communication the manager recommended time off but also an app that would help the artist manage social media related work load. Second recommendation was not sourced from the tool kit. |
| Barriers | Any challenges in using the tool kit? | No, so far the participant has found the tool kit to be useful and easy to use with a nice organisational structure. |

### Check-in Meeting Two

One week following the first check-in meeting, a second check-in meeting was held. Questions mirror check-in meeting one.

Regarding question one, Sarah discussed a recent conversation she had with her band which incorporated artist involvement. The band has been offered a spot at a festival this coming summer which they had participated in the year prior. Sarah included the band on this decision and provided them with adequate evidence to make

an informed decision. She debated the monetary positives but also the negatives of an impact on their work-life balance. Sarah assisted the band to weigh these options to decide if the monetary reward was worth the emotional cost.

> Being more comfortable saying no and not take just any gig for any money. Some of them (live performance opportunities) if it's less than we thought (monetary) for the effort, being like, "Well, actually, maybe not," because then something else can come up or it'll be just better for them to be with their family, then do that (live performance opportunity) realistically. (89-93)

Ultimately, the band decided not to take the offer. Sarah shared the financial implications of this and how it impacted her support of this decision:

> Maybe in the past I would have been a bit more like, I mean, not pushy […]. For me, if they don't do it, I don't earn. If they do it, I earn, but I don't need to go anyway. So, my work until then is done. Them not doing it means that I do lose money. But I didn't feel like pushing, because I felt like in this case, […] if they burn out, then they're not going to do anything. So, I do lose more (monetary). […] I don't feel comfortable pushing either. Whereas I'm sure other managers will have pushed because that's the only way they will have made money. (93-100)

In the first check-in meeting Sarah shared that a member of this band dealing with increased workload from social media duties. Unfortunately, this issue had only worsened. Despite Sarah's advice with an application and aligning his priorities, this member still felt overwhelmed, and it was impacting his well-being. To further assist with this issue, Sarah hired someone outside of the band to work as their social media manager. By providing further support and adapting her strategy to best assist the artist, Sarah implemented aspects of transformational leadership and positively impacted the band members work-life balance. Sarah mentioned that this decision was made because the remaining option would involve Sarah taking on these duties, which would impact her well-being. Sarah stated:

> I feel like now I can go hands off again […] they take forward without me having to be fully on. Because obviously it would be me taking that task, therefore I would be the one suffering with my work-life balance. (107-111)

Concerning future planning, Sarah mentioned ways that she plans to implement the AMMHTK in the next week. Sarah plans to utilise two-way communication

through setting up a formal check-in meeting with a band she manages. She also noted that she plans to incorporate social interaction through inviting a new client to a housewarming party she is hosting.

Sarah shared that in the upcoming week, she had two engagements scheduled with artists she had recently begun working with on a consultancy basis. Although her attendance was not required for either event, she chose to attend in order to strengthen the organisational culture, offer additional support, and build trust with her new clients. One of these events was a photoshoot. Sarah explained that the label had previously expressed dissatisfaction with styling decisions, placing added pressure on the artist to perform well during this shoot:

> It's quite tricky, you can get good feedback with music and things that is not about your physical appearance or about who you are as a person, it's about a product. So that makes it external so it's easy, but in this case if we're gonna help style her, how, without saying, you know, it's gonna be a bit, I'm not sure, complicated. (53-57)

Although Sarah was mindful of the potential stressors involved, she recognised that the relationship with the artist was still developing and presented a valuable opportunity to foster trust. Sarah also expressed concern about how best to support the artist throughout the photoshoot process, particularly when mediating between the label's expectations and the artist's emotional well-being:

> Now the label is free to tell me this […] I don't know exactly how to do it, so it doesn't hurt. […] Then we have a breakdown or something down the line because now I made her too self-aware about her image. (148-151)

In response to these concerns, further discussions were held about how this event could serve as a meaningful opportunity to apply motivational incentives, through offering supportive feedback and encouragement to both Sarah and the artist following the photoshoot.

One barrier was noted during this check-in meeting. Sarah discussed that she found it difficult to find the appropriate scenarios to apply the AMMHTK to artists she worked with for under one year. She indicated that this was normal because they are still building trust.

I'm finding that, I don't know how to lead, how to lead a conversation without, you know, causing an issue there. At the same time, we still haven't built that much trust yet because she's fairly new to the roster. (64-65)

The final question reviews Sarah's current impressions of the AMMHTK and its usefulness and effectiveness. She shared that it has been useful. She noted the value of the check-in process. Sarah also mentioned the five-part action plan and how she wants to use it in the future but noted that it may not happen in the next three weeks. She also stated that she may need to use this action plan on an upcoming tour with the band on her roster. The implementation reflection for this meeting can be reviewed at Table Twenty-One, on the following page.

Table 21: Implementation Reflection Check-in Meeting Two

| Category | Question | Reports |
|---|---|---|
| Sections Used | Which parts of the tool kit did the manager use? | • Artist's Involvement: Engaged band members in decision regarding festival offer<br>• Transformational Leadership: Hired someone to assist with social media management<br>• Work-Life Balance: Enhanced work-life balance for band member through relieving social media duties |
| Adaptations | Did the manager modify, skip, or add anything? | Yes, remaining sections of the tool kit were not utilised. |
| Barriers | Any challenges in using the tool kit? | Participant noted that it was difficult to implement the tool kit with artist's she has started working with in the last year. Participant also discussed how five-part action plan may not be utilised within the next three week period. |

### *Check-in Meeting Three*

In the third check-in meeting, Sarah reviewed numerous ways that the AMMHTK was implemented, week three held the highest number of applications.

As discussed in the previous check-in meeting, Sarah attended a photo shoot for a new artist working with her on a consultancy basis. Before the shoot began, Sarah got a coffee with the artist. During this time, and throughout the shoot during breaks, she engaged in personal conversations which incorporated social interaction. In

addition, during the shoot itself, Sarah provided constant encouragement through verbal recognition.

> I was trying to build that trust […] I was trying to be very encouraging. I was like, "Come on, give me that, whatever." […] She actually really embraced it. At some point I even said, "Okay, maybe I'm being too much." And she was like, "No, no, no, I love it. This is just getting what I need out, so please keep it going." (16-23)

During this shoot, Sarah also implemented artist involvement through supporting the artist in the decision-making process of choosing the styling choices for the shoot. Sarah aimed to be sympathetic during these conversations to ensure she was promoting a supportive atmosphere:

> I was trying to be sensitive when I was talking to her. I was trying to comment but also inspire her to get into that mindset and perform like she needed to perform. Also, in a way when we were trying on different clothes, I was trying to include her in the decision as well. (41-44)

Sarah discussed that after the shoot concluded, the artist reached out and acknowledged the positive contribution Sarah and her involvement had on the overall photo shoot and her emotions afterwards.

> She (the artist) messaged me after, saying how much she appreciated that I was there and that it really meant a lot and she felt like you know that was a big difference in how she felt, how she performed during the photoshoot. […] She tends to get a bit anxious sometimes about things. […] So, I think that's really helped […] that photo shoot and that whole day that we worked together was really, really good. (29-40)

Sarah also exemplified aspects of a transformational leader during this outing through believing in her artist and supporting her, which also enhanced the organisational culture through the artists positive experience and response.

Sarah also employed and aspect of work-life balance by implementing boundaries that an artist set relating to the number of writing sessions they attend per week. The artist had identified in the past they did not want to surpass a certain number of sessions per week. An opportunity arose and Sarah had to explain this boundary to discuss a different scheduled date:

> I guess it's explaining to her what we need to prioritise for the client and then I did remember there was an example, one of our clients asked to not have more than X number of sessions per week. So, they could then fit all the things in life. (154-156)

In context of future planning, Sarah mentioned an upcoming content shoot with a new artist that would provide opportunities for incorporating motivation and social interaction. Additionally, Sarah discussed how she plans to further involve the band in decision-making regarding upcoming show and festival offers. She detailed that this level of artist involvement took planning and preparation:

> I've basically involved them a lot in the decision-making of making the festival happen. […] Guiding them through the process of what it would be, but also being very honest about that fee has been negotiated. […] I tried to explain to them as well, if we were to do it, we have to then be willing to lose it as well. And I feel it does make them feel, you know, to own also part of that decision and understand how it works and how to make it, you know, if it works it works and if it doesn't. (59-67)

Near the end of this meeting, Sarah mentioned a barrier regarding one of the AMMHTK's personalised recommendations. Sarah shared how some aspects of the tool kit come more naturally but others she was struggling to apply. She stated:

> Some come more naturally than others, but then the other ones I'm sure, well like having these conversations about the check-in or having like a five-part action plan. It's just good, I think the organisational culture is a bit harder for me. (127-131)

A second barrier was also addressed. Sarah planned to schedule well-being check-in meetings with her band this week but could not allocate the appropriate time. Sarah discussed the desire to hold this discussion but highlighted the importance of doing so in person.

The final question reviewed Sarah's current standing on the tool kit's usefulness. She affirmed that it was still very useful and showed a positive recognition of the AMMHTK's impacts so far.

The implementation reflection for check-in meeting three can be found below on Table Twenty-Two.

Table 22: Implementation Reflection Check-in Meeting Three

| Category | Question | Reports |
|---|---|---|
| Sections Used | Which parts of the tool kit did the manager use? | • Social Interaction: Coffee with artist prior to photo shoot. Engaged in personal conversations.<br>• Two-Way Communication: Engaged in conversations with the artist during photoshoot breaks.<br>• Transformational Leader: Supported an artist through a photo shoot.<br>• Motivation and Satisfaction: Encouraged artist through verbal recognition.<br>• Organisational Culture: Enhanced relationship culture through incorporating tool kit elements during photo shoot.<br>• Work-Life Balance: Respecting artists prior discussed boundaries regarding writing sessions. |
| Adaptations | Did the manager modify, skip, or add anything? | Yes, remaining sections of the tool kit were not utilised. No elements were added. |
| Barriers | Any challenges in using the tool kit? | • Five-Part Action Plan: Planned to incorporate but wanted to do in person.<br>• Conversation Options: Sarah noted she would most likely not use these. |

### Check-in Meeting Four

Four weeks prior to the first check-in meeting, the final check-in meeting took place. Unlike the first three check-in meetings, this meeting had a second phase. Like previous meetings, Sarah reviewed her documentation template and discussed future use and any barriers. In the second portion of this interview, two new questions were introduced. These questions aimed to measure the impact implementing the AMMHTK had on the artist and the overall success of the tool kit's effectiveness. Along with Sarah's response to these questions, the tool kit's success was also measured by the percentage of the tool kit used, following the tool kit success indicator which can be found on Table Seventeen.

*Phase Two: Artist Manager Mental Health Tool Kit Success Indicator Questions*

1. Was there a perceived positive or negative impact on artist's during the AMMHTK implementation process?

2. One a scale of 1-10, can you please rate the usability of the AMMHTK?

In the first portion of the interview, Sarah reviewed the ways in which she implemented the tool kit in the week prior. She noted that during this time, she was moving house, and this caused her to have less time to utilise the tool kit. Sarah mentioned a content shoot she had with an artist she has on her roster. She aimed to incorporate the artist's active involvement of decision-making during the shoot. Her goal was to ensure the artist felt comfortable and that her choices were heard.

During this shoot, which was outdoors, there was adverse weather that required the team to sit inside while hail subsided. While inside, Sarah used this opportunity to discuss topics that were not work related. She mentioned that, despite working with this artist for multiple years, they had not had the opportunity to have social interactions outside a business-setting. Sarah also used this time to share a personal anecdote with the artist regarding a track she had released. While Sarah had this revelation earlier, she wanted to share this in person to build trust and foster a stronger bond with the artist. Sarah mentioned that she felt this had a positive impact on the artist:

> I used that as well to kind of build that trust and that bond because I could have texted her about it but since I knew I was going to see her in person it was nice to tell the story and why I felt like that song was so relevant for me right now and she really appreciated it and she felt I could see that she felt very connected and very excited. (26-30)

This interaction promoted an opportunity for social interaction, Sarah's discussion regarding her connection to the artist's recent release further enhanced that social interaction and positively impacted the overall organisational culture of their relationship.

Sarah also continued to include the band in decision-making processes regarding upcoming live performance offers which encouraged artist's involvement. Her goal with this is to encourage their involvement and ensure they are not left 'In the dark.' Additionally, when holding these conversations, with the AMMHTK's recommendations in mind, Sarah paid extra care to the messages she sent. She explained:

> I think I'm doing now more often since I've been aware of this (the tool kit), and now it just kind of comes more naturally that I just don't reply to something a bit shorter or like straight to the point. I take a bit more time to

explain why I'm getting to the decision and make sure that they either agree or leave the door open for them to decide something different based on the facts and the information I've given them. (49-53)

Through actively assuring her messages are taken in the correct context, Sarah is enhancing the two-way communication between herself and the band members.

Despite the conclusion of the pilot study, Sarah discussed ways in which she plans to continue implementing the AMMHTK in the future. She mentioned that she had not yet found the appropriate time to schedule a well-being check-in with the band. Within this check-in she plans to implement the 'Conversation Options' section of her tool kit as well as discuss the 'Five-Part Action Plan.' Despite her eagerness to have this discussion, Sarah is confident that this conversation should be held in person. Due to numerous band members, location, and scheduling conflicts, she was unable to meet with them in person during the four-week period.

To review the implementation reflection for this check-in meeting see table Twenty-Three on the following page.

Table 23: Implementation Reflection Check-in Meeting Four

| Category | Question | Reports |
|---|---|---|
| Sections Used | Which parts of the tool kit did the manager use? | • Artist Involvement: Encouraged artist to engage in active decision-making during content shoot.<br>• Social Interaction: Utilised an opportunity to discuss not work related topics during a content shoot.<br>• Organisational culture: Enhanced trust in relationship through sharing personal anecdote with artist.<br>• Artist Involvement: Continued to involved band members in decision-making about live performance offers.<br>• Two-Way Communication: Ensuring messages are not too short or to the point so band members have all necessary details. |
| Adaptations | Did the manager modify, skip, or add anything? | Yes, remaining sections of the tool kit were not utilised. No elements were added. |
| Barriers | Any challenges in using the tool kit? | Yes, manager noted that there was not the adequate time to hold a well-being check-in with band members. |

*Phase Two: Artist Manager Mental Health Tool Kit Success Indicator*

In the second phase of the final check-in meeting, two additional questions were incorporated. The first question aimed to address the impact the AMMHTK had on the artists. Sarah considered that the artist's may not be entirely aware she was implementing new approaches. She noted that the tool kit encouraged a slight change in approach, opposed to an immense one:

> I think I would need to ask them if they felt anything different, but I do think that some artists aren't really aware, so I was, it's been for me more than a huge change in approach. It's been more of a soft change of approach. Because I was already quite... I think I'm quite sensitive to their needs. (77-80)

Sarah went on to discuss the positive impact of the AMMHTK's utilisation and impact on artist's, despite their direct acknowledgement:

> I think it's been a really useful. I think they definitely appreciate how I'm working with them. I think they did before, and I'm sure if I were to bring it up and say, "Have you noticed that I'm trying to do this and this?" I'm sure they'd be like, "Oh, no, actually, yeah, you have." But I don't think it's

something that they would just notice if I don't ask, but I think what's been useful is for me. (83-87)

Along with Sarah's discussion. In past check-in meetings, two instances were noted where the manager received a personal acknowledgement from an artist regarding the positive impact of part of the AMMHTK's implementation. Occurring prior to the photo shoot and then content shoot with two different female musicians. In the photo shoot, Sarah provided encouragement and motivated the artist through positive commentary. The following week, Sarah promoted social interaction with a different artist and shared a personal anecdote relating to one of her tracks. In each of these instances, the artist reached out after the interaction and discussed their gratitude and overall positive experience. These events were reviewed with Sarah in the final check-in to note moments artist's feedback provided evidence of a positive impact.

During this conversation, Sarah reviewed future applications of the AMMHTK and the overall positive impact it has had on her management role. She noted that having mental health resources, an action plan, and conversation options made her feel more at peace. Sarah is also eager to hold regular well-being check-ins with artists in the future. She shared:

> Having the other resources about the mental health resources and how to kind of come up with this conversation, when to have this chat with the band about regular check-ins and stuff, knowing that I can just go back into a tool kit, have a look ways to startup a conversation and like if there is a crisis how to do the five-step action plan and things like that. I think just knowing that I have that at hand in case I need it. It just feels, I feel more at peace. (90-95)

Along with feeling at peace, Sarah shared she now feel like knows 'How to do X, Y and Z.' Along with artist's impact, Sarah's impact of the AMMHTK is extremely valuable.

The final question involved Sarah rating the AMMHTK's usability on a one through ten scale. Ten, being extremely easy to use. Sarah shared that the tool kit is a ten. She preferred that it was in a portable document format (PDF). She noted that while the tool kit is a ten, the documentation template is rated nine. She stated that this was because she had to make a copy each time, rather than a new template for each week. Sarah suggested that the template be organised in an ongoing row, rather than column, where applications can be noted continuously rather than a week-by-week

basis. She also specified that it would be beneficial to implement the documentation into a Live Google Document, so that team members can add to it simultaneously. Sarah went on to discuss how this documentation template could be a tool employed within human resource sectors of larger management organisations to ensure implementation. Discussing the documentation template Sarah shared:

> It's such an easy tool to report back ahead of having that chat with them to check in. And again, bigger organisations, same thing. You could have human resource or someone in charge making sure that this is being implemented. (159-162)

These recommendations are extremely beneficial and valuable to the tool kit's further development. Further AMMHTK's advancements are discussed in the next section.

Along with the usability and impact on artists, the third element that measures the tool kit's effectiveness is the percentage of AMMHTK sections used by the participant. Within Sarah's personalised tool kit, there are eleven pages. An overview of the tool kit's layout:

1. Personalised Recommendations

2. Definition of Transformational Leadership

3. Five-Part Action Plan

4. Signs and Symptoms of Stress's Impact on the Body

5. UK Mental Health Resources

6. Implementation Examples: Part One

7. Implementation Examples: Part Two

8. Conversation Options: Introduction

9. Conversation Options: Discussion Topics

10. Conversation Options: Follow-Up Statements

11. Tool Kit Documentation Template

Within these eleven pages, ten were measured within the AMMHTK's overall adoption. Page two, defining transformational leadership, was not included in the measurement. Information was supplemental and is covered over the transformational

leadership section on page one. Page six and seven, implementation examples, were also removed. This section of the tool was personal to the pilot study and Sarah's concerns on how to implement the tool kit appropriately. Page eleven, the documentation template, was also removed from measurement. This was used weekly in the check-in process as a requirement of participation.

Within the remaining pages, a total of eleven sections were measured in total. Including pages one, three through five, and eight through ten. In page one, the seven separate sections, personalised recommendations, were each measured. Out of the eleven sections measured, seven were applied by the participant. Ultimately, 64% of the AMMHTK was employed throughout the duration of the four-week period. These seven segments included all seven sections of personalised recommendations.

A table outlining the sections used and week of applications can be found below on table Twenty-Four.

Table 24: Artist Manager Mental Health Tool Kit Measured Usage

| Tool Kit Section | Page Number | Used? (Yes/No) | When |
|---|---|---|---|
| Two-Way Communication | Page 1 | Yes | Week 1, Week 3, Week 4 |
| Work-Life Balance | Page 1 | Yes | Week 2, Week 3 |
| Artist Involvement | Page 1 | Yes | Week 2, Week 4 |
| Transformational Leadership | Page 1 | Yes | Week 2, Week 3 |
| Motivation and Satisfaction | Page 1 | Yes | Week 3 |
| Social Interaction | Page 1 | Yes | Week 1, Week 3, Week 4 |
| Organisational Culture | Page 1 | Yes | Week 3, Week 4 |
| Five-Part Action Plan | Page 3 | No | N/A |
| Signs and Symptoms of Stress | Page 4 | No | N/A |
| UK Mental Health Resources | Page 5 | No | N/A |
| Conversation Options | Pages 8-10 | No | N/A |

## 6.2.4 Pilot Study: Part One Analysis and Discussion

This section will reflect on the effectiveness of the AMMHTK in practice, drawing connections to the findings from the reflexive thematic analysis. It will explore how the first part of the pilot study either supports or diverges from the broader patterns identified, providing insights into the tool kit's real-world impact and potential for application across different artist management contexts.

*Artist Manager Mental Health Tool Kit Entry Survey*

Sarah's request for clarification when asked about mental health involvement indicates wording should be rephrased to ensure participants comprehension.

Sarah's response from question two reveals a critical management skill, the ability to adapt and overcome in a time of crisis. Despite caring for her artists well-being, she lacked a mental health crisis plan, resulting in overwhelming situations she had to resolve reactively rather than proactively. Highlighting an industry-wide issue where caring managers lack access to mental health resources and clear action plans, putting both parties at risk. Sarah's creation of a 'safe word' system demonstrates the innovative problem-solving of managers who care but lack formal guidance. This approach particularly benefits artists uncomfortable discussing mental health directly. Her need to improvise reflects an industry gap rather than a lack of concern.

The AMMHTK highlights relationship flexibility between business and friendship modes. Sarah noted that when shifting to a more business-oriented relationship during stressful periods, artists often became more demanding and less understanding of her workload. Revealing the importance of balancing professional boundaries with personal connection. The business relationship can benefit artists but may reduce empathy toward managers, aligning with earlier findings that friendship-based relationships sometimes result in managers not being taken seriously.

*Check-in Introduction*

In the original format, check-in meetings were not included. After the initial meeting and survey, the participant did not apply the AMMHTK in the following weeks. Allowing for a deeper data collection process and informing the analysation by providing recommendations and adaptions to be made throughout the four-week period.

This meeting also introduced conversation options and implementation examples. Sarah additionally discussed apprehension on how to apply elements on the tool kit in a real-world setting. Implementation examples were added to Sarah's AMMHTK. Apprehension could mean that the recommendations or titles are not explained in sufficient detail. Additional adjustments can be made to the tool kit's tailored recommendations through ensuring language is clear and provide specific examples if necessary. Enhancing the previous notion that the tool kit's utilisation

should be conducted in-person to address questions and provide further recommendations or adaptations.

### *Check-in Meeting One*

The first check-in meeting provided valuable insight on the AMMHTK's effectiveness and its personalised recommendations in practice. Sarah implemented two key recommendations, social interaction and two-way communication.

For social interaction, Sarah engaged with artists outside the business context by inviting them to industry events to foster stronger personal connections which encouraged one artist to be more open about personal experiences. Human resource management research supports using social interactions to enhance employee well-being (Lappalainen et al., 2024). Establishing workplace belonging contributes to more satisfying work experiences and improved well-being (Lappalainen et al., 2024). Previous research also highlights the significance of social interaction between artist and manager and its impact on the artist's success (Hull, 2021). Sarah's experience reinforces these research findings, demonstrating the positive impact of social interaction on the artist manager relationship and artist well-being.

It is important to consider additional research discussing the balance between social interactions and artists work-life balance to prevent overwork (Atkin and Brooks, 2021). While Sarah's intentions were positive, social interactions within business contexts could unintentionally increase artists workloads. The AMMHTK recommends engaging in social interactions outside business settings, which presents challenges for managers like Sarah who balance friendship and business relationship types.

This presents a practical challenge for busy managers with multiple artists, particularly when geographical distance exists. Sarah noted difficulty arranging well-being check-ins with her band based in northern London while she works from central London. Despite these challenges, she observed positive responses from artists showing increased openness. The AMMHTK should adjust social interaction recommendations to address these practical constraints.

Regarding two-way communication, Sarah identified early signs of mental distress in an artist handling social media. Noticing declining work quality, she discovered personal and financial stressors affecting performance. She helped

prioritise tasks and introduced a social media management tool to improve workflow organisation. Sarah encouraged artist participation, fostering trust and increased support (Andreu Perez et al., 2022). For artist managers, enhancing two-way communication is essential for artist success, as managers convey the artist's identity to audiences (Gaudesi, 2016).

This adaptation highlights managers understanding of competing priorities. Sarah recognised the importance of maintaining social media presence for the band's success while supporting the artist's well-being. Future managers may similarly need to balance restructuring artists workloads with maintaining essential responsibilities. Managers understand that missed promotion could impact sales or streams, affecting artists perception of their success. Research shows pressure to succeed negatively affects musician's well-being (Araújo et al., 2019; Record Union, 2019). Managers may also consider financial implications, as their commission reflects artists overall earnings (Allen, 2022; Hull, 2021; Morrow, 2018).

Overall, Sarah found the AMMHTK well-structured and practical for ongoing application. While no significant barriers emerged initially, she enhanced its effectiveness by introducing a social media management tool. Demonstrating the tool kit's effectiveness in promoting artist well-being through structured communication and managerial support while highlighting the complexities of balancing artist autonomy with managerial guidance.

### Check-in Meeting Two

In the second week, Sarah applied three of the AMMHTK's recommendations. These were under the category of artists involvement, transformational leadership, and work-life balance. She applied these through a detailed financial decision conversation with band members and by hiring a social media manager to reduce an artist's workload. However, challenges emerged when applying the tool kit with newer artists due to trust-building limitations and in navigating gender-specific concerns around image and styling discussions.

Sarah applied the artist involvement approach when advising a band about a festival offer. The band ultimately declined the opportunity, prioritising well-being over short-term financial gain. Sarah reflected on how her approach to such decisions had evolved. Previously, financial incentives might have influenced her to encourage

participation, as her income was tied to their live performances. However, the AMMHTK reinforced long-term sustainability's importance, and she recognised that pressuring the band into an overwhelming schedule could lead to burnout, ultimately proving detrimental for both parties.

Research indicates that participative approaches enhance employee well-being (Bond and Bunce, 2011; Dobson et al., 2009; Landsbergis and Vivona-Vaughm, 1995). The artist manager relationship is inherently collaborative, with artistic vision and career development intersecting to create shared creative and personal strategies (Morrow, 2018). Despite this, managers commonly handle business discussions independently, involving artists only when direct input is required. Sarah's implementation of the AMMHTK's recommendations, which encourage involving artists in decisions affecting their well-being, provides further evidence of the positive impact on artists and their workload management.

Sarah continued addressing a band member's social media management responsibilities, which had worsened since the previous week. Despite her earlier attempts to help structure priorities, the workload remained unmanageable and negatively affected the musician's well-being. In response, she hired an external social media manager to alleviate this burden. In an industry where maintaining reliable work-life balance challenges modern musicians due to their multidimensional careers, providing artist managers with strategies to support well-being plays an imperative role in fostering healthier work environments (Musgrave, 2023; Smith and Teague, 2015).

This decision demonstrated transformational leadership by recognising when further intervention was necessary. Research shows that incorporating transformational leadership into the artist manager relationship significantly benefits artists overall well-being through recognising the value of healthy work-life balance (Bass, 1985; Bass and Riggio, 2006; Berson et al., 2015; Chen et al., 2003; Klug et al., 2018). Rather than absorbing the workload herself and risking her own well-being, she found a sustainable solution benefitting both parties. She demonstrated sensitivity to artist needs while encouraging and empowering them through genuine care, elements of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985; Bass and Riggio, 2006; Berson et al., 2015; Burns, 1978; Chen et al., 2003; Klug et al., 2018; Lavigna and Paarlberg, 2010; Trottier et al., 2008; Udin, 2024).

Results from the reflexive thematic analysis highlighted manager burnout when overextending to manage artists mental well-being. Two managers, Isabella and Morgan, recounted periods of withdrawing from their responsibilities due to adverse impacts on their own mental health, eventually redirecting their management approaches and mental health involvement levels.

Sarah identified a challenge in applying the AMMHTK's principles regarding mental health implications of photoshoots, particularly around styling and image-related feedback. She noted gender differences in these discussions, finding them more straightforward with male musicians who seemed more accustomed to external input on their image, while conversations with female artists required more careful handling due to potential self-esteem and body image concerns. Providing important feedback for the tool kit's development, which currently lacks gender-specific recommendations. Findings from the reflexive thematic analysis highlighted similar concerns regarding female experiences in a male-dominated industry, including narratives of abuse, maltreatment, and marginalisation.

After two weeks, Sarah found the AMMHTK valuable, particularly for structuring reflective check-ins and keeping well-being central to her management strategy. She expressed interest in further implementing the five-part action plan but acknowledged full implementation might require more time. She anticipated an upcoming tour would provide an opportunity to apply this framework more structurally.

### *Check-in Meeting Three*

The third check-in meeting demonstrated the highest number of AMMHTK elements applied, with Sarah implementing five sections from the personalised recommendations. During this meeting, Sarah discussed a photoshoot with a new artist.

This meeting revealed valuable insights into the AMMHTK's impact. In the second check-in meeting, Sarah had shared potential stressors for the artist regarding the photoshoot. Following tool kit recommendations, she incorporated motivation through active encouragement, providing vocal recognition and emotional support. The artist, who experiences anxiety, messaged Sarah expressing gratitude for her

presence and encouragement, noting that Sarah's involvement significantly improved her performance and overall experience.

This experience demonstrated Sarah's growing ability to balance leadership with emotional support. By adopting a transformational leadership style, she empowered the artist to feel confident and engaged, ultimately improving the shoot's outcome. An integral aspect of transformational leadership is sensitivity to others needs and providing encouragement (Bass, 1985; Bass and Riggio, 2006; Berson et al., 2015; Chen et al., 2003; Klug et al., 2018). Sarah accomplished this through motivation, receiving positive feedback that reinforces HRM research acknowledging the fundamental relationship between employee motivation, satisfaction, and overall workplace well-being (Davidson and Yan, 2013; Ghosh and Satyawadi, 2012; Kuo, 2013; Patwardhan et al., 2013; Udin, 2024).

This social connection reinforced the AMMHTK's emphasis on fostering a supportive organisational culture by creating a friendly and encouraging atmosphere. Sarah additionally supported the artist in making styling decisions, ensuring they felt included, an approach known to enhance employee well-being (Bond and Bunce, 2011; Dobson et al., 2009; Landsbergis and Vivona-Vaughm, 1995). Sarah aimed to be sensitive in her approach, offering guidance while allowing the artist to make choices aligned with their vision. The implementation of artist involvement aligned with the tool kit's recommendation of balancing managerial input with artist autonomy. Autonomy is essential given the unique nature of this relationship, which lacks set office hours, formal hiring, or specific qualifications (Allen, 2022; Morrow, 2018). Sarah ensured decisions were collaborative rather than imposed, reinforcing a positive and respectful working relationship.

Sarah also implemented work-life balance strategies when managing another artist's schedule by demonstrating her commitment to respecting artists well-being. Instead of pressuring the artist to take on more work, she prioritised their long-term sustainability. By respecting the artist's boundary, Sarah cultivated trust, which is a vital aspect in the artist manager relationship. Previous research demonstrates that a collaborative and trust-based approach serves as a cornerstone, fostering an environment conducive to the artist's professional growth and long-term success (Gaudesi, 2016). Human resource management research correlates innovative work

behaviour with trusting leadership, which subsequently contributes positively to employee engagement levels (Ali et al., 2019; Klug et al., 2018).

During this meeting, Sarah identified a key challenge in implementing the AMMHTK. While some aspects came naturally, others, such as building an intentional organisational culture, proved more difficult. She noted that structured check-ins and formal planning were useful but required additional effort to incorporate into her routine. Suggesting that while Sarah successfully implemented many tool kit elements, certain recommendations required more conscious adaptation. She aimed to further refine the organisational culture, focusing on building a long-term framework for communication, well-being, and collaboration.

### Check-in Meeting Four

The final check-in meeting followed a modified structure compared to previous meetings. The first portion maintained the established format, with Sarah discussing her AMMHTK implementation over the past week. The second portion of this meeting included two additional questions which reviewed the impact the tool kit had on the artist and Sarah's usability of the tool kit. Sarah's response to the questions in phase two are discussed in the following sections, 'Research Questions' and 'Tool Kit Success Indicator.'

In the first phase of the meeting, Sarah described her AMMHTK usage during the previous week. She highlighted a content shoot with one of her artists, during which she prioritised the artist's involvement in decision-making. Sarah focused on ensuring the artist felt comfortable and that her input was valued, emphasising collaboration throughout the process. Human resource management research supports this approach, showing that encouraging employee involvement enhances well-being (Bond and Bunce, 2011; Dobson et al., 2009; Landsbergis and Vivona-Vaughm, 1995).

During the shoot, adverse weather forced the team to pause and wait indoors. Sarah used this opportunity to engage in casual, non-work-related conversation with the artist. She observed that despite their established working relationship, they had not previously connected outside of a professional setting. Research indicates that such social interactions can positively impact artist well-being (Lappalainen et al., 2024). Sarah also shared a personal story about her emotional connection to one of the artist's

recent tracks. By sharing a personal experience, Sarah reinforced the friendship aspect of their professional relationship, fostering trust and a deeper bond. Human resource management research demonstrates that trusting leadership contributes positively to employee engagement levels (Ali et al., 2019; Klug et al., 2018).

In the final week, Sarah continued involving her band in decision-making regarding upcoming live performances, keeping them informed and engaged in key discussions. She became particularly mindful of her communication style, ensuring her messages aligned with the AMMHTK's recommendations. Through refining her messaging, Sarah enhanced two-way communication, ensuring clarity and openness. This development illustrates how the tool kit can support artist managers in translating abstract concepts like communication and inclusion into practical, everyday behaviours.

Although the first part of the pilot study had concluded, Sarah expressed a clear intention to continue integrating the AMMHTK into her ongoing management practices, suggesting a perceived long-term value beyond the research context, which was initiated in the second portion of the pilot study. Her interest in using the conversation options section and introducing the five-part action plan reflects an evolving awareness of the importance of structured yet flexible approaches to well-being support. Sarah emphasised a strong preference for holding these conversations in person, which highlights her recognition of the relational and emotional distinctions that can be lost in remote formats, especially when addressing sensitive topics like mental health.

However, the logistical challenges she encountered, such as coordinating among band members based in different locations, spoke to a common barrier in the implementation of well-being practices in music management. The lack of a scheduled in-person check-in during the pilot does not indicate disengagement but rather highlights a tension between intention and feasibility. Revealing an important insight, even when managers are motivated to adopt well-being frameworks, structural and operational realities may delay or inhibit full implementation.

This instance raises critical questions about how the AMMHTK can be adapted or supported to meet the logistical demands of artist managers who often juggle multiple roles and unpredictable schedules. For instance, hybrid approaches, such as initial remote discussions followed by more in-depth in-person follow-ups. Illustrating

the importance of framing well-being support not as a one-off task, but as an ongoing process, that must remain adaptable to the realities of touring schedules, geographical distance, and group dynamics.

Sarah's reflections point to the AMMHTK's potential as a living resource, one that can grow with the manager and adapt to the changing contexts of the artist's career. Her commitment to using it beyond the four-week period suggests that when given autonomy and room for personalisation, managers are more likely to incorporate well-being practices into their professional routines.

### *Research Questions*

Data was collected through the tool kit documentation template, implementation reflections, and a final usability rating scale. An AMMHTK success indicator was also developed to support analysis (Markless and Streatfield, 2012). These methods provided insight into three core research questions:

1. How were the AMMHTK recommendations applied?

2. Did the artist manager alter their approach?

3. Was the AMMHTK deemed useful by the manager?

Sarah employed the entirety of the first page of the AMMHTK which provided personalised recommendations based on her responses in the entry survey. Sarah applied the tool kit in varied and gradually increasing ways over the four-week period. She used two sections in week one, three in week two, six in week three, and five in week four, despite the final week coinciding with her personal move. Her consistent use demonstrated a clear progression. Initially, she found implementing social interaction most straightforward. Over time, she became more aware of how different recommendations could overlap in a single situation.

The AMMHTK documentation template and check-in meetings supported a structured yet adaptable approach. Sarah modified recommendations based on context and availability of time or resources. For example, she used friendly coffee meetings before creative shoots as informal support opportunities.

Although full implementation of the AMMHTK would be ideal, some sections, such as the five-part action plan and mental health emergency resources, are designed

for crisis use and were not needed during this period. Still, their presence offered a tailored foundation of support suited to her artist's needs.

In response to the second research question, Sarah altered her management approach in numerous ways throughout the four-week period. Sarah emphasised open dialogue with her artists to ensure they felt heard and supported. She engaged in conversations with artists to understand their workloads, emotional states, and current work-life balance. For example, she reached out to a distressed band member and eventually hired a social media manager to reduce their pressure, an example of transformational leadership. Additionally, Sarah discussed how, with the AMMHTK in mind, she paid extra attention to correspondence with artists, assuring clear and supportive communication.

Sarah consistently demonstrated flexibility between professional and personal roles, typical of a 'Mixed Relationship' manager. She arranged social opportunities both within and outside formal settings and provided positive reinforcement during shoots. Artists later expressed appreciation, noting how these efforts positively impacted their experience and strengthened their relationship.

Sarah also adapted certain recommendations. In the first check-in meeting Sarah recommended a social media organisation application for an artist dealing with a heavy workload. The AMMHTK recommends working with the artist to come up with a plan to ensure workload aligns with their goals. In the next meeting, Sarah noted how the application was not successful and that she ended up hiring a social media manager to assist the band.

Regarding the third research question, Sarah assessed the AMMHTK's usefulness across four instances. In early check-ins, she described it as well-organised and accessible. By week three, she could better articulate its impact. In the final meeting, Sarah was asked to rate the usability of the tool kit on a one through ten scale. Sarah rated the tool kit's usability as a ten, preferring it in PDF format. Sarah rated the continuous usage and using a Live Google Document for real-time updates, rather than sticking with the existing template format. Sarah also considered introducing a feedback mechanism for artists responses to the tool kit implementation, suggesting periodic check-ins with artists to gather feedback on her management and support levels, which was not part of the original tool kit.

In addition to these discussions, Sarah noted that the AMMHTK encouraged a 'soft' shift in approach, rather than a radical change. As the suggested approach type for two approach categories, 'Variable Involvement' and 'Mixed Relationship-Type' Sarah already adopts many aspects of the tool kits recommendations that aligns with HRM principles and past artist manager research. Now that Sarah has an action plan within the tool kit, she is now an 'Active Action' manager as well. Suggesting that only subtle management changes were necessary, such as the introduction of a five-part action plan and subsequent conversation topics.

Despite this, artists reporting positive impacts relating to these changes also indicated that small shifts encouraged meaningful impacts to not only the artist but the manager. Sarah reported feeling 'at peace' with the AMMHTK, providing her with a consistent sense of security and confidence in her practice.

The second question that was introduced in the final check-in meeting reviewed the perceived impact on the artist, this will be discussed in the next section reviewing the tool kit success indicator.

### *Artist Manager Mental Health Tool Kit Success Indicator*

The AMMHTK success indicator was created to measure the overall use, effectiveness, and impact of the tool kit. There are three sections within the success indicator, 'Adoption', 'Impact, and 'Sustainability.'

Adoption was measured through the participants AMMHTK documentation template and the implementation reflections. Table Twenty-Four reviews each section of the tool kit used, and the timeframe. Within the four-week period 64% of the tool kit was used by the participant. The entirety of the participants usage of the tool kit was from the first page which held the personalised recommendations. Some sections, like the five-part action plan or stress indicators, were unused as no mental health crisis occurred. However, they remain valuable for future situations.

Interestingly, an unused section of the AMMHTK was included for Sarah personally by request. The 'Conversation Options' were included when Sarah stated she was unaware how to address a well-being discussion with an artist. While they were not used in the four-week period, this aspect of the tool kit will also be applied when Sarah implements well-being check-in meetings.

Impact referred to the perceived positive or negative impact the AMMHTK's application had on the artist. While Sarah did not directly solicit feedback from artists, she believed her increased support had a positive influence. She noted that although artists didn't comment unprompted, she felt they would recognise her efforts if asked. An indirect observation suggests benefit, though the lack of formal feedback limits certainty.

This notation is valuable, without a direct acknowledgement from the artist, it is difficult to evaluate if there was a direct impact on their well-being. To address this, future versions of the AMMHTK could include built-in artist feedback mechanisms, such as anonymous or in-person check-ins every three to six months, depending on the manager artist relationship.

In addition to her general discussion, Sarah's records include two instances where artists expressed personal gratitude following her use of the AMMHTK. One instance occurred prior to a photo shoot, during which Sarah offered encouragement and positive commentary, and another occurred while taking shelter during a content shoot where she shared a personal anecdote. In both cases, the artists later reached out to acknowledge their appreciation and discuss the positive experiences they had, providing evidence of the tool kit's beneficial impact on artist well-being.

Regarding sustainability, Sarah discussed using the conversation options section of the AMMHTK in the future when coordinating well-being check-ins with the artists on her roster. She highlighted the importance of holding this conversation in person. Sarah also noted the limitations of having these conversations with new artists on her roster. In the final check-in, Sarah discussed future utilisation of the tool kit and the overall positive impact it has had on her management role.

### 6.2.5 Pilot Study Part One: Conclusion

In conclusion, the first part of the single-case pilot study successfully addressed the aims and objectives outlined at the outset, providing a detailed exploration of the introduction and application of the AMMHTK in a practical setting. By focusing on the experiences of Sarah, results not only evaluated the effectiveness of the tool kit but also examined its relevance in addressing the immediate challenges faced by artist managers. Findings contributed to reflexive thematic analysis by offering insights into

the awareness of UK music managers regarding mental health resources and their role in supporting their artists well-being.

The application of the AMMHTK confirmed that managers involvement in supporting artist mental health varies significantly, with factors such as time constraints, financial limitations, and unclear boundaries often impeding their ability to act. Through personalising the tool kit for Sarah's specific management style, the study provided tailored recommendations that allowed her to better understand and navigate her role in supporting her artist's mental health. This process, including the follow-up meetings and feedback collection, highlighted the tool kit's potential to be adapted for different management approaches, enhancing its overall usefulness. Additionally, findings further solidified the need for comprehensive support systems that can assess and guide managers, ultimately fostering a better understanding of their responsibilities in managing both the professional and emotional well-being of their artists. The results contribute tool kit refinements, ensuring that it is equipped to support a wide range of managers, regardless of their level of involvement in artist mental health.

Section 6.3 will discuss the necessary refinements made to the tool kit based on the results from part one of the pilot study. Section 6.4 reviews the framework, results, and analysis of the second portion of the study.

## 6.3   ARTIST MANAGER MENTAL HEALTH TOOL KIT REFINEMENT

This section presents the refined AMMHTK. The first section, 6.3.1, provides a refinement overview, 6.3.3 reviews refinements made based on participant and researcher recommendations, and section 6.3.4 discusses adjustments made based on sections that were utilised and unutilised during the first part of the study. The following section, 6.4, reviews part two of the pilot study which was conducted to further assess the adjustments made in preparation for a future large-scale study.

### 6.3.1 Refinement Overview

Following analysis of the pilot study findings, several concerns, barriers, and suggestions for improvement emerged from the participant's feedback. These identified areas formed the foundation for developing a refined version of the AMMHTK, which was subsequently tested through part two of the pilot study. In addition to addressing the participant's specific recommendations, the researcher

implemented further amendments based on theoretical considerations identified during the data analysis process. Following each section, figures will be presented that show the refined tool kit, this will be specific to the participant and her personalised recommendations based on her responses to the entry survey. Each section will note which areas are specific to Sarah versus a general tool kit, which a manager would receive following the onboarding process. A general tool kit can be viewed in the following link: [General Tool Kit.](General Tool Kit.)

Refinements made to the AMMHTK have been categorised into three sections. These sections include recommendations from the participant and researcher, barriers and limitations, and sections of the tool kit utilised and unutilised.

1. Recommendations: This segment combines improvement suggestions provided by the participant throughout the pilot study and areas identified by the researcher requiring further development or modification.

2. Barriers and Limitations: This section identifies specific areas where the tool kit failed to meet usability expectations or created implementation challenges for the participant. Additionally, this section documents areas where participants required enhanced guidance on translating tool kit components into practical management strategies.

3. Sections Added and Unutilised: This area documents modifications made to the tool kit's structure and content during the pilot study period. This section also examines tool kit components that remained underutilised or unused during the pilot study.

### 6.3.2 Researcher and Participant Recommendations: Issues and Refinement

The refinement process incorporated recommendations from two sources, researcher observations of implementation challenges and direct participant feedback regarding usability and functionality. Researcher recommendations emerged from analysis of pilot study data and identification of structural or procedural barriers that could impact larger-scale deployment. These recommendations focused on enhancing accountability mechanisms and addressing format related accessibility concerns. Researcher recommendations consisted of two key elements, check-in meeting implementation and the overall page length and accessibility of the AMMHTK.

Participant recommendations originated from direct user experience and provided insights into practical implementation preferences and integration requirements. These recommendations highlighted not only personal preferences in how the tool kit could be applied within real-world management settings but also identified specific needs for integration into existing management practices.

### *Researcher Recommendation: Check-In Meeting Implementation*

During the initial pilot study design, structured check-in meetings were not incorporated into the implementation protocol. During the study period, it became apparent that the participant experienced difficulties maintaining consistent engagement with the tool kit without external accountability measures. Highlighting the need for systematic support mechanisms to encourage regular AMMHTK application.

Structured check-in meetings will be incorporated as a standard component of AMMHTK implementation. These meetings will serve two purposes, they provide ongoing support for managers developing familiarity with tool kit navigation and establish accountability mechanisms to encourage consistent usage.

### *Researcher Recommendation: Page Length and Accessibility Concerns*

The original tool kit comprised six pages. During the pilot study, two additional sections were incorporated based on participant needs, expanding the document by five pages. Combined with the documentation template, the final AMMHTK reached eleven pages in length. While this comprehensive approach provided extensive resources and guidance for mental health management, the document length created potential barriers to accessibility and usability.

To prevent document length from overwhelming managers and limiting access to critical information, the AMMHTK was redesigned as a Google Site platform. Google Sites is a code-free website platform that allows users to create simple websites (Google, 2025a). This digital format organises information through navigable sections while preserving all content. The platform integrates with Google Workspace tools, creating a streamlined implementation process using familiar technology (Google, 2025b).

Unlike Sarah's standardised AMMHTK, each manager receives a personalised tool kit bearing their name. These customised recommendations adapt based on

responses to an entry survey completed during onboarding, while the general tool kit provides recommendations aligned with suggested approach types.

Figure 21: Sarah's Refined Artist Manager Mental Health Tool Kit Homepage
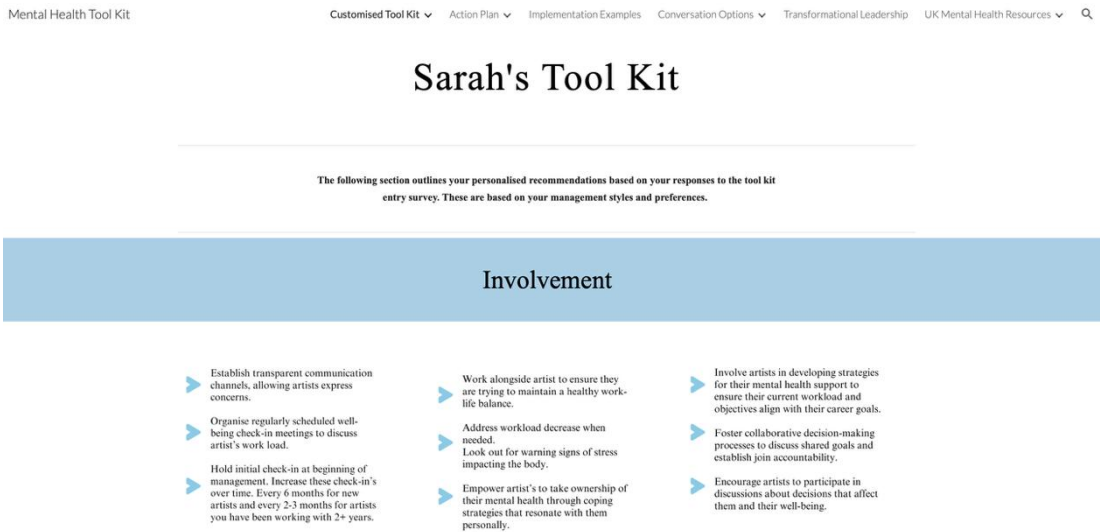


***Participant Recommendation: Documentation Template Enhancement***

Sarah expressed appreciation for the documentation template's utility in tracking tool kit implementation and outcomes. While the inclusion of the AMMHTK was deemed useful, she identified a significant practical barrier, the need to create new templates weekly proved time-consuming and the potential to impact consistent usage. The participant recommended transforming this component into a more sustainable format that would facilitate ongoing documentation without requiring repeated setup.

The documentation template was converted into a Google Sheets format, creating a dynamic, reusable document that eliminates the need for weekly template recreation. A Google Sheet is an online spreadsheet that allows easy access to reuse and repeat a document (Google, 2025c). A living document was integrated into the Google Site platform, providing seamless access while maintaining the tracking functionality valued by the participant. The contents of the documentation template remained identical to the existing template used in the pilot study. The template will remain identical for future managers.

Figure 22: Refined Documentation Template



*Participant Recommendation: Format Preference Considerations*

When asked to evaluate the AMMHTK's overall usability on a scale from one to ten, Sarah rated it a ten and specifically praised the PDF format for its accessibility and professional presentation. Positive feedback indicated that format considerations should be carefully balanced when implementing refinement to the Google Site format.

While transitioning to the Google Site platform, design elements that captured the professional appearance and user-friendly aspects of the original PDF format were preserved. The site design maintained the simple, organised presentation that the participant valued while enhancing functionality through digital platform capabilities.

### 6.3.3 Barriers and Limitations

This section highlights aspects of the AMMHTK that did not align with the participant's practical needs or presented difficulties in day-to-day use. These barriers encompassed difficulties encountered during real-world application and conceptual areas requiring greater clarity or depth of explanation. Each identified limitation was addressed through targeted refinements to enhance the tool kit's functionality and applicability in professional management settings. This area also outlines instances where additional clarification or support was necessary to effectively apply the tool kit's contents within real-world management contexts.

### *Geographical Constraints*

One notable barrier involved the geographical distance between Sarah and the artists she manages. For example, while her band is based in northern England, Sarah operates from central London. She found that although the AMMHTK's structured check-in process was beneficial, it required significant additional effort to implement due to location-based scheduling conflicts. Raising broader questions about the tool kit's suitability for managers who support artists across different cities or countries, particularly when physical proximity is limited and schedules are inconsistent.

This recommendation required further conversations with Sarah regarding the value of holding a check-in remotely versus in-person. In the second portion of the pilot study, this topic was addressed further and analysed, which poses logistical risks. For example, if the opportunity to connect face-to-face arises infrequently, perhaps only a handful of times per year, mental health discussions may be deprioritised in favour of urgent business tasks or social rapport. Without a clear protocol for remote engagement, important mental health issues may remain unaddressed. The goal is to normalise mental health dialogue regardless of format and to ensure such discussions don't become overly formal or uncomfortable when opportunities arise.

To ensure this constraint addressed, an additional section of the AMMHTK was added, titled 'Artists Only.' Within it, there is a guide on how managers can develop a Google Calendar. Allowing managers to list their availability for remote or in-person conversations, giving artists the flexibility to choose times that work best for them and improving the likelihood of regular communication, regardless of distance. Like Sarah, future managers will receive this information within their tool kit.

Figure 23: Google Calendar Guide



## Calendar Guide

### Well-Being Check-in Calendar

Here is a step-by-step guide on how to create an 'Event' through Google Workspace to allow artist's to schedule a well-being check-in when you are available.

Provide details on whether you are available for a remote or in-person check-in based on your schedule.

1. Go to Google Calendar on desktop (must use desktop for this feature).
2. Click a time on your calendar.
3. Select "Appointment Schedule" (or "Appointment Slots").
4. Add a title like "Well-Being Check-In (Confidential)".
5. Set the available hours (e.g. Mondays 2–4 PM).
6. Choose slot durations (e.g. 20 or 30 minutes).
7. Click "Next" to customise settings:
8. Choose whether people can book one-time or recurring meetings.
9. Click "Save and Publish".
10. Copy and share the Booking Page Link with your artists via email or within the Artist's-Only Tool Kit section.

### *Challenges in New Artist Relationships*

Sarah also reported difficulty applying the AMMHTK with newer artists she recently started managing. Mental health discussions often rely on trust, which takes time to build. Introducing these topics prematurely risked feeling intrusive or inauthentic.

In response, a dedicated section was added to support mental health conversations with newly signed or recently onboarded artists, titled 'Guide for New Artists' which is included under the 'Conversation Guide' section. Including a step-by-step guide that outlines how and when to initiate such discussions, how to set expectations, and why early conversations can foster a foundation of openness that benefits both the manager and artist over time. While this was specific to Sarah's experience, this will be applied in all future tool kits.

Figure 24: Guide for New Artists



## Guide for New Artists

Just signed an artist to your roster? Use this guide to start mental health conversations from the start.

### When to start the conversation?

If you want to integrate mental health discussion with your artists, start from the beginning. When onboarding new talent, let them know that mental health is an important factor in your managment strategies.

Once they are on your roster, set up an initial check-in within the first few months of management to asses their needs. At this time, you can establish an ideal amount of regular check-ins to establish. If an artist expresses that this is not something they are interested in, tell them that you are there if you need them and look out for warning signs. You can also let them know about your check-in meeting calendar in the 'Artist's Only' section of this tool kit in case anything changes.

- *As a part of how I work, I try to make sure my artists are supported in every way. This includes how they're doing personally. I've got a toolkit I use that includes simple ways to check in and make sure things feel manageable. No pressure, just wanted to let you know I'm open to chatting anytime about anything.*

- *I know we're still getting to know each other, but I've learned that making space for honest conversations early on can really help in the long run. If anything ever feels overwhelming or off-balance, we can talk it through or find support. You don't have to carry things alone.*

- *Just a heads-up, I've got some resources I use to support artists' well-being. No pressure to dive into anything now, but I'm here if things ever get stressful. Better to name things early than let them build up. I've got your back.*

### Conversation Options for New Artists

Mental health conversations may seem overwhelming. Here is a few options of how to open up conversations with artists you have recently starting working with.

### *Gender Specific Considerations*

The participant also highlighted the absence of gender-specific guidance within the AMMHTK. The participant shared a scenario where she felt uncertain about navigating conversations surrounding image and styling during a female artist's photo shoot, unsure how to offer support without overstepping boundaries. In addition, findings from the reflexive thematic analysis presented similar concerns regarding female experiences in a male-dominated industry, including descriptions of marginalisation, maltreatment, and abuse.

To address this, several resources and updates were incorporated into the refined AMMHTK. Mental health resources specific to women and artists of colour and ethnic minorities were added. In addition, resources for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ+) artists, was included. These pages include direct links to support services. In addition, data was presented from two studies that outlines issues musicians are facing. Along with this, a link to Help Musicians UK's confidential support line was included, allowing managers and artists to report bullying, harassment, or industry-related distress. This section and information will be provided to future managers.

Figure 25: Resources for Female Artists



## Resources for Female Artists

**Organisations, Charities, and Support Lines for Female Musicians.**

| TITLE | TYPE | DEFINITION |
|---|---|---|
| Queerwell | LGBTQ+ individuals | LGBTQ+-affirmative counselling, workshops, coaching and community support across UK |
| Boudica | Trans+, Non-Binary and Female-Identifying artists | A platform that aims to give visibility to Trans+, Non-Binary and Female-Identifying artists working within the electronic music industry. |
| She Said So | Women, non-binary, & allies. | A global community of women, gender nonconforming people and allies in the music industry. |
| Loud Women | Female and non-binary DIY and alternative-genre artists | Events, labels and safe spaces promoting gender-inclusive performance opportunities. |
| Switchboard LGBT+ Helpline | LGBTQ+ individuals | 24/7 confidential emotional support and signposting |
| Galop | Helpline/WebChat | LGBT+ people experiencing abuse or violence, such as hate crime, domestic abuse, or sexual violence. |
| Pride in Music | Non-Profit Organisaiton | Charitable collective working to create a cross-industry network for the LGBTQIA+ community, artists and allies working within British Music |
| Girls Rock London | Charity Organisation | Providing high-quality music programming for young and adult women, trans, and non-binary people |

**Links:**

| Women in Music | Girl Grind UK | WATU | Girls I Rate | She Producer | F-List |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

| Cat's Mother | Cactus City Stu... |
|---|---|

Figure 26: Resources for Artists of Colour



## Resources for Artists of Colour

**Organisations, Charities, and Support Lines for Musicians of Colour.**

| TITLE | TYPE | DEFINITION |
|---|---|---|
| Black Lives in Music (BLIM) | Black, Asian and ethnically diverse professionals | Mentoring, networking and systemic advocacy within jazz/classical sectors |
| Tomorrow's Warriors | Black British jazz artists, women and low-income/marginalised talent | Artist development, education and inclusive mentoring for jazz creatives |
| Black Minds Matter UK | Black artists in the UK music industry | Free culturally competent therapy for Black people |
| The Black Music Coalition (BMC) | Black-Led Association commited to negating racial inequality | Staffed by an executive committee formed of Black professionals who are active members or affiliates of the UK music industry and a wider panel of Black music industry experts. |
| Black Music Action Coalition (BMAC) | Advocacy Organisation | Organises and disseminates key information through their network for 200+ members to influence culture on topics such as racial justice, equity through policy, charitable initiatives and voter education. |
| Color of Music Collective | People of colour and LGBTQ+ Community | An organisation that aims to amplify the voices of people of colour and LGBTQ+ individuals in the music industry. They host free, virtual panels every Monday, offering a platform for sharing experiences and insights |
| Coalition for African Americans in the Performing Arts | Coalition for African Americans in the Performing Arts | Promotes opportunities for Black classical musicians and others in the performing arts. |

**Links:**

| BLIM | Tomorrow's Wa... | Black Minds Ma... | BMC |
|---|---|---|---|

| BMAC | Colour of Music... | CAAPA |
|---|---|---|

Figure 27: Resources for Artists in the LGBTQ+ Community



**Resources for Artists in the LGBTQ+ Community**

Organisations, Charities, and Support Lines for Musicians in the LGBTQ+ Community.

| TITLE | TYPE | DEFINITION |
|---|---|---|
| Queerwell | LGBTQ+ individuals | LGBTQ+-affirmative counselling, workshops, coaching and community support across UK |
| Boudica | Trans+, Non-Binary and Female-Identifying artists | A platform that aims to give visibility to Trans+, Non-Binary and Female-Identifying artists working within the electronic music industry. |
| She Said So | Women, non-binary, & allies. | A global community of women, gender nonconforming people and allies in the music industry. |
| Loud Women | Female and non-binary DIY and alternative-genre artists | Events, labels and safe spaces promoting gender-inclusive performance opportunities. |
| Switchboard LGBT+ Helpline | LGBTQ+ individuals | 24/7 confidential emotional support and signposting |
| Galop | Helpline/WebChat | LGBT+ people experiencing abuse or violence, such as hate crime, domestic abuse, or sexual violence. |
| Pride in Music | Non-Profit Organisaiton | Charitable collective working to create a cross-industry network for the LGBTQIA+ community, artists and allies working within British Music |
| Girls Rock London | Charity Organisation | Providing high-quality music programming for young and adult women, trans, and non-binary people |

Links:

Queerwell | Boudica | She Said So | Loud Women
Switchboard | Galop | Pride in Music | Girls Rock Lond...

Figure 28: Bullying and Harassment Information Part One



**Bullying & Harassment Helpline**

If an artist you are working with is experiencing bullying or harassment, Help Musicians has a Bullying & Harassment Helpline.

Help Musicians

Bullying & Harrasment Helpline:
*Free and confidential 24/7 helpline for anyone working in music.*
Phone: UK (0800 088 2045) Overseas (+44 1452 623224)

Figure 29: Bullying and Harassment Information Part Two



Studies on Bullying and Harassment in the UK Music Industry

99% of women respondents experienced bullying. They were more likely than men to experience the following bullying behaviours:

- Invasion of their personal space
- Insulting or offensive remarks made about them by colleagues
- Gossip or rumours spread about them by someone they work with
- Being stared at in a hostile way
- Persistent criticism about their work (including their creative outputs)
- Hints or signals from others that they should quit working in the music industry

96% of respondents experienced bullying:

- 99% of women and 93% of men who completed the
- survey were bullied
- 98% of survey participants with a disability were bullied
- 97% of survey participants who identified as a sexual
- minority were bullied

BaHMI

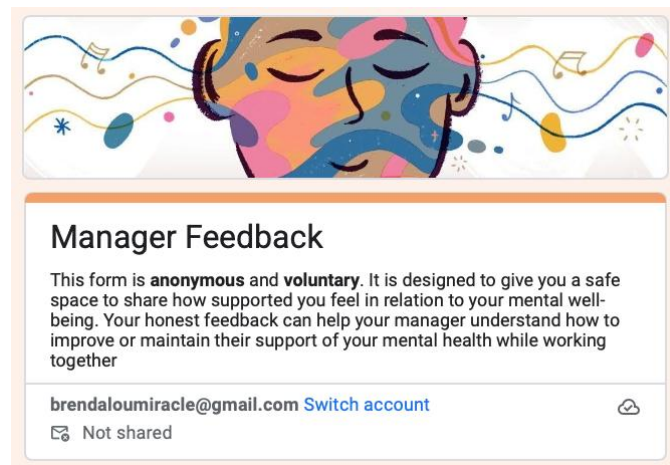### *Addressing Artist Perspectives*

The pilot study aimed to explore the perceived impact of the AMMHTK's incorporation into management practices from both the manager's and artist's perspectives. However, this dual perspective was not fully captured. While the participant engaged actively with the tool kit, direct artist feedback was not requested. As a result, the artist's voice was not formally documented, and their experience was inferred solely through the manager's observations and researchers' interpretations. Creating a significant limitation in the pilot study, the artist's perspective remained indirect and unverified. Without direct insight from artists, understanding the full impact of tool kit integration become speculative.

To address this limitation while respecting the artist manager relationship and ensuring ethical sensitivity, the refined AMMHTK introduces an optional, anonymous artist feedback mechanism. The new component is in the 'Artists Only' section of the tool kit and includes a secure, anonymous feedback link that the manager can share with their artists. Providing managers with the chance for artists to evaluate their mental health support and provide further recommendations. Offering a respectful way to include the artist's voice into future tool kit assessments while maintaining the manager's autonomy and the artist's psychological safety. The first figure provides a view of the form from the 'Artists Only' section and the following figure previews the contents of the form. Due to length, the entire form cannot be shown in a figure, a link to the form can be found here. Future managers will receive access to this section and form.

Figure 30: Anonymous Feedback Form Part One

Figure 31: Anonymous Feedback Form Part Two



### *Entry Survey Clarification*

The original first question from the entry survey has been re-evaluated and updated for future onboarding use to improve clarity, participant understanding, and data quality. Feedback from the pilot study indicated that the initial phrasing of the question caused confusion, prompting requests for clarification during the data collection process.

Original Question Format:

What is your preferred level of mental health involvement? (Scale of 1-10, with 1 being low and 10 being high)

As a result, the question has been revised to more accurately reflect the intended meaning and ensure it is accessible and interpretable. Supporting a more effective onboarding experience and enhances the reliability of the data gathered in subsequent implementations of the AMMHTK.

Updated Question Format:

On a scale from one to ten, how involved do you want to be in supporting your artist's mental health?

## 6.3.4 Sections Added and Unutilised

This section outlines content adjustments implemented throughout the course of the pilot study. New sections were incorporated based on specific questions and needs identified by the participant during implementation. Three areas were added to the

AMMHTK in direct response to participant feedback. These additions were designed to address identified usability gaps and to ensure the tool kit could be realistically implemented within the participant's management practice. Following their use, each section was reviewed and ultimately selected for permanent inclusion in the refined version of the tool kit, based on both its perceived value and actual utility during the pilot.

This area also reviews the parts of the AMMHTK that saw no engagement. These unused sections were reviewed to determine their necessity and relevance, with decisions made regarding their retention, modification, or removal based on their potential value for future users.

### *Added Section: Implementation Examples (Parts One, Two, and Three)*

These examples were added after the participant expressed uncertainty about applying personalised recommendations in practice. The section provides concrete illustrations of how AMMHTK components integrate into daily managerial routines and communication strategies. By placing suggestions within familiar work contexts, the examples increased user confidence and clarity, leading to their inclusion in the final tool kit for future managers with variations based on approach type. The figure shows Sarah's implementation examples, while the original tool kit link contains examples for managers under suggested approach types. The content remains unchanged from the previous tool kit, Figure Thirty-Two below demonstrates the new presentation format.

Figure 32: Refined Implementation Examples



**Implementation Examples**

Not sure where to start? Here are ways you can implement your Tool Kit in real-world examples.

## Part 1:

*Two Way Communication & Work-Life Balance*

1. *Two-Way Communication:*
   a. Set up a check-in with an artist to discuss workload and current well-being.
   b. Ensure workload, well-being, and artist's career goals align.
2. *Work-Life Balance:*
   a. Help plan a balanced work schedule with realistic expectations.
   b. Encourage the artist to take regular breaks and time off if they feel overwhelmed.

## Part 2:

*Artist Involvement & Transformational Leadership*

1. *Artist Involvement*
   a. Set up weekly check-ins where the artist can speak openly.
   b. Use anonymous feedback systems to let the artist share concerns safely.
2. *Transformational Leadership:*
   a. Offer emotional support during stressful times (i.e., tours).

## Part 3:

*Motivation and Satisfaction, Social Interaction, & Organisational Culture*

1. *Motivation Satisfaction:*
   a. Publicly acknowledge the artist's achievements.
   b. Personally thank the artist with small gestures (i.e., handwritten notes).
2. *Social Interaction:*
   a. Schedule casual, non-work meetings (i.e., lunch or coffee).
   b. Attend concerts or exhibitions together to build rapport.
3. *Organisational Culture:*
   a. Encourage an open conversation around artist's well-being and provide additional support if necessary.
   b. Set a boundary in a social setting to not discuss work, or vice versa in a formal conversation.

### *Added Section: Conversation Options (Parts One, Two, and Three)*

This section was created to address the participant's concern about initiating and navigating mental health-related discussions. It provided suggested phrasing for starting conversations, sustaining dialogue, and appropriately following up. The aim was to reduce discomfort or uncertainty around sensitive topics by equipping managers with approachable and adaptable frameworks.

Based on the pilot study outcomes, all three sections were retained in the refined AMMHTK and will be implemented for future managers. The incorporation of practical examples and conversational guidance addresses common entry-level barriers. These additions enhance both the accessibility and scalability of the tool kit as it moves toward broader testing and future large-scale deployment.

Figure 33: Refined Conversation Options



# Conversation Options

**Information to guide you to discussing mental health topics with your artists.**

*Opening the Door for Wellbeing Conversations:* I wanted to let you know that I am here if you ever want to talk about anything related to your overall wellbeing. Whether you are feeling stressed, overwhelmed with the current workload or just how you are feeling in general. No pressure, I want to make sure you know you are supported.

*Setting Up an Ongoing Wellbeing Check-In:* I would love to set up a general check-in to talk about how everything is going. Your workload, current schedule and how you are feeling overall. No agenda, just a space to chat if you are open to it. Let me know what you think.

## Introduction

*Options to start a conversation around mental well-being.*

*Reassuring and Encouraging an Open Conversation:* I really appreciate how you were open to having this conversation. I want you to know this is not because of any particular concern, it is important to me that you feel supported. Success matters but wellbeing comes first.

*Checking in on Workload and Balance:* How are you feeling about your current workload? Are things manageable, or do we need to adjust anything to make sure you are in a good place?

*Exploring Routine and Adjustments:* If your workload is not working let me know how we can adjust. More/Less performances, more time for creative work, time to focus on well-being?

## Discussion Topics

*Statements to make during a discussion around mental health.*

## *Updated Section: Transformational Leadership*

In addition to the refinements made, the page on transformational leadership was updated. The update added three books on transformational leadership. Information was included to provide managers with further information on elements of this leadership type. The included texts are Wiseman's (2017) book 'Multipliers', Rand and Voillequ (2011) 'Evolutionaries: Transformational Leadership: the Missing Link in Your Organisational Chart' and Hacker and Roberts (2003) 'Transformational Leadership: Creating Organizations of Meaning.'

Figure 34: Refined Transformational Leadership



**Transformational Leadership:**
**Definition & Resources**

Your customised Tool Kit discusses working as a transformational leader.
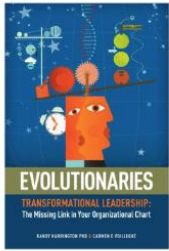
Below is a definition and resources.

### What is a Transformational Leader?

A transformational leader functions as an ethical role model through communicating a vision for the future, challenges employees to be more motivated. Aspects of a transformational leader include understanding motivation and behaviour, being sensitive to employee's needs, communicating effectively, and to encourage and empower employees. Incorporating a transformational leadership style into the artist manager relationship can significantly benefit the artist's overall well-being.

Books on Transformational Leadership

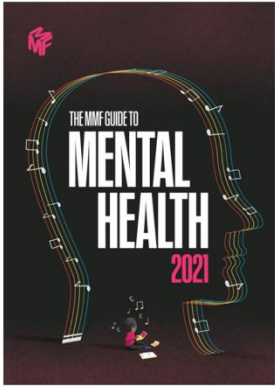| Multipliers | Evolutionaries | Transformational Leadership Creating Organizations of Meaning |
|---|---|---|
| Liz Wiseman (2017) | Randy Harrington and Carmen E. Voilleque (2011) | Stephen Hacker and Tammy Roberts (2003) |

*Unutilised Section: Five-Part Action Plan and UK Mental Health Resources*

The 'Five-Part Action Plan', 'UK Mental Health Resources', and 'Signs and Symptoms of Stress' were designed for use during high-risk or crisis scenarios. These situations did not arise during the pilot. Regardless, both components hold essential preventive and responsive value, especially for managers who may face emergency mental health situations in the future. Their continued inclusion ensures the AMMHTK can address crucial needs. Figures within the refined tool kit can be viewed below. All future managers will receive the 'Signs and Symptoms of Stress' and 'UK Mental Health Resources.' Managers will receive the 'Five-Part Action Plan' based on managers responses to the entry survey. If they fall under the 'Personal Action' or 'No Action' approach category, identifying that they refer to their own experience or do not have an action plan, they will receive this resource. If they fall under 'Active Action,' they already have a plan in place so they will not receive this information.

Figure 35: Refined Five-Part Action Plan



Figure 36: Refined Signs and Symptoms of Stress



### *Unutilised Section: Conversation Options*

The 'Conversation Options' section, although requested by the participant, was ultimately not used during the study. The main barrier was logistical, the band Sarah manages was geographically distant, and she was unable to schedule a time to implement this guidance in an in-person context. Despite its limited use during the pilot, the section remains relevant and has been retained for future users. It is anticipated that other managers with more consistent in-person contact will benefit

from the support it offers. Due to this, it will be included for future managers use. This can be viewed in Figure Thirty-Three.

## 6.4    PILOT STUDY PART TWO: REFINEMENT

Following the analysis of the pilot study, necessary adjustments were made to the AMMHTK's design, procedures, layout, and overall functionality based on the findings and participant's recommendations. To further enhance the tool kit's contents and structure, four semi-formal meetings and three formal meetings were conducted with the same participant to test the refinements made and ensure its capabilities for a larger scale study with UK artist managers. The proposal for this large-scale study is addressed in Section 7.4.2. Section 6.3.1 outlines aims and objectives. Section 6.4.2 presents the research questions. Section 6.4.3 and 6.4.4 describes the qualitative methodology and methods. Sections 6.4.5 and 6.4.6 addresses the participant selection, data collection and analysis tools. Sections 6.4.7 through 6.4.9 reviews the data results, analysis, and discussions. The final sections, 6.4.10 and 6.4.11 present conclusions.

### 6.4.1 Aims and Objectives

The second portion of the pilot study provided an opportunity to test whether the refinements made after part one effectively addressed identified barriers. This extended assessment evaluated the refined AMMHTK's usability over a longer period to determine if the modifications successfully improved functionality and suitability for artist management practices before larger-scale implementation (Jagels, 2006; Keyes, 2002).

### 6.4.2 Research Questions

The following research questions and sub-questions guided the second part of the pilot study during the semi-structured interviews process. These questions emerged from areas identified in the first part of the pilot study. The need to evaluate specific refinements made to address initial barriers, the requirement to assess readiness for larger-scale implementation, and the importance of understanding the participants experience and potential impact on management practices.

*Research Questions and Sub-Questions*

1.   To what extent do the revisions made following the pilot study improve the clarity, accessibility, and applicability of the AMMHTK

a. Do the refinements create any additional complexity or implementation barriers?

2. What are the key requirements and modifications needed to ensure the AMMHTK is feasible for implementation in a larger-scale study?

a. What practical challenges or facilitators emerge when implementing the AMMHTK that could impact larger-scale deployment?

### 6.4.3 Methodology

The pilot study continuation used the same qualitative methodology with semi-structured interviews, documentation templates, and implementation reflections. As with the first part of the study, this approach enabled open-ended dialogue, allowing the participant to discuss issues and barriers encountered with the refined AMMHTK (Anderson, 2013; Steudel and Yauch, 2003).

### 6.4.4 Method

A total of seven interviews were held with the participant to enhance the AMMHTK's ease of use, impact, and design, with each interview addressing different aspects of tool kit usability. Supplemented by documentation templates and structured implementation reflections as additional forms of data collection for the subsequent analysis.

Over two months following the first pilot study's conclusion, four semi-formal meetings were held with Sarah. These meetings addressed mental health care for roster artists, sustained AMMHTK usage, and recommendations. The recorded and transcribed meetings documented tool kit usage without predetermined questions or implementation reflections, defining their semi-formal nature.

Following the semi-informal stage, the second part of the pilot study commenced, conducted over a two-week time frame, where three formal meetings were held. In each meeting a set of questions were developed to analyse the participants use of the refined tool kit.

#### *Initial Formal Meeting*

In the initial meeting, questions were developed to assess use and impact of the tool kit since the end of the pilot study. The final portion of this meeting consisted of

presenting the most up-to-date version of the tool kit to the participant and address any questions they had regarding to its recent modifications.

*Initial Formal Meeting Questions*

1.  In what ways have you utilised the AMMHTK since our last meeting?

    a.  Were there any parts of the AMMHTK, you found yourself most often referencing?

2.  Has there been a situation where the AMMHTK directly impacted your management or support of an artist?

3.  Was there any moment that you wanted to use the AMMHTK but didn't? If so, what stopped you?

### Second Formal Meeting

The second meeting aimed to review the participants experience with the refined AMMHTK and use of its recommendations in the previous week.

*Second Formal Meeting Questions*

1.  How did the revisions from the pilot study enhance your experience in utilising the AMMHTK?

2.  What elements have you utilised in the AMMHTK over the past week?

3.  Are there any sections you find irrelevant or overly complex?

4.  Are there areas in the new structure that are difficult to navigate?

### Final Formal Meeting: Comprehensive Evaluation

The goal of the comprehensive evaluation was to gather the manager's overall reflections and experience of the refined AMMHTK. In addition, this meeting aimed to further review the positive or negative impact of the tool kit's implementation for large-scale utilisation.

*Final Formal Meeting Questions*

1.  What elements have you utilised in the AMMHTK over the past week?

2.  Reflecting on your full experience, what are you overall impressions of the AMMHTK in its final form?

3.  What are some key benefits you experienced from receiving and using the AMMHTK?

### 6.4.5 Participant Selection

Sarah was deliberately retained for the second pilot study to assess how the refined tool kit performed with continued use. Her existing familiarity with the original AMMHTK eliminated the need for new user onboarding, allowing focus to remain on evaluating refinements rather than basic comprehension (Duan et al., 2013; Shuttleworth and Wilson, 2008). This approach enabled Sarah to provide direct comparisons between tool kit versions and identify improvements or remaining barriers that new users might overlook, strengthening the pilot study data.

### 6.4.6 Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection was conducted through three methods. The initial form of data collection was the three semi-structured interviews conducted with the participant (Keyes, 2002). The second set of data was collected through the refined documentation template. The refined version of this template was made into a Google Spreadsheet which was incorporated into the Google Site. Documentation is a recognised form of data collection for qualitative research aimed at assessing a product or idea before large-scale implementation (Keyes, 2002). The final set of data collection consisted of three implementation reflections. Using this structured format ensured adequate tracking of progress and the ability to address issues or barriers perceived by the participant (Gurfinkel et al., 2022). The elements analysed within each reflections document were adapted for each meeting, incorporating differing segments from the first part of the pilot study.

Following the same approach as part one, implementation reflections documented Sarah's experiences across three meetings. These captured which AMMHTK sections were used, their impact on management practices, and implementation barriers encountered. Each meeting included feedback on refinements to determine whether the revised tool kit improved or worsened the user experience, reducing future implementation risks (Anderson and Tito, 2018; Jagels, 2006; Pauceanu, 2016). The final meeting assessed overall tool kit value, whether

refinements resolved previous issues, and scalability potential. Meeting reflection documents appear in Tables Twenty-Five through Twenty-Seven.

Data for the second part of the pilot study was also analysed through qualitative content analysis (Eriksson and Kovalainen 2015). Qualitative data collection and analysis was sustained, allowing for a compressive examination of the managers perspectives on the tool kit's validity for future use and the refinements incorporated (Steudel and Yauch, 2003).

Table 25: Initial Formal Meeting Implementation Reflection

| Category | Question | Reports |
|---|---|---|
| Previous Implementation | Which parts of the tool kit did the manager use since the last informal meeting? | |
| Impact | Did the participant report positive, negative, or neutral impact of the tool kit since the end of the first portion of the pilot study? | |
| Refinement Review | Did the participant report positive, negative, or neutral response to the tool kit refinements? | |

Table 26: Second Formal Meeting Implementation Reflection

| Category | Question | Reports |
|---|---|---|
| Sections Used | Which parts of the tool kit did the manager use? | |
| Refinement Review | Did the participant report positive, negative, or neutral response to the tool kit refinements? | |
| Barriers | Any challenges in using the tool kit? | |

Table 27: Final Formal Meeting Implementation Reflection

| Category | Question | Reports |
|---|---|---|
| Sections Used | Which parts of the tool kit did the manager use? | |
| Barriers | Any challenges in using the tool kit? | |
| Refinement Review | Did the participant report positive, negative, or neutral response to the tool kit refinements? | |
| Value | What benefits did the participant see in using the tool kit long-term? | |
| Refinement Success | Did the refinements successfully resolve previous issues identified from the pilot study? | |
| Scalablility | What modifications would be essential for wider use? | |

### 6.4.7 Pilot Study Part Two: Results

The following section reviews the results and analysis from the second part of the pilot study. The first portion outlines implementations and suggestions from the four semi-informal meetings that took place over a two-month period. The second portion provides results from the two-week formal meeting period.

***Semi-Informal Meeting Period***

The following section reviews the implementations and recommendations that took place during the semi-informal meeting period.

*Semi-Informal Meeting One*

The initial meeting involved a general catch-up to review if the participant had continued to utilise the AMMHTK. Sarah shared that she had been implementing the tool kit in her artist management practices. The most common element of the tool kit used was the personalised recommendations section. She shared that she found herself looking at this section of the document to ensure she was incorporating positive mental health related practices in her management. Focus shifted to specific uses Sarah incorporated since the completion of the initial pilot study. Reflecting on her time, she discussed how it was helpful to have a checklist that she could review instead of trusting a 'gut feeling.' She discussed how this altered from her past management experiences:

> In the beginning, it might just be like a gut feeling, or you feel like something's wrong, or you don't fully know what it could be or how to approach it. So, it's good to have a bit of a checklist so you can go through that. (43-45)

Since the last meeting, Sarah frequently used sections on two-way communication, artist involvement, and transformational leadership, reporting improved organisational culture in her artist management relationships. She referenced the AMMHTK to establish open communication channels and ensure artists participated in decisions affecting them. Sarah also incorporated transformational leadership elements into daily management practices, noting these increased relationship trust and created positive organisational culture.

Additionally, there were discussions about the potential use of the AMMHTK on a larger scale. Sarah expressed her willingness to participate in future studies involving the tool kit and to share her experiences with a wider audience. Considerations around anonymity were also addressed, particularly in relation to protecting her artists privacy. As a result, Sarah agreed to take part in future research but opted to limit a formal in-person review of the tool kit, given that she was the sole participant in the pilot phase.

### Semi-Informal Meeting Two

The second semi-informal meeting focused on Sarah's concerns about discussing well-being with her band. She had not held the in-person meeting to implement 'Conversation Options' and establish mental health check-in baselines. Sarah preferred in-person meetings but noted their rarity and wanted to avoid creating uncomfortable 'ambush' conversations.

Sarah attempted to raise the topic during an informal dinner when visiting the band in person. She planned to casually discuss mental well-being and establish future formal check-ins, but this approach failed. Sarah attributed this to either insufficient regular contact for casual conversations or the discomfort of three male band members sharing personal information with each other present:

> I guess because it's three men as well, like, if one had an issue, they might not feel comfortable opening up in front of the other two. I didn't really much response. (32-35)

Sarah went on to share how she encouraged the members to discuss further about their tour experience and if there were any issues there that they might want to share, such as issues with tour crew members. While this did open a general conversation, the members stated they were okay with how things turned out. Sarah did not believe this:

> They were like, okay, yeah, that's good. 'We're good, whatever.' But I think they were not really good, but they were saying that they were. (38-39)

Later, Sarah mentioned a second in-person interaction she had with the band, this time in a studio setting. Her plan was to work and then afterwards incorporate social interaction through a group outing and then around this time hold a mental well-being check-in. Again, this did not go as planned. Rather than speaking to the members together, she thought it might be better to speak to them individually. Particularly, one member who has been more open about mental health conversations. This member did not attend because of an emergency. Sarah reflected on both occurrences and how a casual setting may not be ideal to hold these conversations:

> I think my main issue with the band is how I thought that bringing it casually could be better, because I wanted to find a moment where they would relax. […] But I guess, because we don't see each other every week, and the communication, I think, is worsening a bit. […] We do speak every day or every two days, but it's very much about work stuff. (72-76)

This meeting concluded with recommendations on how to hold these conversations, potentially over an online platform. Additionally, if in-person meetings are limited, it may be uncomfortable to hold a well-being check-in in a way that supports the band members, rather causing them and Sarah additional stress.

*Semi-Informal Meeting Three*

In the third meeting, Sarah shared that she was having further issues with band members, feeling as though they were disengaging from social interaction and work-related tasks. Sarah was unsure on how to approach this, if she should match their disconnection or push further. Sarah felt like she needed to reciprocate this and put her attention into different areas. She recollected on these emotions:

> It has made me a bit more disengaged, because I feel like they're disengaging. So therefore, why would I stay as engaged when I could be putting the energy into something else? I can feel the relationships slightly deteriorating, and I

don't know if it's a transitional period. I'm trying to see how we can resolve it. (48-51)

Sarah then reflected on reasons this detachment may be occurring, if it was her fault or due to their schedules or lack of trust. She felt as though she was receiving 'mixed signals' and was unsure of the best way to proceed:

I'm getting these mixed signals, and I'm not sure how to get to them. It's like they've closed up a bit, and I don't know if they are losing trust, or they're just too much in their heads and too busy. (67-69)

Discussions were held on ways to bridge the disconnection between herself and band members. A query was incorporated relating to incorporating elements of social interaction back into the relationship to reconnect. She stated that this did not feel possible due to the geographical distance. Sarah also reflected on past attempts for social interaction and how, at times, band members cancel when she has tried to travel to them. She shared:

I guess a social interaction is the hardest one, because of distance and because last time I made the actual effort to go there, it was a bit pointless, in my opinion. (101-102)

Sarah also had issues with the band communicating their work-life balance related to social media stress, which was also identified in part one of the pilot study. She shared that they struggled to communicate and 'identifying where they could use some extra help.' This led Sarah to be unsure on when and how to proceed. Regardless, she did her best to help through making positing schedule and helping when needed. Financial constraints have limited the bands' ability to hire a social media manager to provide further assistance. Incorporating elements of transformational leadership by aiding, even when feeling disconnected.

*Semi-Informal Meeting Four*

In the fourth meeting, Sarah came in with questions relating to an artist who she was debating on removing from her roster. She was unsure on if or how she should have this conversation. These issues stemmed from creative differences relating to Sarah's recommendations and the artist's choice to follow through with these ideas. Additionally, the artist was struggling with personal issues from a difficult transitional period.

Sarah did not know if these were strong enough reasons to remove them from her roster. Sarah debated if their working relationship should be managed differently, or if they should stop working together altogether. She also was struggling with an overwhelming workload, which led her to review her roster. She reflected:

> He's been having a, quite an emotional or, like, transitional period because of some personal changes and career changes and just a lot going on. And we've had a few chats and potentially might change how we work together. Maybe we even start working together all together. (45-51)

Sarah was provided with general support and recommendations on how to manage creative differences to navigate their artist manager relationship. These recommendations were focused around implementing social interaction elements to enhance their interpersonal relationship. She was also encouraged to implement elements of two-way communication to ensure that the artist's creative vision was being heard and implemented properly.

This meeting also held a discussion on the difference between working with male and female artists. Sarah continued to reflect on the issues she was having with the band members and their ability to share concerns of their well-being. Sarah shared that, with ongoing use of the AMMHTK, she has started to notice the big difference between male and female artist ability and willingness to express their well-being. She is not sure how to assist with male artists because she does not know when an issue is occurring. Sarah stated:

> I find that that's very actually thing that I hadn't realised until now, very big difference between men versus female artists in how they express. I think if they don't communicate so openly, it's a bit harder for me to help as well, because I don't know what's going on. (96-99)

This conversation was brought on after reflecting on conversations she has had with a recently onboarded female artist, who has been open to discussing her well-being. Sarah felt like, compared to male artists, female artists have a much easier time expressing themselves. Reflecting on the lack of expression from male artist's she shared:

> Men will not always be very upfront or very up front about something. It would just be like they will kind of play around it, kind of, you know, evade. So, I have to kind of go into like, 'Yeah, I can see how you're doing.' But

yeah, it's a bit harder, but I'm trying to find the technique for each of them. (131-135)

Based on this conversation, a discussion was held on adding further elements to the AMMHTK that can incorporate recommendations for female versus male artists to address these concerns. Sarah thought that, specifically within the 'Conversation Options' and two-way communication section of the personalised recommendations, there could be additional information on how to hold these conversations with male artist, or any artist who is less willing to discuss their well-being.

### *Formal Check-In Meetings*

Following the semi-informal stage, a formal meeting period was held. Prior to commencement, a refined AMMHTK was developed for Sarah based on the recommendations she provided during the initial pilot study and semi-informal meetings. The formal period incorporated semi-structured interview questions and the implementation reflections. Sarah was also encouraged to utilise the refined documentation template during this time.

#### *Initial Formal Meeting*

The first check-in meeting included two parts. The first part consisted of three questions to review AMMHTK applications since the last semi-informal meeting. The second question assessed the tool kit's perceived impact. The final question reviewed elements of the tool kit the participant may have avoided using. The second part of this meeting consisted of sharing the updated tool kit with Sarah and reviewing the changes that have been made.

Since the last meeting, Sarah used the AMMHTK with her recently signed female artist. The artist, who has been open about well-being issues, experienced emotional pressure when considering leaving her current label. This caused stress, prompting the artist to seek Sarah's guidance. Sarah provided support and noted that the label sometimes asked her not to share certain deal aspects with the artist. Sarah rejected these requests, stating her loyalty is 'always with the artist.' Regarding the emotional support she provided:

> I always try to kind of manage her feelings around the label and how to manage that relationship. Trying to kind of slide in the middle and protect their well-being from all those very stressful situations and conversations. (65-67)

Through this situation, Sarah incorporated elements of transformational leadership, not only providing support to the artist but also putting the artist's well-being over the labels request to keep certain aspects private. Sarah did discuss how she was open with the artist on what aspects of the deal, and label conversations, were important to share. Since the artist was experiencing stress with this decision Sarah had to be careful to share what information was important but also avoid adding unnecessary stress to the decision. Her ultimate goal was to make sure she did not make the decision for the artist. By keeping the artist informed, Sarah was incorporating two-way communication and artist involvement. Sarah discussed how, at times, she felt it was difficult to keep 'the human level there' and navigate the artist's emotions through this period.

Sarah also shared how prolonged use of the AMMHTK has naturally integrated into her management practice, particularly improving her ability to address mental health-related sensitive topics. She described:

> It kind of becomes quite integrated in so many other ways, like you just kind of start acting or behaving slightly different when there's a bit of an issue or a topic which could be sensitive in a mental health kind of perspective. (53-56)

Question two reviewed the AMMHTK's impact on Sarah's ability to support her artist's. In response, Sarah said that the tool kit made her feel 'more prepared' with her management practices.

Sarah also shared that the AMMHTK encouraged her to establish formal check-ins with her most of her artists to discuss business, social, and general well-being. Sarah explained how in the past, she would have check-ins with her artists that were work related. Based on the tool kit's recommendations, she has incorporated this as an integrated element of her management practice. Along with this, these check-ins also include a social catch-up and well-being review. By including the social aspect, Sarah is enhancing social interaction. Sarah described these social catchups as a general discussion around recent activities the artist has done that are not work related.

The well-being review also integrates two-way communication by regularly reviewing artist's workload and any potential well-being concerns. Sarah mentioned that this was something she has incorporated for artist's that she has worked with for over a year. In response, Sarah was guided to discuss limitations for holding a social

or well-being check-in with artist's she has recently onboarded. To Sarah, it was an element of trust that needed to be established before encouraging these conversations. She also mentioned that if she were to start this conversation early on, it would be 'coming out of nowhere.'

Based on this response, a question emerged on what support would be beneficial for newly onboarded artists. She shared that it would be helpful to have information on how to start a conversation around mental health early in management. A topic that also came up in part one of the pilot study. Prior to the commencement of the second portion of the pilot study, a refinement was made that guides managers on how to start these conversations. Sarah was presented this new section in the second portion of this initial meeting.

Sarah also mentioned that it would be helpful to have access to the 'UK Mental Health Resources' section that was separate from the AMMHTK, to share this information with new artists. In our last semi-informal meeting, Sarah discussed how a recently onboarded artist was debating whether to accept an offer from a label. Offering support in terms of resources felt beneficial for this situation. She stated that:

> I think is quite a good time for me to send this to her in case she wants some help in terms of therapies or some kind whilst she's going through the process of leaving the label, if she feels it's too much mentally. (112-115)

The final question reviewed if there was a moment Sarah wanted to implement the AMMHTK but did not. She discussed how she had not yet faced a crisis, so she has yet to use the 'Five-Part Action Plan' or 'Signs and Symptoms of Stress.' Other than this, Sarah did not share a moment that she chose not to utilise the tool kit.

The second part of the initial check-in involved sharing the refined AMMHTK with Sarah. Through screen sharing, the new tool kit was presented, and the refinements were reviewed. These refinements were based on her recommendations from the first part of the pilot study and semi-informal meetings. Focus was centred on the updated format to a Google Site and the additional sections. Sarah was instructed on how to use this update version in terms of navigating the site and where to find the added sections. Additional sections that were addressed that included the 'Guide for New Artists', section and newly added mental health resources for women, artists of colour, and artists within the LGBTQ+ community. The section for artists

also has a new Google Form that incorporates an anonymous feedback form that managers can share to review mental health support.

The implementation reflections for this meeting can be found below on Table Twenty-Eight.

Table 28: Initial Formal Meeting Documented Implemented Reflection

| Category | Question | Reports |
|---|---|---|
| Previous Implementation | Which parts of the tool kit did the manager use since the last informal meeting? | 1. Transformational Leadership<br>2. Two-Way Communication<br>3. Artist Involvement<br>4. Incorporating regular informal check-ins that involved a well-being check to increase communication and social interaction. |
| Impact | Did the participant report positive, negative, or neutral impact of the tool kit since the end of the pilot study? | 1. Positive, reported integration into management practices and more prepared.<br>2. Neutral, requested a way to share mental health resources directly with artists.<br>3. Neutral, requested a way to navigate well-being conversations with recently onboarded artists.<br>4. Did not utilise action plan or signs of stress due to lack of crisis. |
| Refinement Review | Did the participant report positive, negative, or neutral response to the tool kit refinements? | Positive |

*Second Formal Meeting*

The second meeting reviewed AMMHTK usage from the past week and assessed Sarah's impressions of the refined tool kit. Initial questions evaluated whether refinements enhanced Sarah's implementation experience. Sarah found the Google Site version 'more accessible,' noting that during the initial pilot study, it was difficult to 'track down' the original PDF version. She appreciated accessing the Google Site from her phone, laptop, or any computer, describing it as a 'game changer.' She reflected on this refined version:

> Having the tool kit on a Google Site, instead of having to save the PDF and then know where to find it is more accessible, especially because I work from different places. Sometimes it's not the same laptop or I might be my phone. And, you know, being able to access through any device has been a game changer. That's been really, really useful. (31-36)

Sarah also provided positive feedback on the Google Site's tool bar navigation. Reflecting on how, the previous version, held numerous pages. Due to this, it was difficult at times to locate sections needed. She reviewed this:

> I quite like the menu. Before it was all one document. […] The fact that now there's, a clear division of where each thing is, it means I don't need to go through everything to find what I need. I can just click exactly the section I am looking for. (52-56)

Along with positive reflections, Sarah had question on the 'Implementation Examples' section. While the content of this section remained the same from the previous version of the AMMHTK, its presentation was reformatted to be incorporated into the Google Site. With this, there were titles for each section that read 'Part One, Two and Three.' Sarah was curious on if these sections were meant to be conducted in a certain order. This was not the case and there was a discussion on a more clear way to title the specific implementation examples for the next refinement cycle.

The second question request Sarah to discuss her applications of the AMMHTK the past week. Sarah shared that she has been feeling much more at ease in terms of her workload and that this has aided with her overall ability to not only apply the tool kit but create a more cohesive environment for her artist's. In previous conversations, she discussed how she felt disconnected from the members of the band she works with. With her routine 'back on track' she felt like she was better able to communicate 'less emotionally' with her artist's, specifically the band, and that because of this she was not taking things 'as personally.' Her workload was able to decrease for two main reasons. Firstly, Sarah spent the week beforehand 'catching up' on tasks. Sarah also mentioned that she has begun to implement boundaries with artists in terms of their communication. By doing these things, Sarah said that she felt amazing and more at peace. Sarah believed that his enhanced communication and supported an overall healthier relationship. She reflected on this:

> My own routine had improved for a few days of like, I would say, even months of like, "I'm just always falling behind." This was affecting the way I was talking to the band, or I was taking everything maybe more personally, or maybe being annoyed at things. I noticed this week feeling like, "Oh my God, I feel amazing." […] I feel so much more at peace. […] Something I found useful is organising my schedule and then putting boundaries in place so I can recharge. […] This has made me have a healthier relationship and communication. (71-78)

Sarah used the organisational culture section of the AMMHTK to set boundaries, enhancing her working relationships through two-way communication and incorporating a healthier work-life balance.

Sarah discussed attending her band's festival performance in Northern England. Initially planning to attend for work-related tasks, she realised her presence wasn't needed due to multiple crew members and a tour manager. However, Sarah decided to attend purely for social interaction, which she felt was missing from recent interactions. The AMMHTK helped her understand that social engagement didn't need to connect to business priorities. With band member's families also present and no work obligations, Sarah enjoyed the performance and socialised with both the band and their families. She felt this valuable event decreased her disconnection with the band, noting that increased summer touring had reduced social interaction and led to overall disengagement. Sarah described the festival:

> I feel like, after maybe seeing each other less lately, and doing less social stuff that event was useful and needed. It really helped us and eased things up between everyone, which before was a bit stressful. Everybody has been more friendly again and easy going. When you don't do it during stressful times, like touring a lot this summer, stress started to build up again. So, it was just nice to do that as a social thing. (108-114)

Sarah went on to discuss how she forgot 'how important it is to actually have face to face moments.' The event incorporated social interaction and enhanced the organisational culture.

In the last week, there were updates with the recently onboarded female artist who was debating leaving her label. Further conversations with the label took place which encouraged Sarah to recommend a 'more realistic and less confrontational' approach. The artist felt like the label was being unfair and wanted to 'break all ties.' While Sarah understood this implication, she also wanted to ensure that there was not a breach of contract and that the label would not require a recoupment of funds to avoid a legal process. The artist chose to cut all ties with the label. Sarah met with the artist after informing the label and told her 'I was like, obviously I went ahead with what you wanted. But we can expect a comeback.' Sarah was happy to keep the artist updated and even carbon copied the artist in the email chain with the label so received 'full transparency' of ongoing conversations. Despite this opposing Sarah's initial

recommendation, she was content that the label got 'what they deserved' and that she was able to 'save her (the artist) mentally' from this situation. Although Sarah did reflect on how a potential legal process could cause further well-being concerns, sharing with the artist 'If you go into a legal process, realistically, it's just gonna be worse for you mentally. You're gonna just be stressed out more.'

These conversations incorporate two-way communication and artists involvement. Sarah ensured that the artist received all the necessary information to make an informed decision. Despite this, the artist chose to go in a difference direction than Sarah's recommendations. Sarah provided support regardless, which showed signs of a transformational leader and enhanced the organisational culture by establishing trust through committing to the artist's decisions.

The third question aimed to assess if there were any areas of the refined AMMHTK that were irrelevant or overly complex. Sarah mentioned that she had not yet needed the 'Five-Part Action Plan' or 'Signs and Symptoms of Stress' but that it would be helpful to keep in case of an emergency. Other than this, Sarah did not think there was unnecessary repetition of information or ideas.

Sarah also shared comments on the titles of the personalised recommendations section, which read 'Involvement', Action', and 'Relationship-Type.' While these remained the same from the initial version, when prompted Sarah had questions on its intended purpose. In response, an explanation was provided on how these titles related to the three questions from the entry survey. Sarah discussed how, over time, it may not be easy to recall this connection and that the titles could be reconsidered. A discussion was held on the most relevant way to title each section, whether it is altered to the questions themselves or combining these sections all together.

This discussion led to a conversation on how the personalised recommendations are categorised based on the managers responses. Sarah shared that she would be interested to know if there was a correct answer or where she fell based on her responses, compared to other managers. Sarah mentioned how this could be covered in a workshop or larger scale implementation models, where managers are informed of their response and how this compares so the suggested approach type. Sarah provided a recommendation for this section to have an additional check-list format, where managers can continuously record if they have implemented certain areas.

Sarah went on to review how this section could be organised to reflect areas that a manager may be 'falling short.' Based on the managers responses, there is a suggested approach type that aligns with the seven HRM principles. Instead of outlining all recommendations equally, Sarah debated on the potential benefits of highlighting areas that a manager could improve on, if they were outside of the suggested approach type. She shared:

> If there is a test that you can, you know the typical test, and you can and see where you sit. Then based on that, then it's like, "Oh, you're probably already doing this and this and this, but maybe you're missing this." […] Therefore, out of all of this, six, seven, whatever they are, focus on these one. (339-352)

This prompted a further enhancement idea from Sarah. With the check-list option or documentation template, managers could have a mechanism where they send in their AMMHTK usage for documentation. If a manager were able to provide evidence that they have been implementing the tool kit on a regular basis, this could be incorporated into a page, that anyone could access, to assess their level of integration. Sarah noted that this should be simple because 'If you make it very difficult or very frequent, we will not do it. We are all very busy.' She went on to discuss how this implementation could have a future incentive. For example, if a manager has been utilising a tool kit for a certain period, they could receive free or reduced quarterly mental health consultation. She also thought it would be a good idea to partner with a company, like the MMF, to offer a reduction to mental health training courses to further encourage implementation. Sarah shared how this could be a 'competitive advantage' that managers could display on their website to showcase their levels of mental health integration for future artists that may be interested in working with a manager that maintains higher levels of well-being support.

The final question addressed if there were any sections of the new structure that was difficult to navigate. Sarah said that other than what she mentioned on titles within the personalised recommendations section, there was nothing that was difficult to use. She said that, with the updates, it is 'very easy to navigate.'

The last portion of this meeting consisted of a review of the sections of the AMMHTK that were added in the last week based on the managers recommendations. In the last meeting, Sarah discussed on a female artist was having troubles with her label and thought it would be beneficial for mental health resources to be added to the

'Artists Only' section, so this can be easily shared. This section had been updated to include Google Sheets for each set of mental health resources, in this section managers are provided with a preview and link of each resource set to share with artist's as necessary.

The implementation reflections for this meeting can be found below on Table Twenty-Nine.

Table 29: Second Formal Meeting Documented Implementation Reflection

| Category | Question | Reports |
|---|---|---|
| Sections Used | Which parts of the tool kit did the manager use? | 1. Organisational Culture<br>2. Two-Way Communication<br>3. Social Interaction<br>4. Artist's Involvement |
| Refinement Review | Did the participant report positive, negative, or neutral response to the tool kit refinements? | 1. Positive, stated that it was more accessible.<br>2. Positive reaction to tool bar for easier navigation.<br>3. Positive, did not report any unnecessary repetitions<br>4. Neutral, discussed curiosity on other potential recommendations.<br>5. Neutral, discussed the implementation of a check-in system.<br>6. Negative, clarification on titles ('Implementation Examples' and 'Personalised Recommendations').<br>7. Positive, stated it was easy to navigate. |
| Barriers | Any challenges in using the tool kit? | 1. Recommended that the 'Implementation Examples' titles were updated.<br>2. Asked for clarification on the title for each section of the 'Personalised Recommendations' section |

*Final Formal Meeting: Comprehensive Evaluation*

The final meeting included five questions and an overview of the final AMMHTK. Sarah discussed ongoing conversations with her recently onboarded female artist, implementing two-way communication, 'Guide for New Artists,' and organisational culture sections. Due to the artist's mental health concerns regarding label decisions, Sarah introduced well-being check-ins into their relationship. She used the 'Guide for New Artists' to initiate these check-ins with the new artist, applying two-way communication recommendations to enhance their working relationship's organisational culture. Sarah found the guide 'really useful to start the conversation' and noted that check-ins helped her 'connect more easily' with the artist. She also informed the artist about available resources. Sarah reflected on this initial check-in outcome:

> It was important for me that if she was feeling stressed or overwhelmed that we have structured time to chat every week. […] We can keep it more on the personal side, if it needs to be, or if she feels like she's overwhelmed and she needs to kind of vent or share (26-30).

During this chat, Sarah reminded the artist to ensure she was resting and taking time off when needed. Sarah reported that the artist responded positively to this conversation and said, 'I should take your advice more often.' She shared that the artist, who is young and works hard, needs additional observation to ensure she does not 'burn herself out.' This incorporated 'Work-Life' balance by supporting the artist to safely manage her workload. Sarah proceeded to reflect further on the comfort she experienced through establishing regular well-being check-ins with her artists:

> It felt like a really good conversation and now it really feels like the door is open. What I've done as well is start a reminder on my calendar to kind of just do a quick check in, just mental health wise, for the clients. (38-41)

While reflecting, Sarah asked a question about the anonymous feedback forms that were incorporated into the refined AMMHTK. She queried if these forms would be sent to herself or a third party. Her concern was around receiving the email or contact name of the artist who filled out the form. She was curious how this would work in the future and if there was a way to have these forms sent to a third party, to review the concerns her artists have around their mental health support.

The second question addressed Sarah's perception of the AMMHTK in its final, refined form. Sarah had positive comments on the tool kit's updates. She said that it does not compare to the original version and spoke highly of it enhances accessibility in the Google Site format, citing the time constraints that were involved in the PDF version. She shared:

> It's a lot better. I mean, there's no comparison. I feel like there was a lot of navigating just a PDF at the very beginning. In the very first form, which was already useful, it was hard to remember where I had it and where each section was located. So, it was a bit more like time consuming and less accessible. I spent more time trying to access the information. (68-74)

Sarah also reflected positively on the additional information provided and the new structure. With easier accessibility, Sarah found herself referring to the AMMHTK more often than in the initial pilot study. Allowing her to more easily

'integrate the tool kit into behaviour.' She shared how this led to the tool kit becoming an 'active' part of her management practice, rather than 'passive.' There was also a positive discussion on the 'Artists Only' section which provided her with resources to share with artists directly and that she plans to 'pin' these resources in artist group-chats when sharing in the future. She noted that this accessibility ensured that the tool kit was not over-complicated, which allows her to use it more often. Discussing the resources and tool kit review she shared:

> So, if anything, you just have to come to our group chat and then read the description, click the link, so it's super easy. So yeah, very happy. It's just very accessible, just really cool. Also, it's not overly complicated, which would be bad, because then it's just too hard to do, so it's very easy to apply. (97-101)

Question three regarded the benefits Sarah experienced from using the AMMHTK. She discussed her overall journey with the tool kit. In the beginning, she shared that she was burnt out and overwhelmed and how this tool increased her awareness of artist's needs. She considered the positive impact of not only setting boundaries but sharing with artists why they were important. She reflected on her tool kit journey and her experience prior to its use:

> Before the tool kit, I was not so aware, and I was burning out very quickly, very often. I did go through a bit of a journey myself. I was trying always to keep those boundaries in place and actually even sharing how good having some boundaries are to my artists. […] Having the tool kit, allowed me to put a structure around what I thought was doing, and then also do more than I was doing. (110-116)

In the past, Sarah identified that the most difficult aspect of supporting an artist was figuring out how to start the conversation. Discussing the impact of having resources to share, validating the importance of mental health support to artists, and guidance on how to address these concerns:

> Most importantly, which was the hardest part, how to bring this artist. So, they are aware that that's important to me and having resources that can be shared when they come to me for support. (117-119)

Sarah also discussed how it would be valuable to be able to share her implementation of the AMMHTK on her social media channels, so artists know that this is one of her priorities:

> It will be really good if at some point, there could be something that we could share on our company socials about how we care about this. Also, some of the resources, not to share the full tool kit, but just to make people aware that we care about this stuff and that we try to apply in our practice on daily basis. (125-128)

Sarah stated that overall, the AMMHTK made her feel more aware and hopes that the tool kits use can encourage her artists to trust her more, because she now has resources and guidance on how to support their stress.

Within this increased self-awareness, Sarah shared how in the past, she felt like she was more concerned with her own well-being and workload. She discussed how she was so burnt out that she could not think about her artists well-being. She referred to the metaphor of putting on your air mask first in an airplane, sharing that she 'could not even think about giving someone a mask.' Reviewing the burn out she felt in the past she stated, 'I am Sarah, and I am more than just a manager.'

The fourth question assessed Sarah's impressions on the AMMHTK's ability to support her artists well-being. Sarah contemplated on when her management company started three years prior. While well-being was also important, she did not feel like she had the structure to support and incorporate it. The tool kit has not only given her a structure, but provided her with warning signs and how to respond:

> Well-being has always been at the core, but I never had a structure. How to look out for those things and how to check in with myself that I'm doing the best I can. Obviously, that is just the beginning. […] Now, I can say I've always care about their well-being, but now I can actually pinpoint examples of why I'm doing X in a certain way. (170-177)

The final question reviewed any further recommendations for large-scale implementation. Sarah further discussed a recommendation made in our previous meeting, regarding a check-in system. She added an additional idea to potentially have a physical board, or poster, where managers could check-off and review the AMMHTK in their office space.

The second portion of this meeting included presenting the AMMHTK with its most recent refinements. Based on our last meetings recommendations, the 'Guide for Adverse Artists' section was shared, which provided information on how to navigate conversations with clients who are less inclined to discuss well-being. This was added after our conversation on the differences between male and female artists. The title changes for the personalised recommendations and 'Implementation Examples' was also presented. The implementation reflection for the final meeting can be viewed below.

Table 30: Final Formal Meeting Documented Implementation Reflection

| Category | Question | Reports |
|---|---|---|
| Sections Used | Which parts of the tool kit did the manager use? | 1. Two-Way Communication<br>2. Guide for New Artists<br>3. Organisational Culture<br>4. Work-Life Balance |
| Barriers | Any challenges in using the tool kit? | Noted that feedback form could initiate a third party user, privacy concerns. Other barriers were addressed. |
| Refinement Review | Did the participant report positive, negative, or neutral response to the tool kit refinements? | Positive, accessibility, 'active' vs. 'passive', felt supported, less time consuming, decrease in artist disconnection, trust building, better work environment, transformational leadership development. |
| Value | What benefits did the participant see in using the tool kit long-term? | Mental health support structures, no longer relying on 'gut feeling', reported ease of use, 'not overly complicated', less time-consuming, impacted overall behaviour, reduced workload stress, willing to participate further. |
| Refinement Success | Did the refinements successfully resolve previous issues identified from the pilot study? | Yes, added sections received positive feedback and 'Guide for New Artists' was utilised. |
| Scalablility | What modifications would be essential for wider use? | Further evidence required for gender-specific recommendations, in-person vs. remote check-ins, and monetary discussions around workload and label involvement. |

### 6.4.8 Pilot Study Part Two: Analysis and Discussions

*Semi-Informal Meetings*

This section provides and analysis and discussion of the semi-informal meeting period.

*Semi-Informal Meeting One*

In the first meeting, Sarah shared that she had implemented the AMMHTK since the end of the first part of the pilot study, which accumulated approximately a two-month period prior to the commencement of the second portion of the pilot study. The implementation provided further documentation of the tool kit's overall sustainability, referenced in the tool kit success indicator. With ongoing usage, the participant provided evidence that the tool kit is a resource that can be employed for long term application. Like the initial pilot study, Sarah discussed how she references the personalised recommendations most frequently. As the tool kit's core, this is optimistic information.

Sarah's reflections on implementing two-way communication, artist involvement, and transformational leadership styled provided evidence of the positive impact these can have on the organisational culture of the artist manager relationship through Sarah's optimistic recollections. Promoting a positive organisational culture critical to well-being and performance (Crawford et al., 2010; Dutton and Heaphy, 2008; Jarden et al., 2017). Sarah also discussed how she could rely on the AMMHTK rather than a 'gut feeling' which provides evidence of the tool kit's ability to provide support to mental health management practices. Sarah's willingness to participate in the large-scale study provided further encouraging evidence of her experience and the potential for other managers to contribute.

*Semi-Informal Meeting Two*

The second meeting focused on issues Sarah was having with members of the band she manages. While Sarah was unable to establish well-being check-in's, her ongoing intention to do so showcases her commitment to this recommendation and the AMMHTK. The conversation regarding in-person versus online check-in's provided information for future tool kit enhancements to incorporate within the large-scale study.

When a manager is unable to frequently meet with an artist or group in-person, it may not be possible to establish a well-being check-in to discuss well-being on a regular basis. Incorporating this may also negatively impact the overall social engagement of these interactions. Research that supported the development of HRM principles and artist manager research discusses social interaction as a valuable resource for well-being and artist's success (Atkin and Brooks, 2021; Hull, 2021;

Lappalainen et al., 2024; Watson, 2002). Sarah's choice to hold these meetings in person is notable. Future conversations with managers in the large-scale study should review the potential positive and negative impacts of holding these conversations remotely or in-person. While it is valuable and possibly significant to have an in-person meeting, managers who do not work in a proximity might miss this opportunity. If a manager holds most work-related conversations remotely, it could be imperative to do the same with well-being check-ins.

Further consideration should be taken to resolve if a well-being check-in during limited in-person occurrence would hold a positive outcome. Sarah tried to hold this conversation numerous times and failed to find the right time. As Sarah stated, she does not want to 'ambush' the artist. Which could hold further negative impacts if an artist is less willing or comfortable discussing mental health concerns.

This meeting also held considerations around well-being check-ins with a band versus solo artist. Sarah noted that band members may be unwilling to discuss mental health in a group setting, this is not a factor that is addressed in the AMMHTK. Managers should consider having a prior conversation with groups to assess if these meetings would be most productive in groups or personal settings. Ideally, a personal conversation would be held with each member. Which unfortunately leads to potential issues with scheduling and an enhanced workload for artist managers. The large-scale study should consider incorporating conversations with managers on whether they think band members would be comfortable discussing this in a group setting. In some cases, the band might feel more willing to discuss these issues as a group. On the other hand, this could lead to potential disagreements among members and put the manager in an uncomfortable situation. Further information should be addressed on the benefits of working with band members individually and how to incorporate this without overwhelming the manager.

### Semi-Informal Meeting Three

The third meeting reviewed further concerns with the band, focused on a potential disengagement. Sarah mentioned how she felt like this may be due to a lack of trust. Highlighting the HRM principle and recommendation relating to social interaction and artist management research supporting social interaction on the artist manager relationship (Atkin and Brooks, 2021; Hull, 2021; Lappalainen et al., 2024;

Watson, 2002). These interactions are meant to build trust, providing insight that trust can be diminished by a lack of social engagement.

After a recommendation to incorporate interaction, Sarah felt that this was not possible due to the geographical distance. Emphasising an important notion that social interaction could be considered remotely. While this may not be as effective, some managers work across a significant distance, where in-person interactions may be extremely difficult to schedule. For example, a manager working with an artist in a different country and time-zone. If this is the case, there could be future enhancements made for managers to encourage remote non-business interactions. Such as casual phone conversations, using voice notes, or 'coffee-chat' video calls where managers can engage with an artist in a more personal setting.

There were also concerns considered relating to the bands work-life balance from social media stress. Self-promotion through social media is vital for modern musicians, which is difficult to navigate for artists and managers, especially when considering that a healthy work-life balance positively contributes to well-being (Atkins and Brooks, 2021; Diskienė et al., 2021a; Gamble et al., 2018; Wood, 2018). This was also impacted by financial constraints, which did not allow the team to hire a social media manager to mitigate this stress. Financial insecurity, caused by a reliance on short-term funding, is something faced by musicians and causes pressure to over-work and can diminish work-life balance (Cunningham, 2011; Dean, 2007; Musgrave, 2023; Throsby and Zednik, 2011).

Certain elements of the AMMHTK may negatively impact financial elements, such as social interaction activities or promoting work-life balance through decreasing workloads. While these elements aim to promote well-being, they can also lead to monetary pressure. Considerations should be made on reviewing a cost-analysis of implementing social interactions and decreasing workload to perceive if this will have an overall positive benefit. For example, an artist may require time off for their well-being, but they may also be in a negative financial situation. Further research can be undertaken that could provide information on how to navigate these conversations and analyse which stressor is most crucial to address, which will be addressed in the large-scale study. Reviewing instances where these elements overlapped, which course was taken, and the impacts of these decisions.

The final semi-informal meeting contained discussions on Sarah's workload and a difficult decision with an artist. There were also considerations on navigating the well-being of male versus female artists, a topic that also held significance in the first portion of the pilot study.

Due to an overwhelming workload, creative differences, and personal issues an artist was experiencing, Sarah was debating if she should re-navigate the partnership or remove an artist from her roster. Like artists, managers also face intense workloads (MMF, 2019; Calkins et al., 2023). Impacting their personal well-being and their ability to support artist, due to excessive workloads, inadequate compensation structures, and limited well-being resources (Chaparro and Musgrave, 2021; MMF, 2019; Calkins et al., 2023).

Sarah was encouraged to incorporate social interactions to enhance the personal and working relationship with the artist (Atkin and Brooks, 2021; Hull, 2021; Lappalainen et al., 2024; Watson, 2002). She was also recommended to ensure that there was adequate two-way communication to address the creative differences. Effective communication is an essential element of the managers role and can increase the artists well-being, aiding in the overall nature of their artist manager relationship to strengthen relationships (Andreu Perez et al., 2022; Miles, 1965; Punyanunt-Carter and Wrench, 2012; Zheng, 2015).

A comprehensive discussion was also held relating to gender differences and mental health support. The conversation was centred around a comparison to the all-male band Sarah works with and a newly signed female artist. From Sarah's experience, female artists are much more willing and able to discuss well-being concerns. These conversations are underlined by existing data that reflects the issues women face in the music industry, such as sexual harassment, eating disorders, and lack of support systems (Easmon and Kapsetaki, 2017; Jones et al., 2023). While women may be more willing to discuss well-being concerns, they may also be facing certain challenges that male artists are not experiencing, or at least with the same context. Which is notable but also the experience of one manager and the female artists she has worked with. This may be the case for female artists, but it may also be specific to this instance.

This highlights an important aspect of the AMMHTK that is still not addressed, specific recommendations for male versus female artists, which could be improved by providing recommendations for artist's who are not comfortable discussing their well-being. Updates do not have to be specifically developed for males, because this could be the case for certain female artists as well. Despite this, future long-term applications of the AMMHTK should address this issue and hold the opportunity to review in-depth how managers navigate and experience gender differences.

The future large-scale study could incorporate specific questions relating to this and provide further data on these differences to inform a further AMMHTK revision. These questions could collect data on managers perceptions of artist's willingness to discuss well-being, to assess if there is a difference between male and female artist. Based on these results, further informed recommendations could be provided.

For this study, refinements were made to the AMMHTK to address navigating conversations with artists who are less willing to discuss their well-being. This was incorporated into the 'Conversation Guide' section. Along with this and the 'New Artists Guide' a third guide was added titled 'Guide for Adverse Artists.' This new guide provides tips for managers who are dealing with artists that are not as willing to discuss well-being. Such as, avoiding labels, creating a routine, respecting boundaries, observing patterns, and evading pressure. Like the other guides within this section, there are conversation options to guide managers on how to navigate these conversations. A figure of the 'Guide for Adverse Artists' can be found below.

Figure 37: Guide for Adverse Artists



## Formal Meetings

The next section presents and analysis and discussion of the three formal meetings, these meetings included semi-structured questions and an implementation reflection.

### Initial Formal Meeting

In this meeting, Sarah discussed a recently signed female artist who was having concerns related to her label. Sarah implemented artists involvement, two-way communication, and transformational leadership.

The artist was very concerned about the decision to leave her label which led to immense stress. To mitigate this, Sarah ensured that the artist was aware of each part of the decision while also navigating elements that were not necessary and would increase her anxiety. Sarah shared that she was there to support the artist, not the label. Rather than siding with the label, Sarah chose to put her artist first. The decision demonstrated elements of a transformational leader.

It is notable that the label requested Sarah to hold certain information from the artist, creating a point of interest that could be executed in the large-scale study. Is this a common occurrence managers experience? If so, do they 'side with the artist' or listen to the label? Is their choice aimed at protecting the artist, the information being shared, monetary reasons or all the above?

By having open and honest conversations about label involvement, she was engaging with two-way communication and artist involvement. An open communication channel had the potential to have a positive impact on the artist well-being and assist with the emotional distress she was facing (Andreu Perez et al., 2022; Miles, 1965; Punyanunt-Carter and Wrench, 2012; Zheng, 2015).

Ensuring that the artist was well-informed of the discussions the label decision guaranteed that their ideas and concerns were not dismissed (Clerkin et al., 2016; Cross et al., 2003). The nature of the artist manager relationship is collaborative, ensuring that there is a shared vision further incorporates elements of artist involvement and enhancing well-being through fostering a sense of empowerment (Bond and Bunce, 2011; Dobson et al., 2009; Gilfillan and Morrow, 2016; Landsbergis and Vivona-Vaughm, 1995). Morrow, 2018).

Sarah went on to discuss how the AMMHTK has become an integrated aspect of her management practice, which yields positive results on its long-term application by impacting the managers behaviours and practices. She also noted that the tool kit made her feel more prepared. Showcasing its ability to enhance the overall capacity of a manager to provide well-being support to their artist's.

Additionally, Sarah shared how she has begun to establish well-being check-ins with the majority of her artist's. She also discussed how these also now included elements of social interaction, which can enhance artist's well-being and maintain positive artist manager dynamics (Atkin and Brooks, 2021; Lappalainen et al., 2024). In the past, these meetings were solely work related, this adjustment showcases the tool kit's ability to enhance a manager's general practices.

Sarah reflected that the additional elements within these meetings were not incorporated until she has worked with an artist for over a year, hoping to establish trust. When queried, Sarah shared she did not know how to start these conversations. This limitation was also discussed in the first part of the pilot study and had already

been addressed within the 'Conversation Options' section of the kit, where a separate guide was developed for new artists. Providing managers with three ways to start a well-being conversation with a newly onboarded artist. This was presented to Sarah at the end of the meeting when sharing the refined AMMHTK.

Sarah also mentioned that she wanted to be able to share mental health resources with artists, without providing the whole AMMHTK. Prompting an addition to the 'Artists Only' section of the tool kit. Previously, this held a guide on how to develop a check-in calendar, as well as a Google Form where artists can review their managers mental health support. The UK Mental Health Resources were added to this page as separate Google Sheets, so that they can be easily shared with artists. A figure of this addition can be found below.

Sarah reported that she had not yet used the 'Five-Part Action Plan' or 'Signs and Symptoms of Stress.' These are incorporated in case of an emergency, so the lack of use does not support removing them from the AMMHTK.

Figure 38: 'Artists Only' UK Mental Health Resources
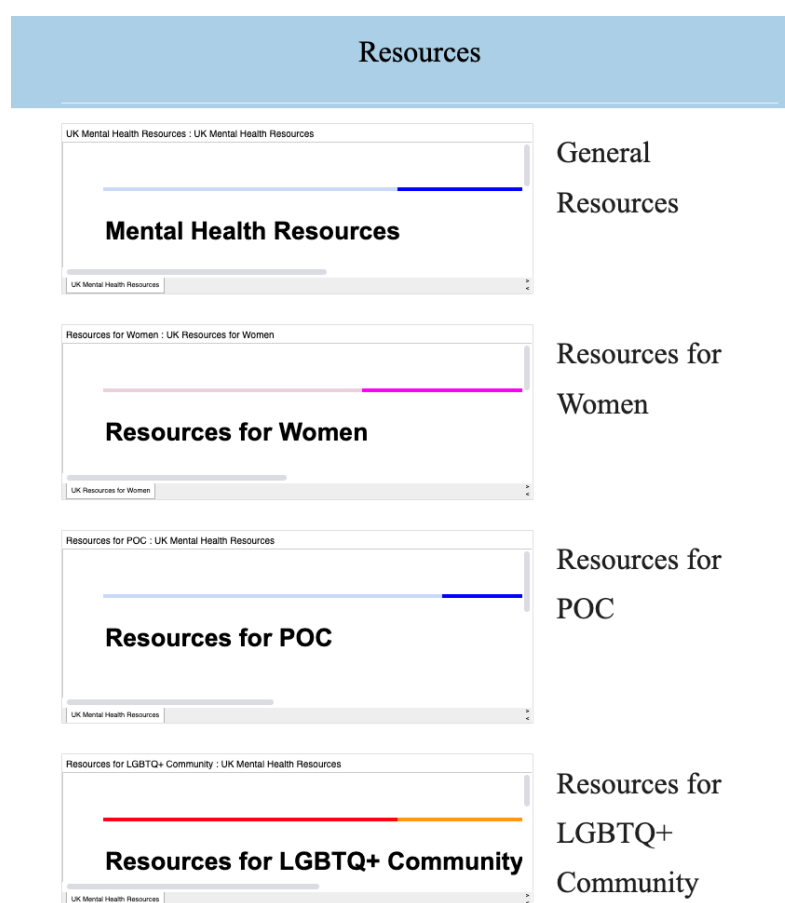
*Second Formal Meeting*

The second meeting reviewed Sarah's utilisations from the past week and requested recommendations on the tool kit's updated format. Sarah stating positive reflections on the AMMHTK's new Google Site format and its navigation bar provided positive data on its enhancements.

Sarah discussed how the 'Implementation Examples' section could be updated, this was addressed and presented to her in the final meeting. Rather than framing it as parts one, two, and three, it was changed to sections one, two, and three, evading confusion in terms of looking at this section as a process. The update can be seen in the figure below.

When discussing implementation, she shared that she felt 'at ease' with the tool kit. Which aided in data to support the AMMHTK's ability to support managers in providing artists with structured mental health approaches. This conversation also held valuable data relating to the managers workload and ability to provide support. With a decreased workload, Sarah felt like she was in a better place to assist with artist's needs. Reflected from data that demonstrates the intense amount of work required for managers (MMF, 2019; Calkins et al., 2023). Sarah stated that this decrease was caused by setting boundaries. Boundary setting is supported in the tool kit through organisational culture. By setting these boundaries, Sarah was able to help herself which in turn, helped the artists. This also incorporated aspects of two-way communication by clearly stating her own needs, which has exhibited a positive impact to her well-being (Andreu Perez et al., 2022; Miles, 1965; Punyanunt-Carter and Wrench, 2012; Zheng, 2015).

Enhancing organisational culture could have a positive reflection on her artist's well-being, by encouraging a healthy work environment (Crawford et al., 2010; Dutton and Heaphy, 2008; Jarden et al., 2017). Reflecting data that shows that an intense workload can negatively impact well-being, in this case for the manager (Atkins and Brooks, 2021). With this decrease, Sarah felt like she wasn't taking comments from her band 'as personally.' Incorporating new data that an increased workload can impact a managers overall perceptions relating to the artist manager relationship.

Sarah also reviewed a positive event that encouraged social interaction with her band members, by attending a festival despite her attendance not being required. She had positive reflections on this event and even stated that it decreased the disconnect

she was feeling with her band. Supporting HRM data that places an importance on interpersonal dimensions to increase well-being (Atkin and Brooks, 2021; Lappalainen et al., 2024). Also enhancing the organisational culture of the relationship with her band, which can improve mental health and decrease burnout (Crawford et al., 2010; Dutton and Heaphy, 2008; Jarden et al., 2017). This occurrence provided additional evidence on the notion that increased social interaction can decrease potential disengagements with artists.

Further conversations commenced regarding the female artists and a decision with her label. While Sarah recommended a 'soft approach' to cutting ties, the artist wanted to severe them immediately, despite potential legal issues that Sarah noted. Despite these potential issues and a lack of funding stream from the label, Sarah supported her artist's decision. In a career with reliance on short-term funding, financial insecurity is prominent, this did not seem like a concern to Sarah when supporting the artists decision (Cunningham, 2011; Dean, 2007; Throsby and Zednik, 2011).

By putting well-being and the artist's choice first, she showed signs of a transformational leader. Sarah functioned as an ethical role model and showed genuine care for her artist by supporting her and providing clear communication through label discussions (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978; Lavigna and Paarlberg, 2010; Trottier et al., 2008; Udin, 2024). Positively impacting the artist's well-being by providing encouragement and establishing trust, which is a fundamental element of the artist manager relationship (Ali et al., 2019; Diskienė et al., 2021b; Gaudesi, 2016; Klug et al., 2018). Also enhancing the overall communication, she has with this artist through ensuring she was informed of all aspects of this decision, promoting an opportunity to improve well-being (Andreu Perez et al., 2022; Zheng, 2015).

The decision was significant for Sarah because her revenue stream is reflected by the artist, so this decision could have a negative impact on Sarah's monetary outputs (Allen, 2022; Hull, 2021; Morrow, 2018). While Sarah decided to support the artist, other managers may feel pressure to make decisions based on financial constraints. In the large-scale study, it could be valuable to address if decisions are made based on finances or artist's support. Are these decisions more difficult to make during times of financial stress and is the artist's well-being put to the side during these times? For

example, if an artist's well-being is negatively impacted by financial stress, is it going to benefit the artist to decrease the workload?

Sarah's comments on the titles of the personalised recommendations delivered valuable feedback. These titles were reformatted to be more intuitive and accessible. Rather than reflecting the approach category titles, they are now tailored to retain original meaning while improving category. 'Involvement' has been updated to 'Support Level', 'Action' was changed to 'Supporting Actions', and 'Relationship-Type' was altered to 'Working Relationship Style.' A figure representing updated titles can be found below.

There was also an important discussion regarding the onboarding process regarding the potential to provide information on what type of manager they are, compared to other options. This option was considered in the development of the artist manager approaches. Within these, there are suggested approach types based on the seven HRM principles and correlating artist manager research. However, this information was not included to avoid managers feeling as though this resource negatively reviewed their preferred management styles. Instead, the goal was to provide tailored recommendations that guide managers to the suggested approach type. However, it would be considerable to implement this within the large-scale study, to gauge managers reactions. It could be possible to provide this information without positioning it negatively.

During this conversation, Sarah also recommended a check-list format for managers to address areas they could improve on. With Sarah's this recommendation, an additional concern emerges. If there were numerous managers participating in a study and some received a longer check-list than others, would this give them a negative perception? Additionally, would a long checklist provide an overload of additional work versus providing support?

The tool could be implemented in a format that is not catered to each manager but a general checklist. Which has potential to be employed within the documentation template while implementation to the large-scale to assess if this format is easy to utilise for managers. There was also a valuable comment about incorporating incentives for applications. While this may not be feasible for large-scale implementation, it will be considered as a potential survey question during this time, to test if this were something managers would use.
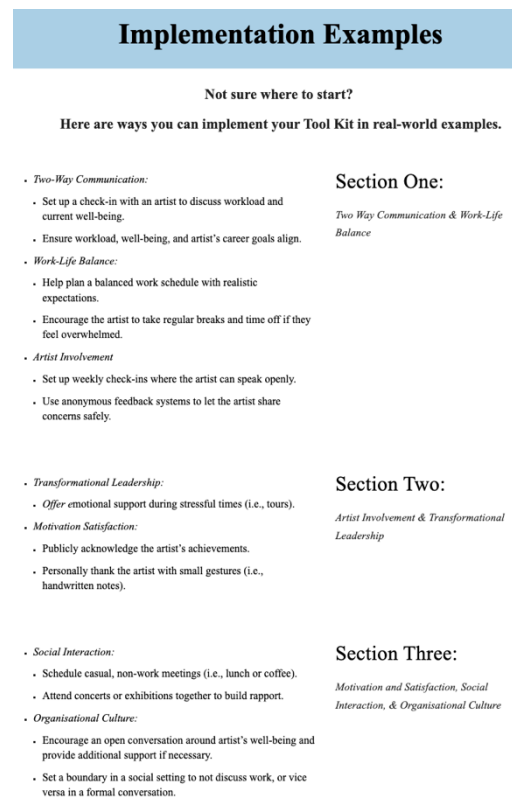
Figure 39: Refined Implementation Examples Titles

## Implementation Examples

**Not sure where to start?**

**Here are ways you can implement your Tool Kit in real-world examples.**

- *Two-Way Communication:*
  - Set up a check-in with an artist to discuss workload and current well-being.
  - Ensure workload, well-being, and artist's career goals align.
- *Work-Life Balance:*
  - Help plan a balanced work schedule with realistic expectations.
  - Encourage the artist to take regular breaks and time off if they feel overwhelmed.
- *Artist Involvement*
  - Set up weekly check-ins where the artist can speak openly.
  - Use anonymous feedback systems to let the artist share concerns safely.

**Section One:**

*Two Way Communication & Work-Life Balance*

- *Transformational Leadership:*
  - *Offer* emotional support during stressful times (i.e., tours).
- *Motivation Satisfaction:*
  - Publicly acknowledge the artist's achievements.
  - Personally thank the artist with small gestures (i.e., handwritten notes).

**Section Two:**

*Artist Involvement & Transformational Leadership*

- *Social Interaction:*
  - Schedule casual, non-work meetings (i.e., lunch or coffee).
  - Attend concerts or exhibitions together to build rapport.
- *Organisational Culture:*
  - Encourage an open conversation around artist's well-being and provide additional support if necessary.
  - Set a boundary in a social setting to not discuss work, or vice versa in a formal conversation.

**Section Three:**

*Motivation and Satisfaction, Social Interaction, & Organisational Culture*

Figure 40: Refined Personalised Recommendation Titles

## Support Level

- Establish transparent communication channels, allowing artists express concerns.
- Organise regularly scheduled well-being check-in meetings to discuss artist's work load.
- Hold initial check-in at beginning of management. Increase these check-in's over time. Every 6 months for new artists and every 2-3 months for artists you have been working with 2+ years.

- Work alongside artist to ensure they are trying to maintain a healthy work-life balance.
- Address workload decrease when needed. Look out for warning signs of stress impacting the body.
- Empower artist's to take ownership of their mental health through coping strategies that resonate with them personally.

- Involve artists in developing strategies for their mental health support to ensure their current workload and objectives align with their career goals.
- Foster collaborative decision-making processes to discuss shared goals and establish join accountability.
- Encourage artists to participate in discussions about decisions that affect them and their well-being.

**Two-Way Communication**

*Practices for establishing open, dialogue that ensures active participation in discussions, decision-making, and feedback exchanges.*

**Work-Life Balance**

*Techniques for establishing healthy boundaries, managing workloads, and maintaining sustainable career practices while preventing burnout.*

**Artist Involvement**

*Approaches for engaging artists as active participants in career decisions and creative processes, empowering them with appropriate levels of control and input.*

## Supporting Actions

- Display aspects of a transformational leadership style.
- Refer to Five-Part action plan to assist an artist in a mental health crisis.
- Review Mental Health Resources and provide to artists if necessary.

- Focus on meaningful gestures for artist support. Such as verbal praise during meetings, spontaneous messages of encouragement, or social media acknowledgments.
- Consistently recognise and celebrate the artist's achievements through personalised acknowledgements or public recognition during meetings

**Transformational Leadership**

*Recommendations for adopting transformational leadership approaches that inspire, empower, and support artists through ethical management practices, clear communication, and genuine care for their professional and personal development.*

**Motivation and Satisfaction**

*Methods for recognising achievements, providing encouragement, and creating intrinsic motivation that sustains artists' enthusiasm and professional fulfilment in a competitive industry environment.*

## Working Relationship Style

- Incorporate shared activities such as outings to a concert or art exhibition.
- Increase social engagement with artist's over duration of working relationship.
- Ensure that along with social interactions, boundaries are set around business discussions. Set work-hours where you are available for work-related conversations.

- Promote a culture of transparency and support by encouraging conversations about mental health support and well-being.
- Adjust relationship type for setting. Adapt to a more friendly tone for social settings and vice versa.
- Establish clear boundaries between professional and social discussions/settings.

**Social Interaction**

**Organisational Culture**

*Final Formal Meeting: Comprehensive Evaluation*

The final meeting provided valuable data on the participants perceptions of the AMMHTK's enhancements and ongoing utilisation. In the past week, Sarah incorporated two-way communication, 'Guide for New Artists,' and organisational culture into her management practice. This was done through initiating a well-being check-in with a newly onboarded artist, something she was apprehensive to do in past conversations. Sarah referred to the 'Guide for New Artists' to start the conversation and found it very useful. These check-ins are recommended to open communication channels. Her reports of the guide allowing her to 'connect more easily' with the artist supports HRM data that open-communication and strengthen relationships (Singh and Singhi, 2015; Snyder, 2009).

She also shared how she encouraged the artist to not overwork herself, which incorporated 'Work-Life Balance' and supports that the AMMHTK has provided Sarah with what elements to observe to protect her artists well-being. HRM data shows that intense workloads can negatively impact well-being (Atkins and Brooks, 2021). Artist manager research reviews the issues modern artists have with incorporating a healthy work-life balance (Allen, 2022; Anderson, 2014; Elberse, 2013). Incorporating these well-being check-ins enhanced the organisational culture through navigating the social working conditions related to the artist productivity (Cavanaugh, 2004). Additionally, since the first pilot study, the use of the newly incorporated section supports the overall data of the tool kits refinements to further support management practices.

Sarahs concern regarding the feedback form is valid. Prior to large-scale implementation, there should be a review on the benefits of incorporating a third party to receive responses. Rather than the manager addressing these concerns, a third-party could not only evaluate artists feedback but communicate this to the manager in a structured format. Which could also be incorporated as a formal way to analyse data on the artists perception of the tool kits impact. For example, if the data is more positive over time, this could be reported as a direct result of the AMMHTK. Managers could also be provided with increasing results to share on their websites or social media pages to inform incoming artists of their growth.

Within response to the second question, Sarah shared an overly positive response to the refined tool kit. By stating there was 'no comparison' she provided valuable data

of the adjustments. She found the AMMHTK a lot more accessible, which is integral in showcasing the impact of the refinements. Sarah also noted how the previous tool kit was more 'time consuming.' This is important because it addresses that, in further adjustments, care should be taken to ensure that elements of the tool kit pertain to ease of use and time.

Stating the tool was 'active' rather than 'passive' and that the tool kit made it easier to integrate these practices in her behaviour, points to results that support the tool kit's ability to be incorporated into future management practices, as an ongoing tool for mental health support. There was also a comment stating the tool kit was not over-complicated, this establishes encouraging data that the tool kit can be seamlessly integrated into future managers roles.

The fourth question provided further compelling data. Sarah discussed her AMMHTK journey and feeling burnt out in the past. She even referred to a metaphor, of putting on a mask in an airplane, that was used by a different manager, Morgan, described in the reflexive thematic analysis. Her reflection of being overworked adds to previous data on managers intense workload (Calkins et al., 2023; MMF, 2019).

She also reviewed that, before the AMMHTK, she was not sure what boundaries to set in place with artists. Research on the artists on their precarious work environment discusses that this can lead to blurred boundaries between work and professional life (Lamis and Musgrave, 2025; Smith and Teague, 2015). The tool kits advice on setting these boundaries, specifically with managers who fall under the 'Friendship Relationship-Type' encourages further positive impacts on management practices.

At this time, she stated that the AMMHTK provided her with a structure on how to navigate mental health support, underlined by previous data that has shown that managers are tasked as artists caretakers while frequently lacking access to appropriate support resources (Calkins et al., 2023). The refined tool kit's ability to provide easily accessible support yields integral data in this second part of the pilot study as a future tool for managers, which is currently lacking.

Sarah shared how, in the past, the most challenging aspect of supporting an artist was figuring out when and how to do so. The AMMHTK's advice in 'Guide for New Artists' provides information on the best time to start this conversation, and 'Conversation Guide' displays examples on holding these discussions from the initial

reach-out, mid-conversation, and post-conversation follow-up. Data from HRM research supports that this type of open conversation can prevent burnout and support well-being (Singh and Singhi, 2015; Snyder, 2009). Additionally, two-way communication is an essential element of artist management practice, fostering trust and collaboration (Andreu Perez et al., 2022).

The final question reviewed further accommodations for the large-scale study. Sarah reviewed a comment made in the prior meeting to a check-list format. She added a comment regarding a physical board to display the personalised recommendations for future managers. This is a valued idea that will be regarded as an option for managers post the large-scale study. While Sarah shared numerous recommendations in the last meeting, her overall content with the current AMMHTK showcased a further positive result to its refinements and the conduction of the second part of the pilot study. The final meeting completed with a review of the tool kit in its final form, showcasing the recent refinements made since our previous meeting.

### 6.4.9 Research Questions Analysis

1. To what extent do the revisions made following the pilot study improve the clarity, accessibility, and applicability of the AMMHTK?

   a. Do the refinements create any additional complexity or implementation barriers?

2. What are the key requirements and modifications needed to ensure the AMMHTK is feasible for implementation in a larger-scale study?

   a. What practical challenges or facilitators emerge when implementing the AMMHTK that could impact larger-scale deployment?

The first research question analysed how revisions improved the AMMHTK's clarity, accessibility, and applicability, while the sub-question assessed additional complexity or barriers. Sarah noted several ways the refined tool kit improved seamless usage. The Google Site increased accessibility, and the navigation bar made resources easier to access, reducing time needed to view and use the tool kit. She praised the ability to easily share 'UK Mental Health Resources' with artists and the marginalised groups section. These improvements positively impacted her ability to incorporate the tool kit into management practices and feel more supportive in artist

care. Comments on two section titles were addressed with more intuitive headings during this pilot study phase.

In terms of complexity, Sarah directly stated the AMMHTK was not 'over complicated.' For additional barriers, she discussed concerns with lack of third-party involvement for the 'Anonymous Feedback Form.' There also needs to be further data collected to address her comments regarding navigating the differences between male and female artist, and if this is an element that should be incorporated into further revisions.

The second research question addressed the key requirements and modifications needed to ensure the AMMHTK is feasible for the large-scale study. The sub-question regarded the practical challenges or facilitators that emerged when implementing the tool kit that could impact the large-scale study. Certain elements need to be addressed prior to large-scale implementation. Preparation for guided research on gender differences within artist support, consideration for remote versus in-person check-ins for geographically dispersed managers, and a cost analysis framework for social interaction and workload reduction recommendations. Further modifications include further consideration on enhanced remote social interaction options, group versus solo artist implementation guides for check-ins, and standardised approach to communications between managers and labels. Additional deliberations should be made regarding data collection on methods for comparing managers decision-making regarding artists support and monetary needs, analysing of whether managers would find comparative management style information helpful or discouraging, and evaluation of check-list formats without creating negative perceptions among participants.

### 6.4.10 Conclusion

The second part of the pilot study provided compelling evidence on the AMMHTK's enhanced effectiveness and long-term viability as a mental health resource for artist managers. Through Sarah's sustained two-month application period, the study demonstrated not only the tool kit's improved accessibility and user-friendliness but also its capacity for seamless integration into existing management practices. The refinements made during this phase and prior to its commencement transformed the tool kit into a management tool that can confidently rely on, rather than a 'gut feeling.'

Data supported the AMMHTK's ability to address complex real-world barriers like geographical barriers and working alongside adverse artists. While identifying critical areas for larger-scale development such as third-party feedback systems, gender specific differences, and remote protocols. Evidence showed the refined tool kit enhanced Sarah's confidence and preparedness in mental health support, while supporting her own well-being through improved boundary setting and workload management. Suggesting that the tool kit's benefits extend past artist support to encompass manager sustainability.

### 6.4.11 Pilot Study Parts One and Two Conclusion

This section will briefly summarise the key findings and suggest next steps for improving or refining the AMMHTK through discussing its strengths and limitations. Additionally discussing the large-scale study.

#### *Strengths and Limitations*

Within the first part of the pilot study, Sarah's experiences align with the AMMHTK success indicator. A majority, 64% of the tool kit was used. While artists were not directly questioned, two artists did report a positive impact. The final aspect of the success indicator reviewed if the tool kit would be used in the future and Sarah discussed future implementation plans. Future employment was further enhanced in part-two of the pilot study. Based on these elements, the tool kit was deemed successful by the developed indicator (Markless and Streatfield, 2012).

The second part of the pilot study allowed for a direct comparison between AMMHTK versions. Building upon established rapport and leading to deep reflective insights on the tool kit's development and Sarah's journey. Achieving its purpose of assessing the usability of the refined tool kit, which determined elements that are practical and require further improvement for the large-scale study. Sarah demonstrated positive feedback to the amended tool kit and her ongoing and future usage supports the tool kit's ability to adapt a manager's behaviour over time and the usage of the tool kit as a long-term resource.

Limitations within parts one and two of the study did occur, not all components of the tool kit were used. However, the sections that remained unused over the course of each study were primarily those intended for emergency situations. The absence of a crisis is not indicative of the AMMHT's failure. Additionally, the impact on artists

was not directly explored through artist feedback. This was addressed within the development of the 'Manager Feedback Form,' but further limitations were discussed regarding third-party observation. A further limitation was noted within the first part of the study, Sarah's description of the impact as 'soft'. However, this is consistent with her management style, which already aligns with the tool kit's suggested approach types. Highlighting that even small shifts in practice can be meaningful, as evidenced by the artists positive responses to the tool kit's implementation, despite not being directly questioned. Sarah also reported feeling 'at peace' with the tool kit. Identified elements of the tool kit were refined and tested further in the second part of the pilot study, which provided positive participant reflections.

In the second part of the study, specific elements of the AMMHTK were identified that require further investigation. The includes gender-specific concerns highlighted by Sarah in both parts of the study, additional research is needed to identify if this is a common occurrence and should be incorporated into future tool kit enhancement. Multiple discussions were held on in-person versus remote well-being check-ins due to geographical constrains. Further evidence is required supporting positives and negatives of holding these check-ins remotely for managers with similar constraints. Additionally, conversations were held that brought up insights into the balance of monetary constraints, label involvement, and artists workload. The large-scale study will aim to address these areas through identifying emotional weights between necessary financial obligations and work-life balance.

### *Connection to Broader Findings*

Both single-case pilot studies connect to broader research on employee well-being, artist management, relationship dynamics. Building on findings from the reflexive thematic analysis and extending the results through the application of the tool kit in a practical setting.

Research in HRM explores how applying specific approaches can shape workplace practices that enhance employee well-being (Atkin and Brooks, 2021; Bond and Bunce, 2011; Charoensukmongkol and Puyod, 2021; Davidson and Yan, 2013; Lappalainen et al., 2024; Wood, 2018). The AMMHTK's first section examines managers preferred mental health involvement levels, connecting to three HRM aspects, two-way communication, work-life balance, and employee involvement. Effective two-way communication enhances trust and commitment, making

employees feel valued and improving job satisfaction (Andreu Perez et al., 2022; Zheng, 2015). Healthy work-life balance through flexible environments directly influences well-being by reducing stress and promoting family-friendly culture (Diskienė et al., 2021a; Wood, 2018). Employee involvement in decision-making strengthens commitment, reduces role ambiguity and creates a supportive environment enhancing well-being (Bond and Bunce, 2011; Charoensukmongkol and Puyod, 2021).

The tool kit's second section reviews managers action plans. Their action levels reflect HRM principles of motivation and satisfaction and organisational culture. Intrinsically motivated employees feel more valued with greater job satisfaction, highlighting the importance of recognition and participative decision-making (Ghosh and Satyawadi, 2012; Kuo, 2013; Patwardhan et al., 2013). Positive organisational culture enhances mental health and performance by promoting well-being and reducing burnout (Crawford et al., 2010; Dutton and Heaphy, 2008).

The third section connects HRM research on social interaction and transformational leadership to relationship types. Social interaction impacts well-being by fostering belonging and community, enhancing workplace satisfaction (Atkin and Brooks, 2021; Lappalainen et al., 2024). Transformational leadership fosters trust and clear communication, increasing engagement and reducing role ambiguity A transformational leader functions as an ethical role model through communicating a vision for the future, challenges employees to be more motivated. Aspects of a transformational leader include understanding motivation and behaviour, being sensitive to employee's needs, communicating effectively, and to encourage and empower employees. Incorporating a transformational leadership style into the artist manager relationship can significantly benefit the artist's overall well-being.

In addition to HRM research, the two-part pilot study connects to past artist manager research. The impact of this relationship on an artist's well-being is profound, as it shapes both their professional success and personal development. Artist managers are central to artist success, shaping careers through logistical coordination, emotional support, and strategic guidance (Hull, 2021; Allen, 2022; Morrow, 2018; Wang, 2024). Their roles often blur professional and personal boundaries, affecting both parties' mental health and stability (Gaudesi, 2016; Musgrave, 2023; Record Union, 2019). Additionally, pressure to succeed is a well-known negative contributor to musician's

well-being (Araújo et al., 2019; Record Union, 2019). Highlighting the importance of clear role definitions to ensure a healthy, productive relationship that supports both the artist's creative aspirations and well-being.

Prior participants demonstrated varied levels of mental health involvement. For example, Malik and Chloe, actively facilitated professional help; others, like John, maintained distance. Some, like Morgan and Isabella, reshaped their management style due to personal well-being. Power dynamics varied, some compared relationships to family or romance, raising concerns about blurred boundaries and professional integrity. It highlights the varying levels of manager involvement in mental health support, from setting clear boundaries to actively facilitating professional help, and further emphasises the impact of power dynamics and professional boundaries in maintaining healthy working relationships. By examining these dynamics, results illustrated how the artist manager relationship can shape an artist's career trajectory and emotional well-being, reinforcing past research on the vital role managers play in supporting both the professional and personal growth of their artists.

The pilot studies reinforced broader research on the pivotal role artist managers play in shaping both the careers and well-being of artists through logistical coordination, emotional support, and strategic decision-making (Hull, 2021; Allen, 2022; Morrow, 2018). Highlighting how varying levels of mental health involvement from active facilitation to deliberate distance, alongside complex power dynamics and blurred boundaries, can significantly influence the stability and psychological health of both parties (Gaudesi, 2016; Musgrave, 2023; Record Union, 2019). By applying the AMMHTK to these relational patterns, findings demonstrate the need for clearly defined, intentional approaches to management that balance emotional care with professional structure. Feedback from Sarah's experience supports refining the tool kit to help managers better navigate relational complexity, ultimately promoting healthier, more sustainable careers and a more supportive music industry.

The future large-scale study will employ a mixed-methods study will test and refine the AMMHTK with UK artist managers. The study will use a quantitative survey and qualitative interviews to assess the tool kit's effectiveness in providing structured mental health support. The study will address gender-specific concerns, in-person vs. remote check-ins, label decision value, and workload discussions. The large-scale study is detailed further in Section 7.4.2 in the next chapter.

# Chapter 7: Conclusion

## 7.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter Seven, a comprehensive conclusion and final remarks will be presented. Section 7.2 will examine the research aims and questions, evaluating the extent to which they were successfully addressed. Subsequently, Section 7.3 will present research implications and results for best practice. Section 7.4 will detail potential avenues for future investigations. Section 7.5 provides summarised conclusions regarding the thesis.

## 7.2 AIMS AND OUTCOMES

This doctoral thesis provides the first comprehensive documentation of UK music manager's knowledge regarding their artist's mental health, addressing a critical gap in both academic literature and industry understanding. The research established a critical understanding of managers awareness of available support resources, the impact of both their knowledge and gaps in support systems, and the profound implications for artist manager relationships when managers lack awareness of how to support artists within existing power dynamics and role dissonance while maintaining their own well-being. The application of the HRM within the music management sector offered a unique lens through which to analyse these dynamics.

Through in-depth interviews with UK music managers, this thesis mapped the landscape of mental health awareness and resource knowledge within the sector, revealing significant gaps and opportunities for intervention. The data generated from the interviews provided a rich understanding of the challenges and potential positive outcomes for the music industry. The research questions and sub-questions were addressed, revealing insights into support systems, awareness of mental health resources, the influence on the artist manager relationship, and the potential impact on artist and managers well-being.

The findings reveal the persistent mental health challenges facing artists in the UK music industry and identify critical gaps in managerial support systems. (Araújo et al., 2019; Berg et al., 2022; Gross and Musgrave, 2016; Musicians Union,

2023; Record Union, 2019). The research not only addressed the existing gaps in understanding music managers knowledge but also highlighted the need for increased attention to the mental health of artist managers themselves, a dimension often overlooked in industry discussions. The research also documented and highlighted manager's struggles with intense workloads and absence of mental health support guidelines in their daily practice. (Gaudesi, 2016; Morrow, 2006; Watson, 2002).

The outcomes of the research presented a nuanced picture of the current landscape of management artist mental health within the UK music industry. The results highlighted the complexities and diverse approaches among music managers in addressing mental health needs, stressing the need for a uniform framework for supporting artists dealing with mental health issues. The AMMHTK contributed to this need by establishing a tool that is grounded in HRM principles related to well-being and adapted specifically for the music management industry, that was tested in a real-world context and includes personalised recommendations for varying artist manager approaches. It was designed and then refined to serve as a comprehensive personalised resource, equipping both artists and managers with the strategies needed to navigate the complexities of their artist relationships while safeguarding their mental health. This refined tool kit now stands as a valuable and actionable resource to empower and educate artists and managers in the music industry. It represents a tangible guide for addressing identified challenges and fostering a more nurturing and supportive environment within the dynamic landscape of the music industry.

Following the development of the AMMHTK, a two-part pilot study with a UK artist manager validated the tool kit's real-world applicability and identified critical refinements. This practical application demonstrated that evidence-based mental health resources can be effectively integrated into music management practice, directly addressing the industries documented lack of support guidelines. The pilot study's personalised approach revealed that adaptable support systems are essential for equipping managers with the knowledge and confidence needed to navigate their complex dual role as business representatives and pastoral supporters. These findings establish a blueprint for industry-wide implementation of mental health support frameworks, potentially transforming how the music industry addresses artist well-being and manager professional development.

Results from the first portion of the pilot study reinforced the importance of artist managers in shaping artist careers and well-being (Hull, 2021; Allen, 2022; Morrow, 2018; MMF, 2012; Wang, 2024). Input highlighted the need for clearly defined management approaches that balance emotional care with professional structure to promote healthier, more sustainable careers (Gaudesi, 2016; Musgrave, 2023; Record Union, 2019). The first portion of the pilot study was deemed successful based on Sarah's positive experience and future implementation plans. While not all tool components were used, the unused sections were primarily designed for urgent situations that Sarah did not experience during the tenure of the study.

The second portion of the pilot study demonstrated why the enhanced AMMHTK represents a crucial advancement for industry practice. The tool kit's improved accessibility, user-friendliness, and seamless integration into existing management workflows directly addressed the systemic barriers that prevent managers from providing adequate mental health support. This breakthrough addresses a critical industry gap, offering managers practical tools to support both artist and manager well-being without compromising professional boundaries. Participant feedback confirmed that the tool kit's flexible, personalised structure empowers managers to develop tailored support strategies that match individual artist needs whilst respecting their own capacity limitations. These findings validate that structured, evidence-based resources can transform the traditionally improvised approach to mental health support in music management, establishing a foundation for professional standards across the industry.

The AMMHTK directly addressed previously identified real-world barriers, such as time constraints, lack of mental health training, and the perceived tension between commercial and emotional responsibilities. By offering adaptable intervention levels and practical templates for use during regular check-ins, the tool kit supported the participant in embedding mental health awareness into their routine practices rather than treating the support as an additional or external responsibility. The tool contributed positively to the manager's own mental health by providing clear, structured guidance and reducing emotional labour. Overall, the final stage of research reinforced the tool kit's relevance, usability, and capacity to foster a healthier, more sustainable working dynamic between artists and their managers.

## 7.3   IMPLICATIONS AND THE RESULTS FOR PRACTICE

The following section examines research implications for best practices by focusing on HRM application, extending current literature, and evaluating strengths and limitations. The section offers practical insights drawn within the music management and mental health sector.

### 7.3.1.1   Contribution To Theory

This research makes a groundbreaking theoretical contribution by developing the first HRM framework specifically designed for artist management, fundamentally reconceptualising how the industry understands the artist manager relationship. This newly developed framework addresses a critical gap in both HRM theory and music industry scholarship, where traditional business management models have proven inadequate for the unique emotional and creative dynamics of artist representation. Through rigorous integration of HRM theory with qualitative data, the study establishes the music manager as a dual-care partner, a theoretically grounded role that encompasses career strategy, logistics, and crucially, artist mental health and emotional resilience. The introduction and validation of the AMMHTK represents a significant advancement in applied HRM theory, demonstrating how academic frameworks can be translated into practical industry tools. This contribution is particularly vital given the music industry's documented mental health crisis and the absence of professional standards for managerial practice. By establishing evidence-based theoretical foundations for artist management, this research provides the scholarly framework necessary for industry transformation and professional development standards.

The findings of this research offer valuable insights into the changing landscape of artist management in the UK, particularly regarding the demands placed on music managers. As revealed in the study, the implications are significant, pointing to an increase in the responsibilities and challenges faced by artist managers. Recognising the changing dynamics of the artist manager relationship and addressing the challenges faced by music managers is critical for fostering a healthier and more sustainable environment for all stakeholders in the music industry.

A critical insight emerging from the research was the wide variability in artist manager approaches across the music management sector, a finding that

fundamentally challenges the industry's current lack of standardised mental health protocols. These approaches were carefully curated and categorised during analysis, revealing a spectrum of management styles that directly influenced how mental health was addressed in practice which are often inadequately or inconsistently applied. This variability matters because it demonstrates why the industry's current ad-hoc approach to artist well-being is failing, leaving vulnerable artists without reliable support systems depending entirely on their manager's individual capacity and awareness. By examining these diverse styles, it became apparent that imposing a rigid, one-size-fits-all solution would be both impractical and potentially counterproductive in an industry built on creative individualism. Instead, the findings highlighted the urgent need for a flexible, evidence-based framework that could be adapted to different management practices whilst maintaining consistent standards of care. This realisation was pivotal in developing the AMMHTK as a scalable solution that respects industry diversity whilst establishing professional baselines for artist mental health support, addressing the critical gap between individual manager capability and industry-wide responsibility for artist well-being.

The two-part pilot study offered a real-world lens through which to test the adaptability and relevance of the AMMHTK in a working management context. The participant's positive experience illustrated how the tool kit could be tailored to suit a specific managerial approach, and how such personalisation fostered greater mental health awareness and clearer boundaries within the artist manager relationship. Results not only reinforced the need for flexible, context-driven support mechanisms but also demonstrated how embedding HRM strategies into everyday practices could lead to improved outcomes for both managers and artists.

The results demonstrate that applying HRM principles through the AMMHTK transforms music management practice by increasing motivation, well-being, and self-esteem amongst both artists and managers (Ferlazzo, 2015; Nwankwo, 2014). The pilot studies validated these findings in practice, proving that customised HRM strategies deliver measurable improvements in mental well-being and self-esteem within real-world management contexts. Both the interviews and pilot studies establish that when music managers implement positive, motivational, and health-focused relationship strategies, they create more inclusive environments with enhanced communication, fundamentally improving the artist manager dynamic. These

outcomes matter because they provide empirical evidence that professional HRM frameworks can resolve the industry's documented relationship breakdowns and mental health crises, offering a scalable solution for sector-wide transformation.

Specifically, the AMMHTK contributes to the identified challenges by providing guidance on managing workload pressures, fostering open communication, and establishing clear boundaries within the artist manager relationship. These elements resonate with HRM principles that emphasise the importance of transparent communication, workload management, and setting clear expectations to promote a healthy work environment (Andreu Perez et al., 2022; Diskienė et al., 2021a; Miles, 1965; Punyanunt-Carter and Wrench, 2012; Wood, 2018; Zheng, 2015).

Data from the two-part pilot study provided evidence that improved mental health awareness and support translate into tangible benefits such as heightened productivity and mutual support for both parties involved, which, in turn, contributes to an artist's overall success and well-being. Additionally, the application of HRM principles and AMMHTK address the longstanding perception of power imbalances within the artist manager relationship (Gaudesi, 2013; Musgrave, 2013; Wang, 2024). By establishing a healthy and equitable dynamic, the theories principles elevate the partnership between artists and managers beyond the traditional employer-employee paradigm. The evolution toward a partnership-based relationship has the potential to reshape the dynamics of the industry, fostering a more collaborative environment.

### 7.3.1.2 Gap in Literature

The music industry's relationship with mental health has emerged as a critical area of concern, with growing evidence regarding destructive working conditions. These conditions are a prominent factor contributing to mental health issues experienced by both artists and their managers (Ackerman et al., 2012; Asher and Kenny, 2016; Bjerkeset et al., 2014; Davis et al., 2004; Gross and Musgrave, 2017; Musgrave, 2014; Record Union, 2019). Research reveals that mental health issues stem from industry functioning rather than the creative process itself (Gross and Musgrave, 2016). The significance of the artist manager relationship has been acknowledged in supporting career development and well-being (Gaudesi, 2016; Morrow, 2013; Wang, 2024; Watson, 2002). Additional research established managers as key figures in artists professional journeys and mental health support networks (MMF, 2012; Morrow, 2013; Wang, 2024; Watson, 2002). While the issues artists face regarding

their well-being has been researched, there was an inadequate understanding of how managers perceive, interpret, or address these challenges within their professional relationships. A fundamental disconnect persisted between well-established industry challenges and management-level responses and whether music managers recognise their role in either perpetuating or mitigating harmful industry conditions.

This research conducted the first comprehensive examination of manager's own mental health challenges and their impact on artist support capacity, exposing the industry's overlooked care crisis. The study revealed how managing artist's mental health creates a destructive cycle that compromises manager's own well-being, establishing these as interconnected rather than isolated challenges. Managers experiencing mental health strain cannot effectively support vulnerable artists, perpetuating industry-wide dysfunction. The research exposed how managers struggle with unclear role definitions and lack structured approaches to psychological relationships with artists, creating professional chaos where boundaries blur. Most critically, the data revealed alarming gaps in manager's safeguarding knowledge, leaving artists potentially exposed whilst managers operate without professional guidance. These findings transform understanding by establishing that sustainable artist support requires systematic manager well-being, challenging the industry's approach that treats these as separate concerns. Providing the empirical foundation for developing professional standards that protect both artists and managers.

Data from the reflexive thematic analysis unveiled that certain managers prefer strict boundaries, 25% semantically stated, 'I am not a therapist.' Others discussed a high level of mental health awareness and support. The analysis systematically identified the factors that influence their capacity to provide effective support, such as their own workload or previous overload with mental health support, offering a universal view of these intertwined challenges. Evidence emphasises the need for increased awareness, education, and support systems among music managers, as their role has a direct bearing on the well-being of artists. In addition, power dynamics and the complexities of managerial relationships were examined in-depth, revealing how managers navigate relationships with artists, including those with pre-existing friendships. Industry-specific challenges faced by music managers were explored, such as gender-related issues, financial constraints, and limited label involvement, offering a comprehensive perspective on the multifaceted roles and struggles

experienced by managers. In a holistic approach to fostering a healthier industry, both artists and their managers should be equipped with the knowledge and resources necessary to navigate the challenges related to mental health.

Workload increases are often attributed to the industry's extensively studied technological advancements (Ackerman and Adams, 2004; Ackerman and Kenny, 2008; Araújo et al., 2019; Bergson, 2023; Bjerkeset et al., 2014; Easmon and Kapsetaki, 2017; Fricke, 2023; Jessen et al., 2021; Jones et al., 2023; Gross and Musgrave, 2016; Lamis and Musgrave, 2025; Musgrave, 2022; Smith and Teague, 2015). Yet, current research failed to examine how managers understand or respond to the mental health implications of these technological pressures on artists.

Manager's observations revealed how technological changes affect artist mental health and their support capacity. The research showed that managers hold conflicting views on technology's impact on artist well-being, with participants unable to determine whether social media supports or harms artist's workloads. The pilot studies identified additional concerns regarding social media pressures, confirming technology's complex role in artist stress. These findings are vital because they expose the industry's lack of digital literacy training for managers, leaving them unprepared to guide artists through technology-related mental health challenges. Recognising that inadequate working conditions affect both artists and managers establishes the industry's shared responsibility to create healthier, more sustainable environments for all stakeholders.

Financial constraints create a destructive cycle that undermines both creative output and mental health across the music industry. The research exposes how music managers face crushing financial pressures in an industry characterised by uncertain revenue streams, particularly when working with emerging artists (Bjerkeset et al., 2014; Davidson, 2004; Jogulu et al., 2017). Without immediate structural reform, financial stress will continue as the primary barrier to artistic achievement and well-being.

Limited label involvement compounds this crisis. Without substantial label support, managers shoulder additional responsibilities that compromise their well-being and effectiveness in supporting artists (Pizzolatto, 2023; Sun, 2019). These findings reveal problematic power dynamics between artists, managers, and labels that demand industry reform. The current system forces managers into unsustainable

positions where they cannot provide adequate support whilst struggling with their own financial survival, creating systemic failure that affects everyone in the creative process.

While various mental health strategies and interventions had been developed for the music industry there was insufficient understanding of managers knowledge of these resources or their capacity to facilitate artist access to appropriate support (Araújo et al., 2019; Beitz et al., 2022; Bergson et al., 2023; Collins et al., 2018; Kenny, 2011). Research filled the void by conducting a comprehensive assessment of managers knowledge of available mental health resources, their use of these resources, and their capacity to connect artists with appropriate support. The findings revealed a lack of understanding among managers regarding available mental health services and established a baseline result of current resource awareness within the sector.

The music industry lacked any HRM framework for creative relationships, leaving mental health strategies without theoretical foundation. Existing approaches were designed for traditional organisational structures, completely ignoring the unique dynamics of creative partnerships (Dean, 2007; Glow, 2010; Jogulu et al., 2017; Morrow, 2018; Throsby and Zednik, 2011; Wang, 2024).

This research established seven HRM principles from over forty studies on well-being and creative research, creating the first evidence-based framework specifically for artist management. These principles were tested against participant's varying approaches to mental health support, directly informing the development of the AMMHTK. The tool kit operationalises these HRM principles for diverse management practices, providing actionable strategies that support both artists and managers whilst acknowledging how different management styles influence mental well-being.

The inclusion of a comprehensive two-part pilot study provided empirical evidence for the theoretical framework, with industry implementation demonstrating the AMMHTK's effectiveness in adapting to specific managerial contexts. The participants experiences highlight the tool kit's effectiveness in adapting to specific managerial contexts, offering practical insights that enhance the literature. Practical validation enhanced the literature by providing concrete evidence of how HRM principles can be successfully adapted to address mental health concerns in creative industry contexts where traditional support structures are absent. In doing so, this

research not only extends current knowledge but also presents a model for future investigations into the intersection of HRM practices and mental health support within the music management sector.

### 7.3.1.3   Strengths and Limitations

The following segment will examine the strengths and limitations identified from the study.

#### *Strengths*

Beginning with strengths, this research, emphasises a holistic understanding, the significance of real-life context, and the amplification of participant voices. Together, these strengths fortify the depth and applicability of findings, contributing significantly to the broader discourse on artist manager interactions and their consequences for mental health support. The scope of the presented information is limited to the context of the music management sector of the UK music industry through the application of HRM and its principles. If applied to other industries or areas, these conclusions may demonstrate incorrect assumptions. Despite this, the following findings are still relevant to the impact that the application of HRM principles might have on the artist manager relationship.

#### *Holistic Understanding*

Uncovered a holistic understanding of the complexities involved in artist manager relationships, including the various aspects of support and challenges related to mental health. The use of qualitative research allowed for a detailed exploration of the experiences, perceptions, and behaviours of artist managers in supporting artists mental health. Providing rich insights. Illuminating the complexities inherent in artist manager relationships and enriches our comprehension of their implications for mental health support.

#### *Real-Life Context*

The findings can be highly applicable to real-world practice and policymaking in the music industry, offering concrete recommendations for improving artists mental health support. The rich data, consisting of narratives and participant quotes, has the potential to effectively illustrate and substantiate conclusions. It is through this in-depth exploration that the tapestry of artist manager relationships and their impact on mental health can be woven, contributing to previous knowledge in this field. The

findings were further enhanced through the participants recorded experience within the two-part pilot study.

Participant Voice/ Tailored Questions

Open-ended questions and interviews were tailored to the specific experiences of artist managers, enabling them to discuss issues that matter most to them. The research's importance on participant voice and inquiries respects the individuality of each artist manager. Granting them a platform to share their unique perspectives and experiences. A depth of understanding will be implemental in shedding light on how artist managers approach and perceive mental health issues, painting a more comprehensive picture of this intricate topic.

### *Limitations*

The next section will discuss the research's limitations. Extending to limited perspective, self-report/recall bias, sample selection and subjectivity in data analysis.

#### *Limited Perspective*

Data collection relied solely on the viewpoints and experiences of artist managers. Not having input from the artists, themselves may limit the overall understanding of the artists mental health, as perceptions and experiences may vary. Artists may have their expectations and requirements regarding the support they need from their managers, and their feedback could shed light on the effectiveness of current support systems. Artists may value certain types of support or approach mental health differently than their managers, so their input is vital in understanding how to best provide support in a way that resonates with them. To address this limitation, future research in this area could aim to include artists perspectives.

#### *Self-Report/Recall Bias*

The issue of self-report bias and recall bias is an essential consideration when assessing the findings. While research relies on the responses and accounts of artist managers to gain insights into their thoughts and actions regarding artists mental health, there are potential limitations associated with these self-reports. Managers might provide responses that they believe are socially desirable or that align with expectations, potentially masking their true thoughts and actions concerning artists mental health. Responses from managers could be influenced by their recall of past

events, potentially leading to inaccuracies in their accounts of specific instances or actions taken to support artists mental health.

*Sample Selection*

Findings could be influenced by the specific managers chosen to participate, potentially not representing the full diversity of experiences among artist managers. Findings may not fully capture the diversity of experiences among artist managers if the sample does not adequately represent the broader population of managers within the music industry. Ensuring that the chosen managers are diverse and representative of the broader population of artist managers was an essential element for producing findings that can aimed to be widely applicable and contribute to a deeper understanding of artist manager relationships in the music industry.

*Subjectivity in Data Influence*

Data analysed through qualitative methods has the potential to be influenced by the researcher's perspectives, biases, and preconceptions (Finlay and Ballinger, 2006). These potential influences can affect the accuracy and objectivity of the findings. For example, a researcher's interpretation of a manager's response to a question about artists mental health may be influenced by their own beliefs about what constitutes effective mental health support. Subjectivity could lead to an unintentional bias in the findings.

Reflexive thematic analysis was used partly due to its ability to reduce the potential for interviewer bias (Holmes and McCabe, 2009; Jomeen et al, 2010; Jootun et al, 2009). Studies show that reflexivity can be used both as a tool to guide the research process and to limit the bias of researchers and their subjectivity. Additionally, extensive member-checking was employed through ongoing discussions with the researcher's supervision team. Full transparency on the research process, including the disclosure of any potential biases, has been shared with the intent to allow readers to assess the credibility and trustworthiness of the research findings.

To mitigate other limitations that were not addressed, future research could employ a mixed-methods approach, incorporating interviews with both artists and managers, longitudinal designs, and larger and more diverse samples of participants. A comprehensive approach that combines the viewpoints of both artists and managers would provide a more holistic understanding of the complexities surrounding mental health in the music industry. Additionally, including multiple perspectives, such as

those of record labels or mental health professionals, could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the topic. To avoid self-report or recall bias, future research could involve triangulation, where multiple sources of data are used to cross-verify information. In this context, collecting data from artists as well might help validate or contrast with the accounts of managers. Recommendations for future research

The next section will discuss future research. Two future research projects will be introduced to further examine the results of the study.

### 7.3.2 Future Research

The examination of music managers experiences within the UK music industry revealed a complex environment marked by significant challenges, shedding light on intricate dimensions in their roles and interactions within the artist manager dynamic. Dissatisfaction was expressed by half of the participants, attributing it to financial constraints, limited label involvement, and broader industry issues. Additionally, 42% of managers identify industry-related factors such as heightened pressure, the male-dominated nature of the industry, burnout, and broader issues related to accessibility as primary challenges faced by artists.

In the context of mental well-being, 66% of the participants, conveyed instances where they encountered personal mental health challenges. Discussions highlight a delicate balance between engaging in artists well-being and potential depletion of personal resources for self-care, with 41%, engaged in conversations pertaining to the diverse causes by which their role as an artist manager interfaces with their own mental well-being. Additionally, 33% noted exhaustion of personal resources due to active engagement in artists well-being, leading some to take breaks from managerial duties. Half of the participants implied the imperative of professional intervention when artists struggled with mental health concerns. These findings underscored the intricate relationship between managerial roles, mental well-being, and the diverse approaches to addressing challenges within the artist manager dynamic.

The primary focus of this work was to examine how managers awareness of mental health resources might influence the dynamics of the artist manager relationship and, the overall well-being of the artists or music groups they represent. The study also sought to examine the available support systems for UK music

managers, investigating the impact of effective communication on job satisfaction and the resolution of interpersonal issues within artist manager teams. While these aspects were identified, the reflexive thematic analysis revealed that managers intentions to provide mental health support might be hindered by their struggles with well-being, dissatisfaction with their current role, or a general lack of resources. Subsequent research is recommended to further explore the role of the artist manager and the dynamics of the artist manager relationship, exploring deeper into the issues outlined by research findings.

### 7.3.3 Large-Scale Artist Manager Mental Health Tool Kit Implementation

The pilot study validated the AMMHTK's effectiveness, establishing the foundation for large-scale implementation that will transform industry practice. The planned post-doctoral study will deploy the tool kit across a wide range of UK artist managers through mixed-methods research, creating the first comprehensive database of management approaches and mental health support structures in the creative industries.

Moving to mixed-methods is essential because whilst the current qualitative research established how managers approach mental health support, large-scale transformation requires quantitative data to map the extent of support gaps industry-wide and measure the tool kit's impact across diverse contexts (Anderson, 2013). This mixed-methods approach will demonstrate the tool kit's real-world effectiveness across varied management practices through the twelve-month qualitative phase, whilst the quantitative survey will provide the statistical evidence necessary for policy development and industry adoption.

The semi-structured interviews will provide critical insights into why managers utilise specific approaches and whether these benefit or harm artist well-being and manager's own mental health experiences (Anderson, 2013; Braun and Clarke, 2021). The research will build toward establishing the AMMHTK as the standard framework for artist management training, potentially influencing policy development and professional certification requirements. This represents a shift from ad-hoc management practices to evidence-based professional standards, fundamentally transforming how the music industry approaches artist well-being and managerial responsibility.

### 7.3.4 HRM Challenges and Mental Health Concerns in the Music Management Sector

The project's reflexive thematic analysis, centred on the experiences of music managers, has revealed significant challenges, with 50% of participants expressing dissatisfaction with various aspects of their roles, including financial constraints and limited label involvement. Additionally, 41%, discussed the diverse causes by which their role as an artist manager interfaces with their own mental well-being. Past research, including studies by Cunningham (2011) and Throsby and Zednik (2011), has underscored the challenges in implementing HRM principles in creative industries, particularly within the music sector. These challenges, including financial insecurity and a lack of training, have been identified as contributing factors to mental health issues among artists and managers. As a result, future research is recommended to extend the existing body of knowledge by investigating how these challenges impact HRM practices within the music management sector, with a specific focus on the intricate intersection of these challenges with mental health concerns. To further broaden this scope, the study would include artists, acknowledging the shared challenges faced by both members of the partnership.

The envisioned research will employ a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. Including artists as active participants would aim to capture a holistic understanding of the mental health concerns and support requirements of both artists and their managers. Participants would include a diverse sample of music managers, representing various genres and experience levels, alongside artists to provide comprehensive perspectives. Quantitative data on employment conditions, financial security, and perceptions of HRM practices will be collected through surveys and questionnaires. Concurrently, in-depth interviews will provide insights into participants experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms. The integration of both quantitative and qualitative data will offer an examination of the complex landscape.

To ensure practicality and relevance, the study will collaborate with mental health professionals and industry experts in program development. Research funding is critical, covering participant compensation, data collection tools, interview transcription, professional consultation fees, and resources for program development and implementation.

Ethical considerations will be vital, encompassing participant confidentiality, informed consent, and adherence to ethical guidelines for mental health research. The anticipated impact of this research is substantial, contributing valuable insights to enhance HRM practices and mental health support within the music industry. The developed programs and resources have the potential to bring positive changes, addressing working conditions, reducing stressors, and increasing accessibility to mental health support, aligning with ongoing efforts to address highlighted concerns in the existing body of research.

### 7.3.5 MMF Integration

The findings from the reflexive analysis shed light on the pivotal role the MMF plays in supporting the mental health of music managers. With 41% of participants mentioning the MMF as the sole organisation providing mental health assistance, and 58% being active members, it is evident that the MMF holds substantial influence within the music management industry. Highlighting the potential of the MMF to act as a central organisational structure capable of driving change and addressing the identified challenges, such as financial constraints and limited training opportunities, faced by music managers.

Historically, the MMF has addressed the mental health challenges faced by musicians and their managers through an annual guide that compiles relevant resources. The MMF emphasises the progressing discourse on mental health within the music industry and commits to ongoing dialogue.

While commendable for focusing on strategies for managers mental health, there is a call for further investigation into UK music managers awareness of their artists mental health and comprehensive guidance for enhancing musician's well-being. A future research project is recommended, to seek to develop a strategic framework to employ the MMF's influential role. By leveraging tools like the Artist manager Tool kit, discussed further in section 5.7, managers could be offered low cost targeted mental health training courses, online guides, and workshops. These initiatives aim to enhance the awareness and application of HRM practices among music managers, contributing to a more resilient and informed music industry ecosystem.

To achieve these objectives, research would employ a mixed-methods approach. Interviews and surveys, would be employed to explore the experiences of UK music

managers who are MMF members, assessing the effectiveness of the MMF's role in providing mental health assistance and training for artists. The interviews will allow for an in-depth examination of the effectiveness of the MMF in addressing mental health needs and providing training. Open-ended questions would be crafted to capture diverse perspectives and to uncover aspects that may not be covered by predetermined survey questions. Qualitative data analysis methods, such as thematic analysis, would be employed to identify patterns and themes within the interview responses. Potential survey questions could include structured questions related to the awareness and utilisation of MMF's mental health resources, the perceived effectiveness of these resources, and the specific challenges faced by music managers in addressing mental health within their roles. Likert scales and multiple-choice questions can quantify responses, facilitating statistical analysis to identify trends and correlations. Participants would be recruited from the MMF membership base. The study aims for a diverse and representative sample, considering factors such as gender, years of experience, and the genres of music managed. A comprehensive exploration could provide valuable insights into the current state of mental health resources within the MMF, the challenges faced by music managers, and the potential impact of integrating HRM principles.

The study would require funding to cover various aspects of study execution. Initially, financial resources will need to be allocated to recruit skilled researchers or interviewers who possess expertise in both the music industry and mental health. Additionally, funds would be designated for participant recruitment and incentives to encourage participation, ensuring a representative and diverse sample of UK music managers. Lastly, financial support will be essential for disseminating the survey to MMF members, which may involve outreach efforts, promotional materials, and the development of an online platform for survey administration that could be at a low cost to artist managers.

This study would seek to build on the findings of a reflexive analysis, emphasising the pivotal role of the MMF in supporting the mental health of music managers. Bridging the deficits in the existing discourse by leveraging the MMF's influence to enhance mental health support and HRM practices among music managers, contributing to a more resilient and informed music industry ecosystem.

## 7.4    CONCLUSION

In summary, this research advances understanding of the mental health landscape within the UK music management industry, by providing valuable insights for academics, industry professionals, and policymakers. As the music industry continues to evolve, the knowledge gained from support analyses can contribute to fostering a healthier environment for communication, promoting the well-being of musicians, and enhancing the artist manager relationship.

This examination of managerial awareness, capacity, and approaches to mental health support represents a significant contribution to understanding how the music industry can better support the well-being of all its participants. The research confirmed and validated previous studies highlighting adverse working conditions as contributing factors to mental health issues while extending this understanding to include music managers as both affected individuals and potential agents of positive change (Araújo et al., 2019; Berg et al., 2022; Gross and Musgrave, 2016; Musicians Union, 2023; Record Union, 2019).

By examining power dynamics and the complexities of managerial relationships in-depth, the study revealed how managers navigate relationships with artists, including those with pre-existing friendships, while recognising that managers operate within the same challenging structural conditions as artists. The research demonstrated both the possibilities and limitations of manager-led mental health initiatives, providing practical insights for industry transformation.

The reflexive thematic analysis demonstrated that the music management industry is in a state of transformation, with significant potential for improvements related to mental health acknowledgement and industry developments. The introduction of HRM principles as a proactive framework provides a practical pathway for enhancing mental health support, increasing productivity, and nurturing collaboration within the music management sector. Not only extending current knowledge but establishing a model for future investigations into the intersection of HRM practices and mental health support within the music management sector.

The development of the AMMHTK represents a novel contribution to the field, as it operationalises proven HRM principles in a way that is directly applicable to the diverse practices observed among music managers. The tool kit not only provides

actionable strategies to support both artists and managers but also encourages a more nuanced understanding of how differing management styles can influence mental well-being. Additionally, the inclusion of the pilot studies provides empirical evidence to the theoretical framework, highlighting the tool kit's effectiveness in adapting to specific managerial contexts and offering practical insights that enhance the literature.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A

## Current Mental Health Resources Available to Musicians in the UK and US.

| TITL | TYPE | DEFINITION | LOCATION | WEBSITE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Music Minds Matter | Support Line and service | Help Musicians dedicated mental health support line and service for the whole UK music community. | United Kingdom | https://www.musicmindsmatter.org |
| Help Musicians UK | Charity Organisation | Leading UK charity for musicians of all genres, from starting through to retirement. | United Kingdom | https://www.helpmusicians.org.uk |
| Musicians Union | Trade Union | Over 30,000 musicians are working to protect our members' rights and campaign for a fairer music industry. | United Kingdom | https://musiciansunion.org.uk |
| MusiCares | Non-profit organisation | Since its establishment in 1989, MusiCares has supplied more than $60 million in health, financial, and rehabilitation resources to music people in times of need. | New York, USA | https://www.musicares.org |
| Backline | Non-profit organisation | Connects music industry professionals with mental health and wellness resources. | United States of America | https://backline.care |
| Silence the Shame | Non-profit organisation | Empowers and educates communities on mental health and wellness. Through wellness training, compelling content and outreach programs. | United States of America | https://silencetheshame.com |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| SIMS Foundation | Non-profit organisation | Provides mental health and substance use recovery services and supports for musicians, music industry professionals. | Austin, Texas | https://simsfoundation.org |
| Key Changes | Charity Organisation | The music industry-focused mental health recovery services in hospitals and the community for musicians affected by depression, anxiety, PTSD, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and other mental health conditions. | United Kingdom | https://www.keychanges.org.uk/about-our-work/ |
| Sweet Relief | Non-Profit Charity Organisation | Provides financial assistance to all types of career musicians and music industry workers who are struggling to make ends. | United States of America | https://www.sweetrelief.org |

**Appendix B**

**Original Questionnaire Questions:**

Source: Hagan, Daniel (2019) *How do the promoters of independent UK music festivals organise and implement events?* Doctoral thesis, University of West London.

(1) The Music festival sector has gone through a period of continued growth. What would you put this growth down to?
(2) The music festival sector has seen many new events begin and some events close. What do you think makes a successful festival?

(3) Developments in technology have allowed for new ways of staging live performance. Which developments do you think have had the most impact on your work?
(4) In what ways are you conscious of the location in which your event takes place? (5) How would you characterise the audience for your event? Are they local, national, or international?
Repeat attenders, demographic and age group etc.?
(6) How closely does your festival feel like part of the local community?
(7) How important is teamwork to managing your event? Which roles are critical to your success and why?
(8) How do you go about programming or booking your event? Do you just work on one festival at a time, or are you already planning future festivals concurrently?
(9) Music festivals are events that often attract and/or rely on sponsorship. Do you see this as something that affects your work?
(10) What do you see as the main challenges in organising your event?
(11) How have these challenges changed over time?
(12) There are now many ways to gain training in event management. How did you develop your knowledge of event management?
(13) What do you think is the most creative aspect of your work?

**Appendix C**

**Gantt Chart:**

*Year 1*



MPHILPHD2005
BRENDA COMBS
FEBRUARY 2021-2022

**2021: YEAR 1**

UNIVERSITY OF
WEST LONDON

| TASKS | QUARTER 1 FEB, MAR, APRIL | QUARTER 2 MAY, JUN, JULY | QUARTER 3 AUG, SEPT, OCT | QUARTER 4 NOV, DEC, JAN |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Acceptance/Enrollment | | | | |
| Research Programs | | | | |
| Ethics Form & Approval (pending) | | | | |
| Review Proposal with Supervisors | | | | |
| Annual Progress Report (Aug, 31st) | | | | |
| Submit URDSC (Oct. 1st) | | | | |
| URDSC Acceptance | | | | |
| Graduate from MPhil to PhD | | | | |
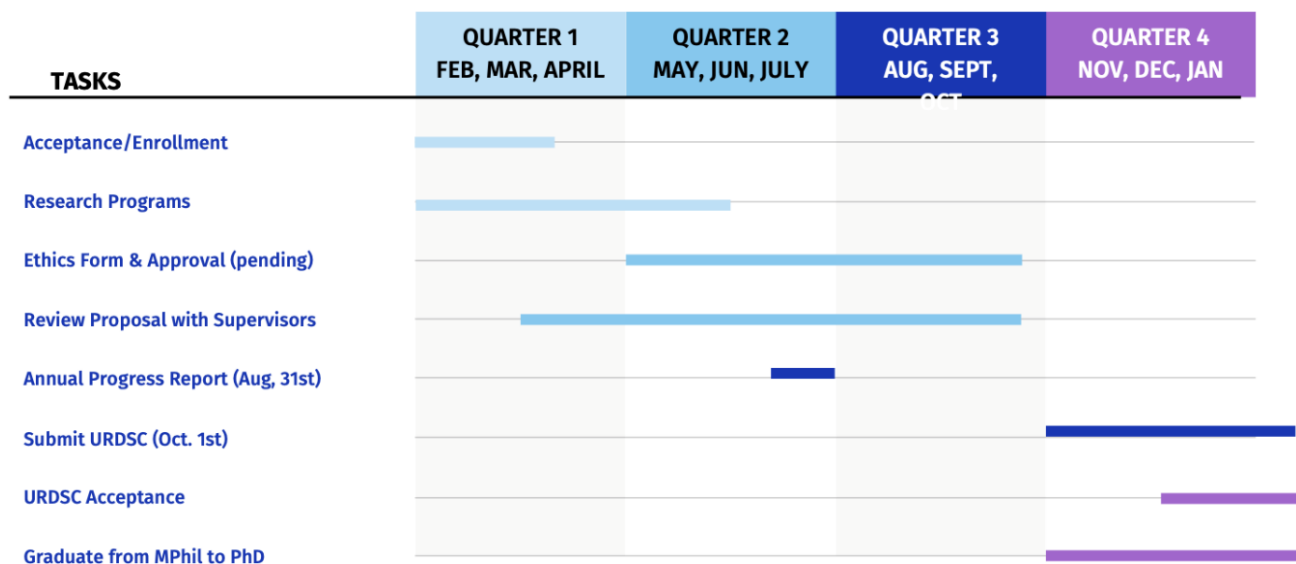
*Year 2*

**MPHILPHD2005
BRENDA COMBS
FEBRUARY 2022-2023**

# 2022: YEAR 2

UNIVERSITY OF
WEST LONDON

| TASKS | QUARTER 1 FEB, MAR, APRIL | QUARTER 2 MAY, JUN, JULY | QUARTER 3 AUG, SEPT, OCT | QUARTER 4 NOV, DEC, JAN |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Data Collection (Begin Focus Groups )** | ▬ | | | |
| **12-month Preparation & Presentation** | ▬ | | | |
| **Begin Data Analysis (Continue Collection through interviews)** | ▬▬▬▬▬▬▬ | ▬▬▬ | | |
| **Monthly Supervision Meetings (Writing in tandem)** | ▬▬ | ▬▬ | ▬▬ | ▬▬ |
| **Annual Doctoral Conference (May)** | | ▬▬ | | |
| **Submit Annual Progress Report (August)** | | | ▬▬ | |
| **Publishing Enquiries** | | | ▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬ | |
| **Transfer Presentation (Oct)** | | | ▬▬ | |

*Year 3*



**MPHILPHD2005**
**BRENDA COMBS**
**FEBRUARY 2022-2023**

**2023: YEAR 3**

UNIVERSITY OF
**WEST LONDON**

| TASKS | QUARTER 1<br>FEB, MAR, APRIL | QUARTER 2<br>MAY, JUN, JULY | QUARTER 3<br>AUG, SEPT, OCT | QUARTER 4<br>NOV, DEC, JAN |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Writing up final chapters | | | | |
| Monthly Supervision Meetings | | | | |
| Present at Conference | | | | |
| Prepare Paper for Annual Doctoral Conf. | | | | |
| Annual Doctoral Conference (May) | | | | |
| Publication | | | | |
| Review Chapters & Proof-Read | | | | |
| cOMPLETION!!! | | | | |
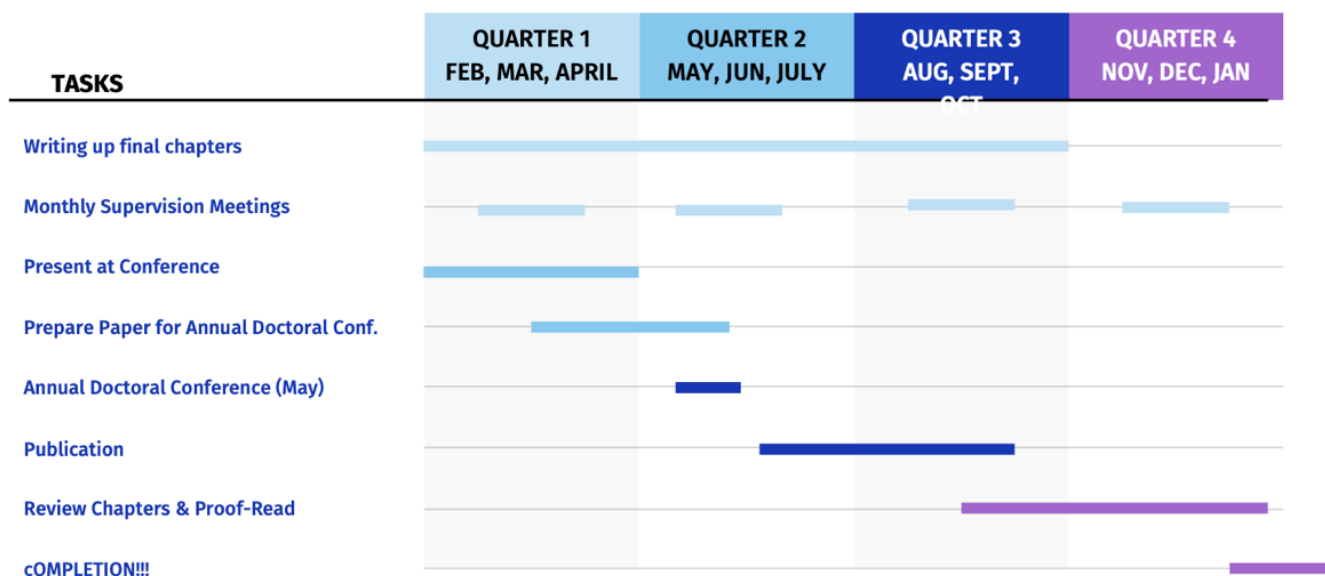
**Appendix D**

**Sources to Provide to Participants**

**Music Minds Matter is a free 24/7 helpline** run by Help Musicians UK for everyone in the music industry. Call them on 0808 802 8008 or visit their website

**Music Support** also runs a helpline for anyone in the music industry struggling with ill mental health and/or addiction. It operates 9:00 am - 9:00 pm on weekdays and 10:00 am - 8:00 pm on weekends. Call them on 0800 030 6789.

**The British Association for Performing Arts Medicine (BAPAM)** connects performing artists and musicians with free specialist health support.

**Minds** are a general resource you can contact for urgent help and support. They also have advice on how to support others.

**BAATN** hosts an online directory of Counsellors and Psychotherapists of Black, African, Asian and Caribbean Heritage in the UK

**Black Minds Matter UK** – making mental health topics relevant and accessible for all Black people in the UK.

Appendix E

Consent Form Provided to Participants

### *Understanding Mental Health in the Music Industry: The Artist manager Relationship*

- ☐I............................................ voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

- ☐I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.

- ☐I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.

- ☐I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

- ☐I understand that participation involves answering 15-20 questions relating to

- ☐I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.

- ☐I agree to my interview being audio-recorded.

- ☐I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.

- ☐I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.

- ☐I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the researcher's doctoral dissertation, publication, and potential presentations.

- ☐ I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm, they may have to report this to the relevant authorities - they will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.

- ☐ I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in the property of the researcher and her supervision team at the University of West London, London College of Music until the exam board confirms the results of the researcher's dissertation.

- ☐ I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for up to 1.5 years.

- ☐ I understand that under freedom of information legalisation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.

- ☐ I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

Brenda Combs M.A. in Music Management and Artist Development. B.A. in Business Management.

Supervisor Team:  Dr. Daniel Pratt, Daniel Hagan, and Moira Cachia

University of West London

London College of Music

Signature of research participant

----------------------------------------- ----------------- Signature of participant Date

Signature of researcher

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study

----------------------------------------- ---------------------- Signature of researcher Date

Appendix F

Paragraph Read to Participants:

Discussions around mental health have only begun to become prevalent in the music industry, despite this, it is also an industry with a high propensity for negative mental health outcomes (Ackerman et al., 2012; Asher and Kenny, 2016; Bjerkeset et al., 2014; Davis et al., 2004; Gross and Musgrave, 2016; Musgrave, 2014; Record Union, 2019). The following study aims to gather information regarding UK music managers knowledge of mental health challenges as well as their awareness of available resources. This interview will focus on examining the knowledge of UK music managers knowledge of their artists mental health while providing information on how to further assist musician's mental health as well as your own.

Appendix G

Pilot Study Consent Form

**Case Study: Consent Form**

**Title of Research Project**: PhD Doctoral Thesis Title: Mental Health Best Practice in the UK Music Industry: Investigating Better Relationships Between Managers and Artists

**Study Title:** Pilot Study of UK Music Management Organisation: Artist Manger Mental Health Tool Kit

**Researcher Name**: Brenda Combs, Doctoral Candidate

**Purpose of the Study**: This study seeks to explore the implementation and initial application of a mental health tool kit designed for artist managers. The purpose is to gather insights, feedback, and reflections from participants to improve the tool kit and contribute to research on mental health in the music industry.

**Participation Details**
- Participation involves contributing qualitative feedback through interviews and related activities.
- Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason.
- Any feedback or information shared will be anonymised unless explicit consent is provided for identifiable information.

**Confidentiality**
- The name of the artist manager group will not be disclosed in any publications or presentations.
- General descriptors (e.g., location, size, or focus) and anonymised feedback will be used to provide context for the findings.
- If you consent to the name of the group being included, you may indicate this below.

☐ **I consent to the group name being included in publications or presentations.**
☐ **I do not consent to the group name being included.**

**What You Will Be Asked to Do**
- Participate in interviews or discussions related to your experiences using the mental health tool kit.
- Share your thoughts and feedback on its implementation, effectiveness, and potential improvements.
- Provide consent for anonymised data to be included in the study's findings.

**Your Rights**
- You have the right to ask questions about the research at any time.
- You can request to review, amend, or withdraw your data up until [specific date, e.g., two weeks after data collection].

**Contact Information**

For any questions or concerns about this research, please contact:

Brenda Combs

Email: 21413286@student.uwl.ac.uk

**Consent Declaration**

By signing below, I confirm that:
- I have read and understood the information provided about this research.
- I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.
- I understand that I can withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

**Participant Name (Print)**: _____

**Signature**: _____

**Date**: _____

**Researcher Signature**: _____

**Date**: _____