

A Study of the Effect of Music on Wellbeing and Emotion Between Age Groups

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Abstract

Results found that age was not of primary influence in the effect music has on an individuals' wellbeing and emotional response to music. However, it was found that age does play some role in the effect of music on wellbeing and emotion, in particular for younger participants.

Introduction

Music has the ability to evoke feelings of happiness, sadness and even fear to name but a few (Goycoolea, Levy & Ramirez, 2013). Results even support the link between music and emotional reactivity (Baltes & Miu, 2014).

Music preference has also been found to change over the course of one's lifetime, however, researchers found that preference for "the Mellow, Unpretentious, and Sophisticated dimensions increased with age, whereas preferences for Intense and Contemporary declined" (Bonneville-Roussy et al, 2013).

Music has been found to evoke emotions in individuals with several studies suggesting that "the most common goal of musical experience is to influence emotion". The study of music and emotion seeks to understand the relationship between human affect and music. Previous research has found that individuals "value music primarily because of the emotion it evokes" (Juslin & Vastfjall, 2008).

Utilising music to facilitate wellbeing is more commonly known as music therapy (Wheeler, 2008). It can be defined as "the use of sounds and music within an evolving relationship between client/patient and therapist to support and develop physical, mental, social and spiritual wellbeing" (Bunt, 2002, p.3). It has also been found to aid the healing and recovery process of patients suffering from a wide range of neurological conditions including alzheimers and dementia.



Method

233 male and female participants between the ages of 18 – 75 from an Irish sample took part in the present research. The sample included 154 female and 79 male adults from the age of 18 years upwards.

A method of convenience sampling was used with the majority of participants selected through means of the researcher's social network. A minority of participants (approximately 50) were selected through means of accessing a third level institute in Dublin's city centre.

The overall design for this research is quantitative research adopting specifically a correlation design with a predictor variable such as 'Happiness' and criterion variable such as 'Music Preference'.

As the research was of a quantitative nature a questionnaire was used to collect the necessary data. The questionnaire consisted of a total of 73 questions divided into four sections.

The online survey tool 'Survey Monkey' was used to collect data.

The researcher input the questionnaire results into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences software tool called SPSS to record and analyse the data.

Results

Little difference was found in the mean scores between younger & older participants for all of the variables analysed. There appears to be strong evidence that both age groups have felt emotional as a result of listening to music. 62.40% of younger participants and 58.40% of older participants reported that they strongly agreed with this statement, indicating that over half of participants from both age groups had experienced such an effect as a result of listening to music.

The statement "I could not live without music" to which participants scored strongest, with a positive result of 75.81% participants agreeing that they could not live without music.

Discussion

The results of main hypothesis, that musical experiences will have an emotional effect on individuals between age groups surveyed found strong evidence that both age groups did indeed feel emotional as a result of a musical experience. These results support statements from Juslin and Vastfjall (2008) such as "the most common goal of musical experience is to influence emotion" and from Slobodo, who pointed out that the primary dedication of music is indeed to evoke emotion (Slobodo, 1990 as cited by Khalifa et al, 2005).

Few differences were found in the results between younger and older participants. However, future studies accounting for the limitations addressed in this research may yield significant results for the hypothesis tested.

References

GOYCOOLEA, M., LEVY, R., & RAMÍREZ, C. (2013). Central auditory processing. Are the emotional perceptions of those listening to classical music inherent in the composition or acquired by the listeners?. *Acta Oto-Laryngologica*.