

Music Genres, Emotions, and Stress-reducing

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Abstract: The influence of music on human emotions is a hotly studied topic due to the widespread recognition of the importance of the problem in Psychology. Unfortunately, the relationship between stress-reducing and music genres is little addressed due to the lack of studies. The essay aims to address the gap in knowledge by analyzing previous studies. The study indicates that different music genres have different levels of influence on the human stress system. Furthermore, the author confirms that listening to Classical Music can have a number of advantages for relaxation and stress-reducing through investigating and analyzing different existing studies and papers. This essay may help audience to better understand the positive effects of music on human body.

Keywords: types of music, stress, psychology, classical music

1. Introduction

Music exists everywhere in people's lives. Music as art derived from ancient times, thrived in different civilizations, and it is known as an important part of human life. However, a few people have considered about the correlation between different music genres and human feelings. Imagine you just finished the work from the whole day working, what is the first thing you would do during the time you are back home? Perhaps you will put your earphone on, and listen to music in the subway. If we ask for the reason for that behaviour, perhaps the answers would sound like this: it can help me to relax or listening to music can let me reduce my pressure.

Music has a powerful influence on people's emotions. However, It has been long debated among psychologists and musicians --- how the range of feelings that music may provoke, from joy and belonging to bittersweet anguish and despair [1].

People are now generally aware that music may be utilized as a therapy strategy. This treatment is referred to as Music Therapy, which refers to "an established health profession in which music is used within a therapeutic relationship to address physical, emotional, cognitive, and social needs of individuals" [2]. Additionally, some music can be known as media that can assist individuals in lowering their blood pressure and help people to hostile negative feelings [3].

Except for the contribution of music in the medical field, music can be used also as an art of communication. To be more specific, the transmission of information from the composer of the music to the person who will listen to it involves a series of intermediary steps characterized by various circumstances which may also have different emotional responses among audiences in different types of performances [4]. Moreover, the function of individual musical characteristics in identifying certain emotions has already been examined by much previous research. However, with the purpose

of properly comprehending the connection between music and emotion and how we can use these links to elevate people's living conditions, for instance, helping people to reduce their pressure, we should also focus on the correlation between certain emotions and a specific music genre, and how various music genres can lower stress.

This essay will primarily focus on illustrating the questions of how different music genres may influence people's emotions. Additionally, this essay will explain how people can reduce their pressure more effectively by listening to certain types of music, for instance, classical music and more.

2. Music Genres and Emotions

Whether there are connections between music and emotion have been a popular topic among psychologists and scientists for several decades, and it has been examined that there are correlations between these two factors. However, less research has been concentrated on how different Music Genres may have different influences on people's emotions. In this section, I seek to illustrate that there are links between these two elements.

Emotion can be divided into two types called "Episodically and dispositionally". As an event, an emotion is an episode: it is anything that is felt, experienced, or endured at a particular moment, such as when someone flushes with embarrassment, is terrified with dread, finds a situation humorous, or feels empathy for another's misery. A dispositional concept of emotion is characterized by the propensity to feel the emotion when particular ideas are present in the mind—— in these cases, episodes of the emotion tend to appear. For example, when a person is jealous of others' skills and feels envy when he contemplates that person's accomplishment [5].

Over the course of the last decade, the study of the relationship between music and emotions has seen tremendous expansion and a broadening of its scope in many areas. For instance, previous research has shown evidence that empathy and visual imagery are both important factors that let music induce different emotions in people [6]. An experiment conducted by Tuomas Eerola in 2011 [7] focused mainly on the study which concentrates on musical genre, and whether or not that makes a difference in the way feelings are communicated. In this experiment, Eerola analyzed nine distinct datasets representing genres ranging from classical music, cinematic music, and popular music, to mixed genres. Using multiple and Random Forest regression, research models were generated using 39 musical characteristics to explain self-reported valence and arousal. In this study, Tuomas has stated that different features of music can represent different emotions. As given in the summary of the research conducted by Gabrielsson and Linstrom [4], the music features here mainly refer to mode, tempo, dynamics, sound quality, (colour of sound), articulation, and phrasing. Some researchers discovered that enjoyment is conveyed via "faster tempos, a greater pitch range, and a major mode", while when there are sorrowful musical representations, these characteristic features would show in the opposite way [8-11].

Another experiment conducted by Christopher Rea and his colleagues in 2010 primarily focused on the impact of various music genres on emotions. As they had presumed that each person may listen to different types of music when facing different situations and experiencing different moods because people tend to choose the music to which they can most relate. In this study, Rea proposed to let participants listen for roughly 10 minutes to three different types of music—classical music, pop music, and heavy metal music. They used the "State-Trait Anxiety Inventory for Adults" to measure and investigate people's emotions. In this experiment, participants were required first to rank their music preference from 1 (strongly dislike) to 7 (strongly like). Second, they had to fill out a Self-Evaluation questionnaire. The results of this study indicate that individuals in the classical condition are more likely to express feelings of tranquility and relaxation, as well as less anxiety. In contrast, those exposed to heavy metal conditions reported increased agitation and decreased tranquility, security, pleasure, and pleasantness. So as to make the hypothesis that there are links between

different musical genres and people's emotions, Rea had also done an additional investigation that represented emotions on the post-test period with music. When participants listened to classical music, a negative relationship was discovered an upbeat and conventional musical preference, as well as sentiments of sadness. When people listened to heavy metal music, the result revealed negative associations between energetic and rhythmic musical preferences and statements of feeling tense, also between upbeat and traditional musical preferences and claims of pleasantness. Positive associations were identified between rebellious music and feelings of happiness, as well as between energetic preferences and feelings of relaxation. These two above experiments provide evidence and reliable data that support my claim that different music genres can elicit different emotional responses among listeners.

3. Different Music Types and Pressures

In modern society, people frequently find themselves in a stressful emotional state, which they may even experience multiple times in the span of a single day. However, stress can be detrimental to one's health. It is possible for it to bring about despair, anxiety, animosity, and violence all at the same time. In addition, it has been associated with a variety of health problems, including headaches and sickness [12]. Therefore, it would be valuable to find out what kind of music can help people reduce stress and pressure.

People's pressures in this essay can be defined as "real or perceived serious demands imposed on one person by another individual or group" [13]. As I demonstrated in the previous paragraph, music is of great importance to people's lives since it can profoundly influence people's emotions and provides huge emotional value to people. Moreover, the feelings of listeners differentiate by music genres. Therefore, it elicits a question about which type of music can help people to reduce pressure effectively. Personally, I hypothesized that Classical Music can reduce people's pressure, because the characteristic of Classical Music, such as rich harmonies, complex structures, and soothing melodies, can exert a positive influence on people's mental health.

As many experts, such as Knobloch and Zillman, mentioned in their study that young people often listen to a variety of preferred songs or "tunes" when they feel stressed and that music is one of the things that helps them relax [14].

However, some types of music can also evoke aggressive feelings. An experiment conducted by Anderson in his study "The effects of songs with violent lyrics on aggressive thoughts and feelings." [15] has shown that the aggression scales would be varied by different music genres. In his study, he tested participants with seven violent songs which include many aggressive words in the lyrics. Further, he also presented the participants with eight non-violent songs. The result of this experiment was extremely interesting. It revealed that the participants who listened to violent songs are more likely to have an aggression tendency. On the contrary, the participants who listened to non-violent songs are less likely to have aggressive thoughts. This experiment showed that not every type of music can bring positive emotional responses to people and supported the claim made in the previous paragraph that dissimilar music genres indeed have different impacts on people's feelings and thoughts.

Returning to the topic of how music might help individuals deal with stress, we should investigate whether people who listen to specific music genres, for instance, classical music or other specific types of music, experience less tension and anxiety. In addition, is it true that people feel more relaxed when listening to classical and some specific types of music?

According to Elise Labbe and her colleagues, listening to classical or self-favored calming music following subjection to a stressful situation should reduce stress-induced anxiety, hostility, and sympathetic nervous system arousal and improve calmness. Labbe and her colleagues conducted an experiment with 56 college students. After undergoing a stressful test, 56 college students, including

15 men and 41 women, were presented with various musical types. The result of this experiment reveals that listening to the music of self-selection and classical music considerably lowers uncomfortable feelings and “physiological arousal”. This is in marked contradiction to the effect that is produced by listening to the music of heavy metal or sitting quietly [3].

Another research done by Nilsson [16] suggested that the type of music which can reduce pressure would be the soothing and relaxing one. Nilsson did his research based on a concept called “Music intervention”, which is a therapy that has been broadly used in the medical field to reduce patient pressure. According to Nilsson, music such as classical or slow instrumental music can effectively lowers stress levels. All the above research provided evidence and data that support my hypothesis that classical music can effectively decrease the level of pressure and help people to develop their feelings of relaxation.

4. Conclusion

Since music has been widely acknowledged as an indispensable element in human life, the understanding of the links between music genres and the emotion evoked by them should be crucial. In the contemporary era, life becomes more and more stressful. Most young people are facing a common problem called overwork. For instance, it is common that people to suffer from insomnia. However, music is supposed to be a good way to release pressure. That’s why it is important to introduce music therapy. According to the above evidence and reliable data, I would assert that the emotions of people can be varied by different music genres, and Classical Music can be acknowledged as a music genre that not only can successfully alleviate people’s pressure but also bring happiness and the feeling of relaxation to people. I expect there will be more and more future research that focuses primarily on the correlation between music and negative emotions such as depression, hostility, pressure, and more. I believe this kind of study can be extremely helpful for music therapists, and it can have many profound impacts on music therapeutical. Moreover, these studies may solve many psychological problems or mental illnesses among the young generation.

As Kahlil Gibran said: “Music is the language of the spirit. It opens the secret of life bringing peace, abolishing strife.”

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