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Research Article

Harmonizing Narratives: A Qualitative Exploration of the Life Experiences and Challenges Faced by Music Core Groups in the Cebu Province Music Industry

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the intricate life experiences and challenges faced by music core groups within the ever-changing Cebu Province Music Industry. A qualitative multiple-case study technique was employed to harmonize narratives by revealing common experiences and challenges. Furthermore, the research aimed to provide interventions that might assist music core groups in effectively addressing their difficulties. Through cross-case analysis, the study uncovered underlying themes, such as Evolution and Growth, Challenges, Support Systems, and Passion and Personal Fulfillment, that transcended the boundaries of different music core groups. The text explored distinct variations in terms of Business Orientation, Role and Artistic Identity, Artistic Foundation, and Creative Liberty. Coping strategies were found to be essential for building resilience and took several forms, including faith, self-care, diversion, economic bargaining skills, continual learning, and community participation. The discovery of these coping methods offered valuable insights into the resilience techniques utilized by music core groups. Moreover, the research extended beyond mere inquiry and put forth interventions designed to assist music core groups in surmounting their difficulties. This research provided practical suggestions to aid stakeholders, policymakers, and industry participants in improving the sustainability and well-being of the dynamic music community in Cebu Province. These recommendations aimed to build specific initiatives for this purpose.

Keywords: *Life Experiences, Music Core Groups, Music Industry, Multiple-Case Study, Qualitative Research*

Introduction

The Cebu Province has long been known for its thriving music scene, significantly contributing to the cultural and artistic landscape of

the Philippines. Music core groups—including singers, musicians, bands, record labels, music producers, artist managers, and other collaborating music entities—play a pivotal role in this

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dynamic environment. Despite their importance, these groups face numerous challenges exacerbated by the digital revolution and the COVID-19 pandemic, impacting their ability to sustain and grow within the local music industry. The advent of digital technologies has transformed the music industry globally, necessitating innovative marketing strategies for minor artists and labels. With limited financial resources, these groups must leverage technology to improve connectedness with clients and enhance their market presence (Zhang, 2018). The pandemic has introduced complex challenges for organizing and promoting music events or festivals. Novel approaches emphasizing value generation, collaboration, and co-creation are critical for achieving financial, economic, and social objectives in this uncertain environment (Werner et al., 2019). The music core groups in Cebu encounter difficulties related to cost-effectiveness, cooperative alliances, distribution networks, and regulatory compliance, including intellectual property rights. These challenges hinder their ability to develop a customer base or secure early investments (Whitaker, 2017). Artists often face creative or ethical challenges, such as a lack of technical skills or awareness in areas like marketing, branding, and financing (Secheyaye & Martiniello, 2019). Distinguishing professional artists from part-time or avocational musicians further complicates the landscape, necessitating a clear understanding of the unique nature of careers in the music industry (Alper & Wassall, 2006). Intermediaries, such as managers, record companies, media outlets, retailers, and concert promoters, are crucial in bridging the gap between musicians and the industry. Artists must effectively influence these cultural intermediaries to increase their visibility and market presence (Janssen & Verboord, 2015; Hirsch, 1972). The compensation structures in the music industry vary widely, with factors like job nature, company size, and economic conditions influencing wage disparities (Hennekam & Bennett, 2016). Many artists manage job insecurity by engaging in multiple forms of employment while pursuing their primary artistic careers (Lindström, 2016; Hausmann, 2010). Music-focused universities and vocational training programs are

increasingly incorporating specialized training to prepare students for careers in the creative industries. In the Philippines, efforts to enhance creativity and art education are ongoing, though challenges like insufficient trainers and facilities persist (Samodio, 2017; TESDA, 2019). Despite the rich musical heritage and potential for growth, many music makers, performers, and organizations in Cebu struggle to achieve financial success. These obstacles, compounded by self-imposed restrictions and external market pressures, impede their capacity to develop sustainable business frameworks (Hawkins, 2021). This study aims to harmonize the diverse narratives of Cebu's music core groups, offering a comprehensive understanding of their lived experiences and the unique challenges they face. Through this exploration, we seek to contribute to the sustainability and growth of Cebu's music industry, ensuring it continues to thrive, enrich the cultural fabric of the province, and support the Philippines in implementing the long-term plan for the development and promotion of the creative industries. This plan includes programs aimed at creating opportunities and employment, nurturing human resources, ensuring financial-enabling mechanisms, and providing incentives to encourage and sustain Filipino excellence in the creative industries, as stated in Section 2 of Republic Act 11904 of 2022.

Methods

This study examined the importance of Cebu Province in the Philippine music industry using a qualitative multiple-case methodology made possible by Delve's qualitative data analysis technology highlighting the many musical practices and cultural impact of the province. Aiming for a sample size of six to twelve key informants to achieve saturation, as recommended by Clarke and Braun (2013), Fugard and Potts (2015), and Guest et al. (2006, 2020), key informants in the music industry, including music producers, artist managers, singers, bands, musicians, governmental entities, and record labels, provided insights through purposive sampling and face-to-face interviews. The primary objective of qualitative research was to gather in-depth and nuanced data from knowledgeable key informants, rather than just

aiming for a predetermined sample size. The researcher established specific criteria for selecting the sample, which included persons connected to different parts of the music business and had a substantial level of expertise in artist or band group management. The researcher also took into account the variety of viewpoints within the sample, guaranteeing the inclusion of individuals from various genres, cultural backgrounds, and areas. This facilitated a thorough comprehension of the difficulties and possibilities encountered by artists and bands throughout the music industry. The qualitative research focused on gathering input

from key informants to gain a detailed and comprehensive understanding of the complexities of artist and band management in the ever-changing music industry. This method produced meaningful data and guaranteed thorough examination. The study's validation process involved the consultation of a research specialist, a communications professional, and an expert in the music industry. The group effort yielded a thorough and varied interview guide that would provide insightful information on the main issues and problems facing the music industry.

Table 1. Author's Classified Research Key Informants

| Music Core Groups (Key Informants) | Description | Identifiers |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| Music Creators (MC) | Music Producers (MP) and Artist Managers (AM) | C _{MPn...} , C _{Amn...} |
| Artists (A) | Singers (S), Bands (B), Musicians (M) | A _{Sn...} , A _{Bn...} , A _{Mn...} |
| Organizations (O) | Government (G) and Record Labels (RL) | O _{Gn...} , O _{RLn...} |

Table 2. Demographics of the Music Creator, Artist, and Organization Key Informants

| Key Informants | Years of Professional Experience | F | % |
|----------------|----------------------------------|--------|------|
| Music Creators | 5 to 10 years | 2 | 25% |
| | 11 to 20 years | 3 | 38% |
| | 20 years and above | 3 | 38% |
| | | n = 8 | 100% |
| Artists | 5 to 10 years | 3 | 25% |
| | 11 to 20 years | 5 | 42% |
| | 20 years and above | 4 | 33% |
| | | n = 12 | 100% |
| Organization | 5 to 10 years | 0 | 0% |
| | 11 to 20 years | 2 | 50% |
| | 20 years and above | 2 | 50% |
| | | n = 4 | 100% |
| | Government Agency | 1 | 20% |
| | Private Organization | 4 | 80% |
| | | n = 5 | 100% |

The researcher attempted to collect comprehensive insights and views related to the study aims by carefully choosing informants who fit these criteria. The objective was to get a thorough comprehension of the functions and contributions of the music core group. Although the sample size for the Organization music core group was modest, the researcher

made efforts to get the maximum amount of information and insights from the available informants. The primary focus was placed on the quality and depth of the data, rather than rigorously adhering to a pre-established sample size. This methodology facilitated an extensive examination of the fundamental dynamics within the music core group and empowered

the researcher to accurately capture the subtleties and intricacies of their roles and contributions. By placing emphasis on the excellence and depth of the data, the research managed to provide unique ideas and views that may have been disregarded with a bigger yet less comprehensive sample. In the end, this method improved the accuracy and thoroughness of the study's results, adding to a more complete comprehension of the music core group's importance inside the organization.

Results and Discussion

The research undertook a comprehensive analysis of the music business in Cebu Province, with a specific emphasis on the life experiences of the key informants of the study that had a substantial impact on the development of this dynamic environment. Diverse stakeholders within the music industry ecosystem, such as music producers, artist managers, singers, bands, musicians, government authorities, and record companies, all made distinct contributions to the intricate landscape of challenges and achievements that defined the music scene in Cebu. The creators, including music producers and artist managers, acted as visionary

builders, expertly crafting engaging sonic narratives and balancing creative expression with economic viability. These specialists managed talent, coordinated production, and planned strategies to navigate the dynamic industry. Artists, both solo vocalists and bands, formed the core of musical expression, pursuing artistic fulfillment while facing the challenges of gaining recognition, honing skills, and adapting to audience demands and industry changes. Various organizations, such as the government and record labels, played significant roles in supporting Cebu's music industry. The government fostered growth through legislation and supportive frameworks, while record labels influenced the visibility, expansion, and distribution of musical talent, shaping the industry's overall structure. Figure 1, a graphic depiction, effectively illustrated the life experiences of these music core groups, providing a clear understanding of the connections and differences among the different stakeholders. It offered a comprehensive perspective, allowing a nuanced comprehension of the interactions, collaborations, or differing obstacles experienced by these groups within the music industry ecosystem.

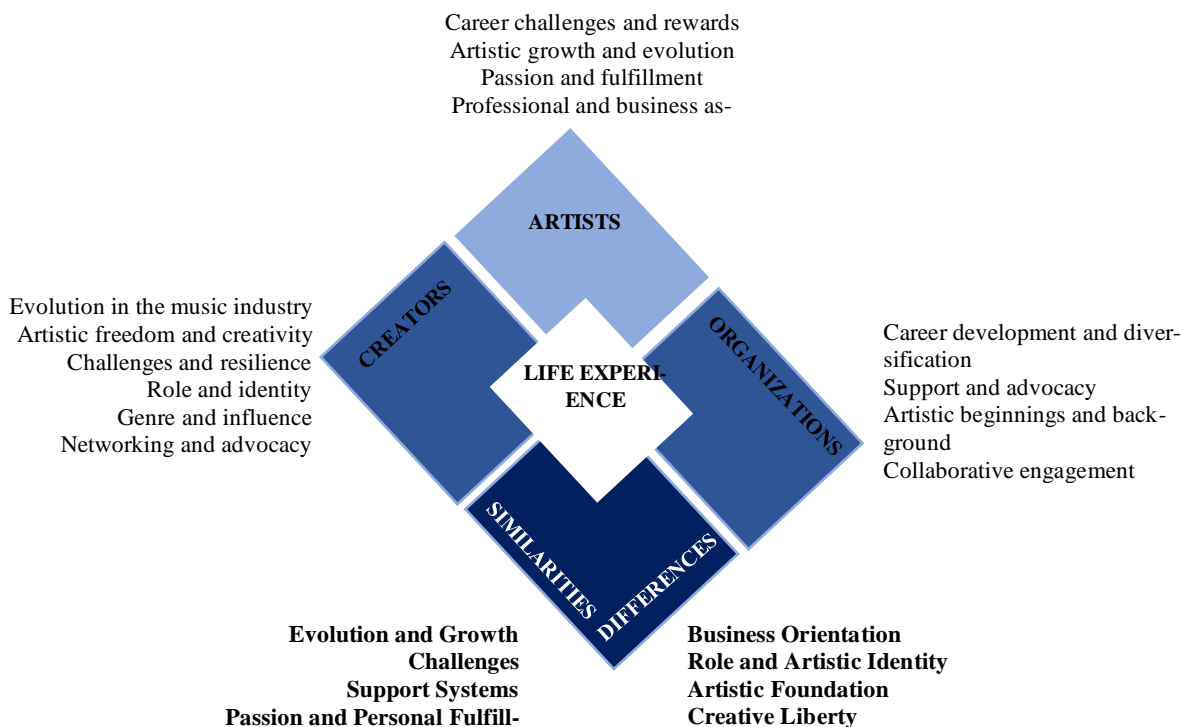


Figure 1. The Life Experiences of the Music Core Groups

Evolution and Growth

The expansion of the music business in Cebu served as both a catalyst and a challenge for local music core groups. Producers adapted to the shift from traditional recording to digital creation, leveraging new music technology and distribution channels, which increased both autonomy and competition. This transformation required continuous learning and adaptability to stay relevant. The study drew on research by Milner (2009), Katz (2004), and Wikstrom (2009) to examine the impact of digital audio technology on music listening and consumption, particularly in the recording industry. Music core groups experienced diverse opportunities and challenges throughout their careers, influenced by changing circumstances and personal growth. They adapted to major shifts in music dissemination and accessibility due to technological advancements, specifically through formats like Compact Disks and MP3s. The study highlighted the role of social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube in enhancing music dissemination. However, it also noted that increased accessibility led to market saturation.

"Nowadays, because of technology, you can totally do whatever you want. It's so easy to distribute your own songs. But it's so saturated because everyone is doing it. As long as you have a laptop, a microphone, and a wire plug, you can make music." (AB₁)

The rise of Music 2.0 and streaming music transformed the industry by offering free, continuous access and becoming essential for band websites and social media, helping record labels find new talent (Aponte, 2011). This shift drove consumer demand for advanced music technology, significantly increasing industry revenue but also presenting ongoing technological challenges (Graham et al., 2004).

"Mostly, it's social media now. We usually search for artists on platforms like TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, and we also check their Spotify profiles, like, 'Hey, they already have a following that watches

them or supports them; we might scout them." (ORL₁)

Music professionals pursued growth, expanded skills, and explored diverse career paths to stay relevant. Classical music environments changed rapidly, posing self-employment and freelancing challenges for young artists. The focus of higher music education expanded to include electronic music and multimedia composing, though traditional individualistic training persisted (Partti & Westerlund, 2013; Lupton & Bruce, 2010; Böndum, 2019; Partti, 2012). Aspiring composers faced recognition and financial stability issues (Dowd & Kelly, 2011; Smith & Thwaites, 2019). Ecosystemic changes in music blurred traditional structures, expanding professional practices into diverse contexts and leading to new collaborative approaches (Gaunt & Westerlund, 2021a). This resulted in portfolio careers, where musicians manage multiple industry options, and protean careers, focusing on entrepreneurial adaptability (Bennett & Bridgstock, 2014; Bridgstock, 2005).

Challenges

Music core groups faced various challenges, including financial constraints, market saturation, and balancing economic viability with creative integrity. To build sustainable careers, they needed thorough career planning, diverse skills, relevant experiences, and appropriate educational opportunities (Henry, 2013). Additionally, psychological traits such as motivation, professional maturity (Duffy & Dik, 2013), career identity, and supportive networks (Beech et al., 2016; Dobrow & Higgins, 2005) were crucial. Despite these obstacles, music core groups exhibited resilience and perseverance, managing uncertainty and devising innovative strategies in a competitive field. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing challenges in arts and music education, requiring professionals to adopt new lifestyles and increased creativity (Martyniv et al., 2021; Ratten, 2020). Musicians adapted by leveraging digital media to maintain performances amidst job losses, which posed mental health risks (Brunt & Nelligan, 2020). Research highlighted

the positive relationship between challenge demands and employee resilience, suggesting that resilience tactics could help music core groups overcome creative difficulties (Crane & Searle, 2016). Musicians' careers were marked by artistic growth, devotion, and balancing creativity with business demands. Achieving career goals involved navigating intense competition, financial instability, and the sector's demands, often relying on self-directed efforts when workplace support was insufficient (Creech et al., 2008). Musicians were expected to demonstrate technical excellence, interpretive and improvisational skills, and engage in original compositions or music creation. The study explored the complex and non-linear paths to career success in the music industry, emphasizing the importance of resilience and innovation in overcoming obstacles.

"The profession of being a musician, it seems, isn't very recognized. If it shows a path towards becoming a professional musician, they won't consider it or they don't acknowledge it as a profession, as if it's just a hobby. We often hear others say things like - 'You can't support a family with that, that's as far as you'll go, or what will you achieve with that?'" (AM₄)

"My first compositions were all in English. It was in 2016 when I realized that Bisaya was popular. I didn't even know before that Visayan Pop songwriting existed. So, my partner challenged me to write in Bisaya. My first submission was rejected. But it's okay, I realized that there are really talented people here in Cebu." (CMP₂)

"The reason why it took me this long to reach this point is because I've experienced rejections. I was scolded before for being uncool. I was looked down upon because I was uncool. But I told myself, 'I'll prove you wrong.'" (AS₂)

Pursuing a career as a music creator and artists required continuous commitment to stay current and remain significant in the music industry. There was a consistent need to

demonstrate initiative and make an active effort to create opportunities. The dominant impression that pursuing a career as a musician was not considered a viable profession had been stressed. The previously mentioned expressions, such as *"dili man na makabuhi ug pamilya"* (indicating an incapacity to provide for a family), *"diha ra ka kutob"* (implying restricted potential), or *"unsa may maabtan nimo ana"* (inquiring about the possible achievements), undermined the importance of pursuing a music career. Therefore, it was necessary to make a significant effort to maintain exposure and develop a recognized position in this field. According to Petriglieri et al. (2018), independent professionals often felt uncertain and exposed when their careers lacked financial security and social acknowledgment. This lack of meaning sometimes led artists to abandon their career progression. It was essential for artists to actively create opportunities to enhance their professional identity due to the ever-changing nature of identity (Dobrow, 2012; Dutton et al., 2010). Despite these challenges, many artists persisted, driven by their integration of music into their lives. Music provided both financial sustenance and personal fulfillment, with creators and artists finding pleasure and satisfaction in arranging songs (Zhang & Parker, 2018). Achieving a successful music career often required a significant time commitment and musicianship, seen as a combination of understanding, skill, and mastery. Rewards came from reaching significant goals, engaging with audiences, gaining acknowledgment, and experiencing the excitement of live performances. Pursuing a music profession reflected individual optimism and self-confidence, motivating musicians to strive for success (Sutopo, 2017). Emotion played a crucial role, serving as an internal driving force that propelled musicians' activities and provided a rewarding experience during music creation (Woody & McPherson, 2010). Positive emotions enhanced creativity, expressive capacities, and improvisational skills during performances (McPherson et al., 2013), helping musicians see themselves as equipped to face future challenges.

Support Systems

The support system described in the text was instrumental in fostering the growth and development of music communities. It emphasized the importance of networking with peers, industry insiders, and platforms to gain visibility and collaboration opportunities. Promoting artistic work and the broader music business was seen as crucial for community development and expanding influence at regional and national levels (Forman, 2004; Rose, 1994). The Do-it-Yourself (DIY) music producers interviewed highlighted the significance of informal learning outside traditional educational settings. They engaged in various facets of music production, from creation to distribution, leveraging local and global networks (Scott, 2012). The cultural significance of music consumption was underscored, influencing social status (Bourdieu, 1984). Music creation, initially driven by artistic aspirations, evolved into a product influenced by industrial processes, akin to the cultural industry concept (Adorno, 2005). Scholars attributed the global success of Korean cultural products, including music, to proactive government support (Jin, 2006; Kim, 2012; Kim, 2013). Similarly, Australia's music industry benefited from government initiatives dating back to 1927, which supported recording, touring, and copyright protection (Homan, 2002). Despite concerns about government interference, these cases demonstrated that strategic government interventions could enhance rather than hinder creative industries (Breen, 1993; Nelligan & Nelligan, 2021). Such interventions were found to support cultural and economic values in the arts.

"Before, the Cebu music scene didn't really have much support, but now it's starting to pick up. There's local support coming from various organizations. And slowly, even the government is starting to provide support." (AM₄)

Initially, local music faced a lack of support, but this improved with assistance from various organizations, including government authorities. While Tagalog or OPM songs were promi-

nent, there was a resurgence of interest in Bisaya songs and music, driven by acclaimed Visayan vocalists and growing appreciation for Bisaya tunes. Despite progress, unified support for local music and performers remained lacking. Government funds were strategically allocated to promote industry growth, aiming to shift perceptions of musicians from hobbyists to professionals. Optimizing fund execution could significantly advance the local music scene, focusing on empowering musicians with resources to enrich cultural contributions without stifling creativity.

Passion and Personal Fulfillment

The journey of music core groups was fueled by their deep passion for music, which sustained their dedication, perseverance, and resilience in overcoming obstacles. Their satisfaction derived from composing music, connecting emotionally with listeners, and witnessing the profound impact of their art drove them to persist despite challenges. Music producers and professional musicians were noted for their emotional commitment and passion in their artistic pursuits (Bonneville-Roussy & Vallerand, 2020). Individuals often tied their self-esteem and identity closely to their professional endeavors, highlighting a strong correlation (Dobson, 2010; Teague & Smith, 2015; Ascenso et al., 2017). Viewing performance as a lifestyle choice rather than merely a means of income was emphasized as crucial for a comprehensive approach (Oakland et al., 2012).

"I started out as fan of music. From music background, my parents were into music. My mom was a singer and then from there, being a Chinese, I had to work. I had to be in a situation where I had to go to a more business kind of situation. I didn't graduate. I was in Accounting and Business Management in San Carlos University. I didn't graduate because the music thing really got into me where I became a band, and I was doing all that stuff. I felt like I didn't want to finish school because I was so passionate about being a band." (ORL₂)

"We all know that being an artist isn't a stable job. I don't even call it a job. It's not stable financially because if you're a singer or an artist or a musician, you won't have money if you don't have gigs. You won't have money if your songs aren't popular. The good thing is that you enjoy your passion and at the same time, you're earning. I can't say it's work because I enjoy it and I'm alive, but not as wealthy. Maybe someday if I become famous." (AS₂)

"The passion for music has to be genuine. It has to be what you really want. I feel you cannot thrive in the industry if it's just for the sake of making a living. Because the exhaustion from performing can be overwhelming. At the end of the day, singing has become a stress reliever. I don't just say I earn, but I also have fun. This is a huge blessing. Passion is very important. Commitment might come second, but for me, passion is something that should be an essential factor for artists." (AB₄)

The profound passion for music significantly drives career advancement, bolstering professional proficiency and identity construction (Riza & Tosti-Kharas, 2011). Music artists find inspiration in the intrinsic joy of music interaction, occasionally seeking support to meet skill demands (Zhukov & Rowley, 2022). Emphasizing enthusiasm over resilience, skilled musicians prioritize intense practice and maintain motivation. Exploring diverse career paths and seeking personal satisfaction are integral to individual existence (Hall, 2004), shaping career trajectories through personal decisions rather than external factors (Hall, 1976). Personal interpretations of success drive self-directed career pursuits (Gubler et al., 2014).

Business Orientations

A significant differentiation was noted among creators, artists, and organizations in the music industry in Cebu Province regarding their diverse business strategies. In addition to serving as a means of fostering multicultural connections (Huron, 2001) and expressing various identities (Mithen, 2009), music also

played a role in the corporate domain. Creators, typically individuals or small groups, prioritize artistic expression over financial gain. They focus on generating innovative ideas and crafting unique musical compositions, emphasizing creativity over marketing strategies. The process involves manipulating aural components during recording and focusing on textual aspects during publishing. Therefore, music publishing companies largely focused on generating profits from songs, whereas record labels predominantly earned money from the commercialization of song recordings (Simon, 2019). Moreover, the growth of the music industry highlighted the complex relationship between the creative and business aspects of artists.

"The artists can freely focus on their artistic work while the business side is taken care of by more capable people. We know a lot of musicians who are not good businesspeople. It's a different skill set to think about the business aspect of the industry." (ORL₃)

"Content creators, music included, have to be educated about the business side of content creation. Many musicians really just want to create music, but they don't think of how they can market themselves." (OG₁)

Conversely, artists frequently upheld a balanced state of harmony between their artistic endeavors and a practical inclination towards the music industry. Pizzolitto (2021) said that artists hesitated to label themselves as entrepreneurs because of the complex relationship between their creative endeavors and financial profit. Recent scholarly investigations centered on analyzing the relationship between artists' creative and business identity (Pizzolitto, 2021). The researchers discovered a notable problem that arose when artists stuck to traditional views on their art but also needed to adapt their business methods to match current economic conditions. Everts and Haynes (2021) conducted recent research that investigated the British and Dutch music marketplaces to analyze the aspects that impact artists' entrepreneurial identities. Their research

indicated that the formation of this identity was influenced by the ever-changing characteristics of musical contexts and the surrounding geographical conditions. Artists sought to enhance their business models by expanding into music creation, production, and distribution. Technological advancements, particularly the digital revolution, significantly impacted studio practices and recording methods for many performers (Herbst & Albrecht, 2018). Despite focusing on developing their creative identities, artists also demonstrated a keen awareness of market trends, audience preferences, and branding strategies. They successfully balanced creative integrity with financial success, actively seeking opportunities to sustain their artistic endeavors in a competitive market.

"As an artist, you really need someone to handle the business side of things. Because as an artist, you're constantly thinking about the melody, the lyrics, the appearance, the marketability, branding, and so on." (AB₁)

"It's essential to have someone manage you so that your focus can solely be on honing your craft and developing it. Such as how you perform, enhancing your songwriting. Because business is a different field altogether." (AS₂)

Artists reliant on live performances embraced entrepreneurial strategies, historically seen in the 1830s-1840s with figures like Niccolò Paganini and Franz Liszt pioneering music tours (Weber, 2004). This era marked the rise of artist management firms, facilitating broader audience reach beyond royal courts. Artists today manage contracts, negotiate deals, build their brand, devise marketing strategies, and navigate royalties, balancing creative integrity with commercial demands to sustain careers in a competitive music industry. Ibrahimova (2019) emphasizes that innovative economic models in art and culture thrive through collaborations among government, non-government organizations, and creative entities, offering artists independence from traditional record contracts. Carter and Welsh (2018) highlight in

their study of the hip-hop industry how collaboration among artists, such as Alessandro Aleotti (J Ax) forming his own label, Newtopia, fosters career autonomy. Despite industry complexities, artists prioritize artistic pursuits over commercial aspects (Everts et al., 2021), leveraging digital revolution to self-promote through self-publishing (Schwetter, 2016) and developing entrepreneurial skills (Eiriz & Leite, 2017). In Cebu Province, music organizations focus on revenue generation, market expansion, and artist support while adopting strategic management practices (de-Miguel-Molina et al., 2021). Kavanagh (2018) notes artists creating their labels for independence, amid digital platform impacts like YouTube (O'Dair & Owen, 2019) reshaping music industry paradigms and business strategies.

Role and Artistic Identity

Over the past two decades, academic interest in the intersection of music and identity has surged, revealing how music shapes personal and collective experiences. In the dynamic music industry, creators navigate evolving roles and identities amidst market demands. Music producers and artist managers adapt to fulfill industry needs, constantly refining their identities (Burke & Stets, 2009; Erikson, 1994; Goffman, 2009; Hogg, 2007; Sedikides & Brewer, 2001). Scholarly literature explores music's impact on development, health, education, social integration, and musical participation (Creech et al., 2021; Lehmberg & Fung, 2010; MacDonald et al., 2002, 2017; Marsh, 2017; Saarikallio, 2017; Shoemark et al., 2018). MacDonald et al. (2002) propose a framework elucidating how music shapes identities and fosters social connections, crucial in volatile industries like music. Bennett and Hennekam (2018) highlight artists' adaptive strategies—selection, optimization, and compensation—that evolve over time to align with their changing identities.

"We stick to our identity. I think our identity, when the acoustic industry boomed, it was actually our band who started bossa nova. Nobody else. It was me because I brought the genre. I think genre

and setting to your identity is very important because your client knows what to expect of you and you also do your job correctly because that's your identity." (AB₄)

The social status of paid artists in various music scenes often correlates with their creative or professional achievements, which may diverge from financial success (Pinheiro & Dowd, 2009). Classical and Hollywood studio musicians emphasized professionalism as crucial for industry recognition (Bensman, 1967; Faulkner & Becker, 2017). Communities that foster music identities play pivotal roles in shaping youths' musical identities (Falck et al., 2010; Lonie & Dickens, 2015), delineated through roles such as artist or music teacher (Hargreaves & Marshall, 2003; Freer & Bennett, 2012; Garnett, 2014; Pellegrino, 2015). Music not only forms the basis of music-related identities but also influences broader aspects of personal identity (Hargreaves & Marshall, 2003). Frith (2011) argued that music and identity are intertwined, reflecting ongoing self-transformation through musical engagement (O'Neill, 2002; MacDonald et al., 2002). Digital transformations have reshaped the music industry, altering roles like artists and intermediaries (Leurdijk & Nieuwenhuis, 2012; Nguyen-Khac, 2003), and expanding the involvement of ISPs and ICT corporations (OECD, 2005). Publishers now focus on managing copyrights and royalties, traditionally critical for artists' visibility and financial support (Wikström, 2010).

Artistic Foundation

The creative basis emerged as a crucial yet often overlooked aspect in understanding the differentiation among music core groups in Cebu Province's music business. It highlighted foundational events that profoundly influenced artists' career trajectories. The study underscored how diverse artistic beginnings, backgrounds, and developmental phases shaped each ensemble's creative identity. Cultural and familial backgrounds significantly influenced individuals' identities and ambitions, with early exposure to music playing a pivotal role in sparking interest and engagement (Louhimo, 2023).

"My parents, grandparents, they're musicians too. It's in the bloodline. Especially my grandfather and then my father. We're all into blowing instruments from Consolacion... During elementary, I was a member of a choir, from grade 1 to grade 6. After graduating elementary, I auditioned for the Cebu Youth Symphony Orchestra, under the foundation in Lahug. I spent six years in classical music, from high school to 2nd year college." (AM₃)

The study highlighted the significant influence of parents on their children's musical preferences, emphasizing activities like shared musical engagement and attendance at musical events during crucial developmental stages (Morgan et al., 2015; Bogt et al., 2011). This parental influence often involved passing down music enjoyed during their own teenage years, aligning with the concept of cascading reminiscence bumps (Krumhansl & Zupnick, 2013). Engaging in musicking, a form of social interaction, facilitated the development of innate musical talents in young individuals (Trevvarthen et al., 2014), shaped further by cultural norms and community interactions. Regarding artistic identity, the study revealed that musicians overwhelmingly identified themselves as "artists," contrary to findings suggesting some felt excluded from the wider art world (Lena & Lindemann, 2014). Musicians perceived their involvement in music as inherently artistic, requiring creative aptitude and emotional expression in composition and performance (Gerry et al., 2012; Pitts, 2009). This self-identification as artists underscored their commitment to creative expression within the music industry. The diverse artistic roots among music core groups in Cebu Province illuminated variations in their approaches, innovative methods, and commercial orientations. Bands originating from different genres, such as rock or traditional folk, pursued distinct paths influenced by their unique backgrounds. These varied creative beginnings contributed to a vibrant local music scene, offering audiences diverse musical experiences to enjoy.

Creative Liberty

Creators and artists in the music industry of Cebu highly value creative autonomy, seeing it as fundamental to their work. This autonomy fosters the exploration of new ideas and the development of original approaches, allowing producers, arrangers, and talent managers to blend diverse musical styles and create innovative auditory experiences. The freedom to express oneself authentically enables the emergence of unique musical identities, enriching Cebu's music culture with diversity (Cabra & Uribe-Larach, 2013). Musical artists are characterized by their musicality, a profound ability to perceive and interpret the world through music. Their versatile personalities are marked by traits such as musical aptitude, creativity, diligence, perseverance, and emotional receptiveness (Caruso et al., 2016). These attributes empower them to engage in self-expression, innovation, and exploration without the constraints of external or self-imposed limitations. According to the theory of the aesthetic situation, the organizational structure of musical artists operates on three levels: values shaped by the artist's skill, artworks influenced by their originality, and the natural world influenced by their mastery (Szostak, 2022b). This framework underscores how artists navigate their creative processes and interactions within the broader musical landscape.

"When we started out, our foundation or genre was classic rock. We didn't have any OPM rock, Rivermaya songs, Kamikaze, we didn't have any of those. But we talked about it and thought maybe it's about time to try different songs." (AS₁)

"I think we're the only band that actually does genres from classics. I think most of the bands now are starting to do it, which I think is good because it creates a diverse listening pleasure in music." (AB₄)

The music creators and artists of Cebu blend indigenous traditions, contemporary trends, and global influences in their work, contributing distinct elements to the broader music landscape. Their creative output spans various genres, reflecting and influencing the rich

cultural tapestry of the province (Zweigenhaft, 2008). Research by Schäfer and Sedlmeier (2009) highlighted rock, pop, and classical music as among the most favored genres in musical preferences, whereas ongoing studies by Aucouturier and Pachet (2003) explored the relationships between musical qualities and genre classifications. Other scholars have examined genre associations with rhythmic patterns (Chen et al., 2004), lyrical content (Neuman et al., 2016), and musical elements like pitch, rhythm, and timbre (Brecheisen et al., 2006). These studies collectively underscore the diverse influences and complexities shaping musical preferences and creations in Cebu.

"Genres don't matter. Genres will always gonna be here regardless of time. It's just that the elements, the flavor, the progression, the riffing and everything." (AB₂)

"We started as a cover band. The way I formulated the band is not genre-specific, it's age-specific. These songs are limited because most likely you've heard these songs before. That's why I noticed that when people come to our gigs and insist on it, it's because they can tell that you're of the same age and you really know these songs." (AB₃)

"We're trying to establish our own persona as a band. So, how do you do that? We have to stick with our songs. We have to stick to our guns, like if you're into rock and rap, then you're into rock and rap. During the making of our album, our approach was to compose whatever comes to mind, without a specific genre established. Just free flow. It's in the arrangement where we win." (AM₁)

The study delved into the intricate relationship between musical characteristics and genre classifications, exploring how listeners perceived and categorized music based on its inherent traits (Rosner et al., 2014; Vatulkin et al., 2013; Cheng et al., 2008). Rentfrow and Gosling (2003) underscored the influence of social contexts and media on musical genre perceptions, noting that mediums like radio significantly

impact how music is categorized and enjoyed (Peoples, 2015). Personality studies highlight correlations between individual traits and musical preferences, linking characteristics like openness to genres such as Blues and Jazz, conscientiousness to Soul and Funk, and extraversion to Pop and Rap (Zweigenhaft, 2008; Rentfrow & Gosling, 2003). These findings emphasize that musical preferences are shaped not only by genre conventions but also by personal characteristics and the intrinsic qualities of the music itself. In the music industry, various core groups navigate challenges like financial constraints and societal barriers, drawing strength from support networks such as fan communities and government entities. Despite these obstacles, their dedication to artistic creativity and connection with audiences remains steadfast, influencing their partnerships, strategies, and creative output. This diversity within music creation fosters a vibrant musical environment, enriching the sector with innovative approaches and unique artistic expressions tailored to different group needs.

Conclusion

The development of Cebu's music industry highlights important changes brought about by the internet age, presenting opportunities as well as difficulties for regional music core groups. Because of the shift from analog to digital recording, musicians now need to be constantly learning new skills and being flexible, which encourages creativity and perseverance. The distribution of music has been transformed by digital audio technology and social media sites like Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and Instagram. This has increased accessibility but also led to market saturation. The demand for cutting-edge music technology has increased due to streaming services, which has increased industry revenue but also brought out new technological difficulties. Cebu's music industry professionals have proven to be remarkably flexible, seeking a variety of career routes and developing their skill sets in order to remain competitive. They have demonstrated tenacity and perseverance in the face of monetary limitations, market saturation, and striking a balance between economic

sustainability and creative integrity. These difficulties were made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic, but it also encouraged creativity as musicians used digital media to advance their careers. Support mechanisms have played a vital role in fostering music community growth, including strategic government initiatives and networking opportunities. These interventions have revitalized local music, particularly in the resurgence of Bisaya songs, shifting artists' perspectives from amateurs to professionals. Despite the prevailing notion that music is an unprofitable profession, music core groups remain dedicated, driven by passion and personal fulfillment. The digital revolution has empowered artists to blend creative expression with the industry's practical demands, enhancing their entrepreneurial skills and self-promotion. Cultural and familial roots significantly influence an artist's identity, which is crucial to the careers of Cebu's musicians. Still, to further strengthen the foundation of this study, it's essential to assess the implicit effectiveness and feasibility of the proposed interventions. Engaging with industry experts and reviewing best practices from other music communities could provide valuable insights into the success of these initiatives. Such assessments will inform tailored recommendations for stakeholders and enrich the study's contributions. Acknowledging the study's limitations, particularly in representing various industry roles, underscores the need for further research to fully comprehend the intricacies and challenges of the music business. In addition, this study acknowledges certain limitations inherent in the qualitative research approach, including the difficulty of generalizing findings to broader contexts and potential biases in narrative collection. Future research could explore the effectiveness of the proposed interventions in different music communities or employ quantitative methods to validate these qualitative insights. Nevertheless, the findings provide a basis for governments, academic institutions, industry players, and researchers to develop targeted programs and policies that address identified issues and foster the long-term growth and resilience of the music ecosystem. The implications of this study extend beyond

Cebu, offering strategies and insights applicable to music ecosystems globally. By removing barriers and implementing recommended actions, Cebu's music industry can transcend constraints and emerge as a vibrant hub appealing to both domestic and international audiences.

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