

The Effects of Music on Psychological Well-Being

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Abstract. Due to many reasons, such as increased pressure, a lot of people are now facing severe mental problems. In this case, music was thought of as one of the possible mitigation measures for people's Psychological Well-Being (PWB). This review will discuss the beneficial effects of music on PWB. The factors relevant to the effects of music on PWB are too numerous to consider, but most of the significant ones will be introduced in this review. Additionally, only considering the impact of music on PWB may not be sufficient, because other aspects like self-awareness also play a role. It is crucial to the effectiveness with which music might affect listeners' PWB. A lot of findings will be presented in this paper, they are unquestionably good, but there are still far too many perspectives and factors to consider when looking at this topic because it is such a large field. To eventually arrive at a comprehensive conclusion, there are still many factors to take into account and many perspectives awaiting additional research and experimentation, such as the impacts the surrounding environment has on how effective music can be on PWB.

Keywords: Psychological Well-Being; music; preference; self-awareness.

1. Introduction

Psychological Well-Being (PWB) is a mental state when people experience positive feelings such as happiness and satisfaction. It is commonly divided into two sections: hedonic and eudaimonic. Hedonic happiness is basically happiness from subject feelings, such as the positive feeling after spending time out with friends. Eudaimonic happiness is defined as when people feel good based on a well-lived life, such as having the life they always wanted. Briefly speaking, music is a combination of sounds and was invented in ancient times. There are various types of music. Some have been there for a while, and the others are still being developed. Different types of music are often used at different occasions for different purposes and can bring people different feelings. Maintaining a PWB is an essential part for human as without a PWB, it's hard for people to socialize with others and to have further developments. PWB is increasingly important as the uprising percentage of society is going through a sub-mental health situation. For example, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), about 3.8% of the population in the world is experiencing through Depressive Disorder (Depression). Suicide leads to more than 700,000 deaths every year. In addition, over 75% of people in middle- and low-income countries can't receive effective mental treatment. The above background information makes the study of music's effect on PWB more important because if music can really improve PWB, it may be an efficient therapy with less money spent. With this study, a lot of people suffering through a mental illness may benefit, as they will have one more way to improve their mental health.

In the studies by Loersch and colleagues, they conducted seven experiments in the area of music and sociology, investigating the connection between people's musical reactivity as well as their social behavior and motivation [1]. The seven studies were categorized into three parts: evaluating individual differences in objective musical reactivity, evaluating individual differences in subjective musical reactivity, and manipulating musical reactivity. The studies came up with the following ideas. Firstly, musical reactivity and another form of social bias in a domain not related to music, such as intergroup discrimination, are significantly associated. Secondly, musical and emotional reactivity are analytically different constructs. Thirdly, musical reactivity and emotional reactivity are both related to the participants' current level of belonging motivation. Moreover, musical reactivity may be utilized for predicting the extent to which individuals are associated with a specific ingroup. Plus, musical reactivity is not linked to the need for cognition. In addition, there is a relationship between

group process and music because music has a greater effect on the group of participants who feel that they are the poor group. Lastly, the effect music has on people is driven by threat conditions in some ways.

In the study by Huppert, she introduced PWB from different perspectives, varying from its cause to its consequences [2]. For example, among all the parts being discussed, one big section is about whether the drivers of PWB and ill-being are the same or not. In this category, the drivers were divided into four branches: personality factors, demographic factors, socio-economic factors, and other drivers. It is stated that many factors for mental illness are identified at either the individual level or the social level. However, for mental well-being, though some factors are the same, others are not. When it comes to the whole paper, there were six factors, such as that PWB can be affected through flexible and creative thinking, good physical health, and pro-social behavior. A person's PWB can be largely influenced by his/her early environment, but the trauma during that time can be compensated at later stages in the life course. A person's own actions and attitude matter more than the external circumstances when it comes to PWB. Targeted interventions can alleviate the misery of people with disorders, but a universal approach may be more effective.

As the above paper has already stated, music has the abundant ability to promote group living; it is closely connected with people's social being and social life. People's reactions to music are associated with their social behavior and motivation. Also mentioned in the paragraph before, PWB is a very important portion of human life; people should be aware of it and actively look for ways to relieve the pain of those with poor psychological conditions. According to previous research and experiments, there are many different factors that lead to PWB; the environment and people themselves all play an important role. It is essential to find a common way—a universal approach—that can be used by more people. In this review paper, the positive influences of music on PWB will be discussed in two sections. There are way too many aspects to determine the effects of music on PWB. For instance, different types of music may have different effects on people, and the same music may also have various effects when the identity of the people listening to it has changed. What's more, when it comes to PWB, only considering the effect of listening to music may not be sufficient, as there are other factors such as self-awareness. It plays an essential part in how people's PWB can be effectively influenced by music.

2. The General Function of Music in Promoting Psychological Well-Being

2.1. The Effect of Different Types of Music

Broadly speaking, classical music refers to western music created in the western Middle Ages, especially the period of time from Bach's death to Beethoven's death (the classical period), with representing composers like Mozart, Beethoven, and Haydn. Classical music is mostly not noisy, and the harmony of the instruments might influence people to calm down. As one of the largest categories of music, the melodic classical music known for tranquilizing people might be a significant factor in PWB. In the study by Osmanoğlu and colleagues, they conducted a study to investigate the influences classical music has on anxiety and university students' well-being [3]. In the experiment, the participant students—15 students (7 females) selected from 50 students due to their examined relatively higher anxiety levels from the self-rated questionnaires—were asked to complete two self-rated questionnaires regarding anxiety and PWB. Then, the students needed to download six works of Mozart to their phones, which they are supposed to listen to at least once a day for a 60-day period. At last, after the sixty days, they need to redo the questionnaires. The results indicated that regular listening to classical music can reduce anxiety levels and increase subjective well-being levels of people. Therefore, it is suggested that classical music has a significant impact on making people less anxious and feel better mentally, which is basically improving people's PWB. This states that music, or at least this type of music, does have more or less some effect on enhancing people's PWB.

When categorizing music into different types by its effect, comforting music and distracting music are two possible categories. Comforting music is basically music that consoles people, and distracting

music is music that can detract people. A lot of people will choose one of these two types of music to improve their mood when they face sad feelings. While it is mostly believed that distracting music might be more effective because distracting music can often stop people from thinking about what makes them feel depressed. In the study by Schäfer and colleagues, they invited 90 individuals between 20 and 41 years of age, including 65 females, to take part in an experiment that tested the impact music has on negative emotions [4]. The participants were divided into six groups, which were formed by combining three different conditions of mood induction with two different types of music: comfort music and distracting music. The three conditions are created using the visualization technique by playing three recorded narratives that represent three emotions to the participants: the first one is to let the participants imagine his/her family member's death in order to let them have interpersonal sadness. The second condition gets people thinking if they are blind to creating non-interpersonal sadness. The last one allows the participants to have a neutral mood by imaging a shopping mall. The participants needed to fill out a mood questionnaire before and after the mood induction, and a loneliness scale after the induction. Then, they were asked to listen to approximately 20 minutes of music that was either comforting or distracting to create two listening conditions and fill out the questionnaire and scale once again. However, though the groups were designed differently, the results showed that all participants' loneliness levels went down no matter what kind of sadness they had before or what type of music they were listening to. Thus, it can be inferred that both strategies of distracting music and comforting music are effective in reducing people's loneliness. These might be proving that music itself, regardless of type, plays an important role in improving people's moods and PWB.

2.2. The Impact of Music Listening on Different Populations

Many people tend to listen to their own music when they are nervous or in a stressful situation. No matter how old that person is, music can often reduce his/her stress. However, since teenagers and younger adults with their earphones on were seen more often on the streets and in public places, music's positive effects probably worked out better on them than on some more mature adults. In the study by Groarke and colleagues, they tested the difference between the induced negative effects (NA) on younger and older adults when listening to self-chosen music [5]. They did this experiment with 80 participants, including 40 younger adults between the ages of 18 and 30 and 40 older adults between the ages of 60 and 81. The participants were randomly separated into two groups, with 20 younger adults and 20 older adults in each group. Both groups were told to take a 10-minute break to prepare for their speeches afterwards. During this 10-minute period, one group, the controlled group, was given a radio documentary to listen to while the other group. Another group, the intervention group, can listen to self-selected music chosen for a stressful situation. Then, both groups were asked to evaluate the familiarity of the music they had selected and rate how effective they believed the music was for regulating the NA. The results of this experiment showed that NA was reduced when the participants were listening to the music; the older adults reduced NA more when listening to their music compared to the younger adults. Therefore, music is essential for reducing people's pressure; however, younger adults react weaker than older adults. The extent of the impact music has on people with negative moods varies when the age group varies; this might be due, for example, to the fact that older adults and younger adults have different lifestyles, face different challenges, and have different mindsets.

Now that there are students from all around the world eagerly seeking opportunities to study abroad, many universities have both international students from other countries and domestic students from the local area. However, when it comes to the social part, international students, compared to domestic students, might lack social support, and feel much lonelier as their friends and family members aren't around. In the study by Vidas and colleagues, 475 participants, including 61.9% of domestic students and 38.1% of international students, were involved to test how international and domestic students view music as a coping strategy for stress, their listening habits, and music's relationship to their well-being [6]. The experiment is basically gathering the students and letting them fill out a fifteen-

minute between-groups cross-sectional survey online. The results of the survey showed that international students tend to have greater loneliness compared to domestic students. Both international students and domestic students viewed music as a good coping strategy for stress, and the emotional regulations or social reasons they listen to music were basically the same. The effectiveness of music on both kinds of students was also similar, but only the international students felt that listening to music could improve PWB. Therefore, music has a different impact on each age group and population.

3. The Role of Music Preference and Self-Awareness

Just like different types of music are often used depending on the different occasions, music preference is not only essential to different environments and situations, but it might also change how effective it can be towards improving people's PWB. In the study by Jiang and his colleagues, they gathered 280 female undergraduate students as participants to test music preference's role in reducing psychological stress [7]. The participants were settled in a quiet room and were first asked to rate their levels of tension and complete a questionnaire. They next completed a five-minute mental arithmetic on paper, rated their degrees of tension, and refilled out the questionnaire. After this, they listened to a piece of music prepared by the staff and regained their tension and anxiety state. At last, they were also expected to evaluate the music based on its valence, arousal, preference, and familiarity. The results of this experiment demonstrated that the effectiveness of music in reducing stress depends critically on the listener's musical preferences. It is proven that music preference does play an important part in how effective music can be in improving people's PWB. Thus, it might be guessed that how the person feels about music, whether they like it or not, affects the extent of the influence it has on mental feelings.

Similar to comforting and distracting music, sedative and stimulative music are two very different types. Sedative music can calm people down with quieter melodies and softer harmony, while stimulative music can get people excited. In the study by Zhou and colleagues, 144 female education students were recruited as participants to examine the effects of sedative and stimulative music have on stress reduction from a music preference perspective [8]. The four groups of participants listening to different music—preferred sedative music, preferred stimulative music, unpreferred sedative music, and unpreferred stimulative music—were assigned at random. Before and after the arithmetic test, as well as after listening to one piece of music in their genre, the participants needed to evaluate their degrees of tension and state anxiety. The results of this experiment showed that when people listened to the music they preferred, the difference between the positive effects sedative and stimulative music brought was very tiny. However, when they were listening to unpreferred music, people listening to sedative music reduced significantly more tension and anxiety compared to people listening to stimulative music. Therefore, it can be understood that the style of music and whether the music is the listener's preference or not are both very crucial to how influential the piece of music can be towards enhancing people's PWB.

People often have different strategies to calm themselves down and different ways to control their mood while using music to reduce stress. When the strategies vary, the influence and the efficiency might also change. In the study by Baltazar and colleagues, 35 participants (14 females) between the ages of 19 and 44 were gathered to test if the strategy of using music to reduce stress matters more or if the music itself matters more [9]. They were first asked about their favorite piece of music, which was the one they were most familiar with; one piece of music they liked but hindered them from calming down; and both the most efficient and least efficient strategies to relax when listening to music. Then, they need to do a physiological measurement, a stress induction by choosing between a safe and a risky option, and a music stress regulation. In the music stress regulation part, each participant needs to download two music pieces onto their phone and is instructed to focus on a part of the music, for example, the lyrics. They were told that they have three minutes to go through the music and need to try their best to calm down and focus on the musical aspects. The results of the

experiment showed that both the efficiency of the strategy and the preference of the music are important for the outcomes of stress reduction. Therefore, it is indispensable to pick a proper strategy to follow when trying to use music to develop one's PWB.

Self-awareness is basically consciously knowing one's inner self, like feelings, desires, and motives, which might help people control their emotions. On the other hand, when a person is lacking self-awareness, for example, denying the fact that he/she is not feeling well until he/she gets diagnosed with depression. Thus, it can be inferred that when people are aware of what they are listening to and are aware of the positive effects, music might be more influential towards PWB. In the study by Stewart and her colleagues, they gathered 615 participants to take part in the experiment testing the conscious and self-awareness choices young people with tendencies to depression will make [10]. The participants needed to do an interview, with interviewers trying to lead the conversation to how they use music to regulate their moods, particularly negative moods. Meanwhile, the participants' body language is carefully recorded. By combining what the interviewees say and how they react, the staff found that the effect of music on people's moods is significantly associated with the listener's self-awareness. Therefore, it's probably that when people raise their self-awareness while listening to music—the correct type of music, to be more specific—it will highly increase their efficiency. Combining with the previous research, it is suggested that self-awareness while listening to music, different types of music, and the listener's subjective feelings toward the music are all key factors in how influential music can be towards PWB.

4. Conclusion

A previous study indicate that classical music has a considerable effect on reducing anxiety and increasing mental health, ultimately enhancing PWB. Also, it can be concluded that both tactics of distracting music and comforting music are beneficial in reducing people's loneliness. Moreover, music is important for relieving stress, yet younger people react more strongly than older adults. The level to which music has an impact on people who are depressed differs depending on the specific population. This could be because older adults and younger ones have different lifestyles, encounter various obstacles, and have different perspectives. Even though international students utilize music more personally, most of the effects music has on different university students are comparable. In addition, it has been demonstrated that a person's preference does affect how efficient music is at enhancing PWB. Therefore, it stands to reason that a person's perception of the music—whether they enjoy it or not—will alter how much of an impact it has on their mental states. Likewise, it is clear that the type of music and whether or not the music appeals to the listener are both essential factors in determining how effective a piece of music can be at boosting people's PWB. Plus, when attempting to employ music to improve one's PWB, it is essential to select a coping strategy.

These above conclusions are undoubtedly valuable, but there are still other angles and variables when considering the topic of music's effects on Psychological Well-Being as it is a very broad area. For instance, when self-awareness and music preference can both affect the results, it's not yet been investigated whether there are any connections between the two factors themselves. There are still a lot of points to consider and a lot of perspectives waiting for further research and experimentation to examine. For example, follow-up studies can be done to investigate music's influence on the PWB of people at different developmental stages. This review can provide some suggestions to the development of prevention and intervention programs with musical elements for at risk populations.

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