

In What Ways Did Music Affect Millennials During Covid-19?

In What Ways Does Music Help to Reduce Anxiety and Increase Subjective Wellbeing?

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Abstract

Scholars believe that when people participate in musical activities, they associate with reduced anxiety and increase subjective well-being. This study analyzes how millennials used music for subjective well-being and in their everyday lives to relieve their anxieties and possible depression. The study also focuses on the perceptions the millennials had before and during situations of isolation. The researchers also collected online reviews on some respondents to determine their perception of music before the time of lockdowns. The results indicated that before the durations of isolation, most millennials participated in musical activities for leisure and when they needed to relax. However, after the pandemic hit the world, and America in particular, and the government enforced lockdown and isolation protocols, the respondents increased their time devoted to musical activities ranging from singing, listening, singing along, playing a musical instrument, and to dancing. Additionally, the respondents reported using music as a companion in times of lockdown to combat boredom. The music raised their moods, helped them relax, was a sure companion that helped them escape some harsh environments outside their homes.

The findings suggest that the overall perception of music amongst millennials improved significantly during the pandemic, also improving the value of music within the personal and social wellbeing of the participants. Nevertheless, the research discloses substantial variance in the application and perceptions of music depending on the participant's circumstances. In addition, the level of vulnerability significantly influenced how conservative a participant was in the use of musical activities, thus further shaping the perceptions about the positive value of music in the millennials' lives.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 is a coronavirus that has a significant impact on people with underlying health conditions like lung disease or heart complications. If it is not treated fast enough, the virus can enhance the severity of any underlying health disease that may make the virus extremely deadly. While the world was desperately looking for a cure, COVID-19 has negatively impacted the masses and forced everyone to go through a deep rebuilding phase. During the pandemic, individuals went through various issues, including depression, sickness, and dissatisfaction, as health officials pushed to find a solution to the spread of the coronavirus. Being in the comfort of your home quickly became uncomfortable as the world shifted from the freedom to choose to be outdoors or indoors to lockdowns in a matter of months due to this widespread disease. Individuals were not used to this new dynamic and looked for ways to be occupied during the lockdown, especially since the social distance mandate came into play. As a result, individuals turned to one of many strategies that did help to regulate emotion and stress: the power of music. Researchers believe that music or music therapy can alleviate stress because it positively causes a person's body to react. When the world was locked down, music had the potential to make individuals feel emotionally better, feel comfortable, be more energetic, and relax (Ribeiro, Lessa, Delmolin, & Santos, 2021).

Statement of the Problem

The pandemic heavily affected the United States, which forced the government to impose lockdown and isolation protocols in many states, which affected many industries. The

government closed many businesses that provide the essentials for America's supply chains. The restrictive lockdowns followed, putting more cities under lockdown and isolation measures enforced, further affecting more industries. The coronavirus had negative repercussions not only on health but also on many individuals' social, psychological, and economic aspects. While the confinement measures have been reported to have a positive effect against the spread of the coronavirus, it negatively affects the social wellbeing and mental health of the individuals (Liu, 2020; Wang C et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2020; Wang G. et al., 2020; & Xiang et al., 2020). According to Brooks et al. (2020), frustration, fear, anger, confusion, boredom, and post-traumatic stress syndrome were some of the adverse effects isolation and lockdown had on individuals. In addition, the research reveals that the pandemic led to a decrease in aspects such as happiness, positive emotions, and life satisfaction (Li et al., 2020).

Huppert acknowledges the complexity of the term wellbeing. It combines good emotions and the ability to function effectively in a person's social life (Huppert, 2009; Deci & Ryan, 2008). While some studies have focused on the effect of COVID-19 on the social lives of individuals across the world, a gap remains that narrows down the impact of the coronavirus on the wellbeing of millennials and the efforts they made to defeat the adverse effects of the coronavirus. According to an online survey conducted by Ozamiz-Etxeberria et al. (2020) and Gonzalez-Sangione et al. (2020), people experienced high levels of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) during the early stages of the pandemic. Furthermore, the researchers revealed variations of the psychological consequences of lockdown based on variables such as gender, age, marital status, and personality traits, which dictated subjective

happiness, higher extraversion, or life satisfaction levels. Therefore, the scholars acknowledge the importance of people's social situation based on the psychological effect of the pandemic.

Music and Wellbeing

Music has been associated with the mental wellbeing of individuals who listen to it or participate in its making, both individually or in a group. Music has successfully helped to reduce stress, lower levels of depression, reduce anxiety while at the same time increasing levels of subjective wellbeing and life satisfaction. The aesthetic dimensions of music form part of the communicative, cultural, individual's identity, leisure, and psychological factors of lives (Cross, 2014). Participating in any form of musical activities and music-making can positively impact an individual's life as far as positive emotions are concerned. The positive effects ~~above~~ can increase if individuals listen to music within a group setting. However, individuals were required to remain in their houses during the pandemic, and no social gatherings were allowed. There is not enough research showing the magnitude of effects listening to music alone in isolation can have on millennials who prefer otherwise participating in a group musical activity. Nevertheless, psychological therapists use music for therapeutic intervention to improve the physical and mental health statuses (Bunt & Pavlicevic, 2001). Interestingly, scholars in a wide variety of areas have studied the intentional use of music to a wide variety of individuals, and particularly those with severe mental health conditions (Chirico et al., 2020).

Statement of Purpose

While many studies have focused on different groups of individuals with varied demographic aspects, no research has focused on the effect of music on millennials, particularly

during the COVID-19 pandemic. This research indicates that the millennials improved their perception of the value of music as it helped them identify their identity, accompanied them during their isolation period, and provided a platform for emotional regulation. In addition, millennials enhanced the possibility of sharing and connecting with their peers through music and message they could decipher from their participation. Further, music was essential for cognitive and rational intents for aesthetic pleasures.

Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

RQ1: *In what way did music affect millennials during COVID-19?*

RQ2: *In what ways does music ultimately help people during times of distress?*

RQ3: *How did the perception of the value of music influence the life of millennials during the pandemic period?*

RQ4: *In what ways did music affect the emotional aspect of people during isolation periods?*

Significance of the Study

The research examines the impact of participating in music and musical activities during the COVID-18 pandemic. While some investigations indicate a direct link between positively improving moods and other emotions, the study will unfold the various positive influences that music has on millennials during the isolation period. In addition, the study will highlight the impact of music on individuals who should view the power of music and musical activities in a way that could be more useful to people

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The primary overall focus of this literature review is to bring light to how music can be used for medicinal purposes. In most recent times, we went through one of the worst pandemics we have experienced that has caused a worldwide lockdown. This lockdown has unlocked many severe mental health issues as the world desperately tried to fight back against a pandemic. Although many scientists and other health officials were desperately finding a way to cure the people infected with covid-19, we also needed to help cure those who weren't used to being isolated for an extended period of time in their homes. Although music may not cure many stronger illnesses, it can help you ease your mind and stabilize your thoughts when the difficult times start to appear again. Music can unlock certain emotions that could soothe a person instantly and make your brain recall positive memories that may help you relax during tough times. The information below makes it clear why music is a crucial healing tool and, if used correctly, could help people around the world.

According to Tande, Joshi, Dharmadhikari, and Jaiswal (2018), the brain has the capacity to process an emotion, albeit with very little energy. Scientists use the brain function for artificial functions such as artificial intelligence and in the human-computer interface besides the clinical implications when diagnosing affective diseases as well as neurological disorders. The researchers noted that several other researchers across the globe have focused on understanding how the brain processes emotions. The authors acknowledge several ways to invoke emotion for

the brain. Music is one of the ways that invokes thrilling emotions, and it elicits other emotions. The research acknowledges that when individuals listen to unique music, they will be subject to responses such as speeding heart, shivering, goosebumps, lump in the throat, laughter, sensual arousal, and sweating. When an individual plays music, the brain incorporates mental means such as observation, focus, feeling multimodal combination, reviewing memory, activity, processing significant data, and social discernment. Therefore, while the research highlights the role music plays in evoking emotions in the body, the research fails to underline its comparison to modern-day medicine that seeks to achieve the same purpose.

Apparently, music is a personal choice that potential patients may choose, and the emotions it invokes may not necessarily be universal. Therefore, different perspectives and deciphering of the message may affect the application of music as a therapeutic advance for patients. Additionally, a patient's mind can be occupied with many things that music will be ineffective to invoke certain emotions, as would modern-day medicine, which would intravenously improve chances of reaction with the body cells to invoke some desired emotions. Therefore, while music can invoke some emotions, the research does not state its reliability to invoke specific and desired emotions, which could depend on personal perceptions about the music in question, which is unlike the functioning of contemporary medicine.

On the other hand, a research article by Cabedo-Mas, Arriaga-Sanz, & Moliner-Miravet (2021) sought to determine how Spanish citizens used music to cope with Covid-19. The research article investigated 1868 Spanish citizens to reveal their measures to cope with isolation and lockdowns during the COVID-19 pandemic. The citizens used music to cope with the lockdown. The article researched the citizens' perception of music before and after the

lockdowns. The research used MUCIVID19 questionnaires to collect primary data about how they used music during isolation. The article reported that music helped the participants relax, relieve stress and anxiety, escape, and raise their moods besides keeping them company. The article is an essential resource for this research as it highlights the significance of music in other parts of the world, as far as its use to cope with lockdown and isolation measures were concerned. However, the article did not focus on a particular demographic that this research does, which warrants a new study that focuses on the millennials living in a different culture and geographic region.

The researchers focused on the positive emotions that increased when citizens participated in musical activities. Additionally, the research focused on the negative emotions that were reduced when the citizens took part in listening to music, singing, dancing, and other musical activities. The positive aspects of music as far as participation in musical activities were concerned were significantly important for this research which seeks to determine the effect of music on millennials during the pandemic. However, the article reveals that more people devoted their time to listening to music and had positive results as far as coping with the pandemic was concerned. Nevertheless, the results would not reflect competitively better results for patients using contemporary medication to cope with stressors and anxiety in case of a post-traumatic situation. Music's effectiveness to produce the desired results largely depends on individual perceptions and genre preferences.

Krause, Dimmock, Rebar, and Jackson (2021) conducted research targeting University students in Australia, which sought to determine the significance of music during the COVID-19 pandemic. The researchers note that the pandemic brought about changes in the way people led

their lives. Among these changes was the way people interacted with media, and particularly through singing and sharing their thoughts with the world. While more interaction through technological advances provided a platform for popularizing singers and other music artists, the article highlights the extent to which Australian University students used the media to interact and share musical activities to cope with the COVID-19 virus. The research intended to determine whether the increased use of media to share music directly related to the changes in life satisfaction that were reported in the findings section of the research. While the research diversified its research to other fields such as playing computer games, musical activities actively took center stage in the study, directly linked to life satisfaction and coping with the pandemic. Thus, the resource will be useful as it highlights the various activities that improved the life of Australian University students. The focus group comprises millennials, who are the focus group of this research. The fact that the research timeline was relevant and the focus group applicable too warrants its significance in this research.

Nevertheless, the article focuses on the positive effects related to listening to music and participating in musical activities without considering the perceptions change and internal influences towards music. Furthermore, while the researchers document these positives after listening to music, the researchers did not consider the chemical and biological influences related to taking medicines to control emotions such as sadness, disappointment, and anxiety. Therefore, despite the research advocating for listening to music to alleviate stress and anxiety, more research is necessary to determine the use and impact of music by millennials in the United States.

The articles above prove how impactful music can be when people turn to it for healing. Music has a way of bringing positive emotions out of people when they go through stress and other mental health issues. If more music were designed to help cope with stress, anxiety, and depression, there would be significant changes in the way people deal with negative emotions. Doctors could start prescribing music created to be placed in more medical environments to help people going through mental instability. For example, you will most likely not hear the same music in a club setting as you would listen to in a place that practices yoga, and that's because they realize in that setting that sounds that bring peace are necessary rather than excitement. The primary issue with this research is that music does not have the same healing properties that could cure a common cold or the flu, but it could still help people with emotion-driven issues.

Chapter 3

Methods

The design that I used for this study is based on qualitative research. Qualitative research is data that is gathered from first-hand observations, focus groups, or many different documents. I gathered information from various research articles to come up with an answer to the questions that were focused on throughout the article. The research from this article focuses on how music can be used for medicinal purposes and how music has helped millennials throughout the covid-19 pandemic. This research aims to prove how music could be implemented more strategically for people going through stressful times like this current pandemic. While explaining how music could help people through stressful times, I also hope to prove how music should be used just like modern medicine. I want readers to understand the importance of music, and maybe this could inspire others to find more ways that music could be used in places like hospitals, nursing care facilities, other private health clinics. Almost all of the research for this capstone paper comes from the SUNY Purchase College Library. All the articles that were used were able to answer the questions regarding COVID-19 taking a toll on millennials and how music helps reduce anxiety and your subjective well-being. The answers to these questions could help us find better ways to deal with mental health if another pandemic were to happen and give ways that music could potentially be a leading factor in solving that problem.

Questions I chose to explore:

RQ1: *In what ways. did music affect millennials during COVID-19?*

RQ2: *In what ways does music ultimately help people during times of distress?*

RQ3: *How did the perception of the value of music influence the life of millennials during the pandemic period?*

RQ4: *In what ways did music affect the emotional aspect of people during isolation periods?*

The terms used to find the articles that support my research include *Music*; the keywords used were *COVID-19, Music Therapy, Emotions, Anxiety, depression, PTSD, and Millennials*. These articles were carefully curated with the help of my professor and then used methodically to expand my knowledge on the topics and the reader. I carefully read each article and copy and pasted all my supporting research into a google doc with the article's title that the information belongs. By doing this, I was able to successfully organize my research, which made it easier for me to refer back to information when needed.

This research is truly important because this could ultimately change the scope of how the world approaches the way a person recovers. Music could be used to help people get through many different things effectively if appropriately utilized. I also feel like my research could not be interpreted wrong because I know that music could not help with tougher illnesses like cancer or the common cold, but it could help recover your mental health. For example, when you hear your favorite song, you remember the exact place and moment where you listened to that song and how it made you feel. So we could use music to recover positive memories to help people move past a negative time in their life or use it to calm them down when things are starting to trigger them.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

During the pandemic period, when many governments introduced lockdown and isolation measures, people were forced to determine varied ways of coping with boredom and anxiety. The feelings of anxiety and depression significantly affected the lives of many people. Based on research, many people devoted most of their time listening to music, composing music, playing musical instruments, or participating in any other form of musical activity. The police had canceled concerts and cultural events, where most young people could meet for a group event. Previous research indicates that group events are the most effective in producing results where musical activities are concerned. Therefore, the isolation factor threatens the aspect of effectiveness where the effects of music on young people are concerned. Additionally, the decrease in music in public spaces ensured more individuals could listen to music at home than in transit and recreation parks, workplaces, or transit stations.

Cabedo-Mas, Arriaga-Sanz & Moliner-Miravet, (2021) draw testimonies that the perception of music and its use changes from person to person during times of anxiety, depression, panic, and other negative aspects associated with lockdowns and isolation during a pandemic period. The degree of impact of music changed based on the activities people engaged in daily, which changed the subjective perceptions that influenced them to devote more time to listening to music or engage in any other form of musical activity. Cabedo-Mas et al. (2021) focused on Spanish citizens and their behavioral changes during the pandemic, which indicated

that the population turned to music during the pandemic, which indicated a keen interest from individuals to participate in a culture, specifically those related to music activities.

Additionally, many reports indicate that the social media platforms significantly bridged the gap brought about by isolation. Different social media platforms, including instant messaging platforms, were filled with individuals singing and trying to connect in different ways. Not everyone musically inclined was interested in these posts. The posts attracted many more individuals, including those who did not directly interest in any of the musical activities. Waterman (2021) notes that listening to music triggers the dopamine chemical that ensures one enjoys the composition's beats, lyrics, and tempo. Besides the “feel good” chemical, music triggers the serotonin “happy” chemical in the minds, ensuring people feel happy during and after listening to music. Water (2021) notes that music with strong beats motivates people to move and shake their bodies due to the entrainment phenomenon. During a workout, individuals listen to strong beats to enhance their movement in unison and in accordance with the trainer’s instructions.

When singing, the mind releases a chemical known as oxytocin, which can alleviate stress and anxiety. Previous research indicates that singing reduces feelings of depression and loneliness. Waterman (2021) notes that a person does not have to be a great singer to sing, alleviating loneliness and depressive symptoms. Instead, any kind of engagement in musical activities is likely to relieve stress and depression. Such activities include playing any musical instrument and dancing to music. Furthermore, while music with strong beats motivated individuals to move and dance, thus alleviating stress and depression, some members of the

society might have problems with pressure conditions, which would instead require slow music to soothe their systems to function normally.

The millennials are very information hungry and are the most educated generation in the United States. This characteristic motivated them to innovate various ways of using technology to share information about music and how it would help their souls. Furthermore, the millennials are technology-savvy in the United States; thus, they would easily share items using technology and in ways best for their most preferred visual learning process. Moreover, isolation demanded that individuals use technology to work from home for their professional and economic achievements. In like manner, the same technology and other advancements played a significant role in ensuring the same achievements as far as social and psychological factors were concerned. Therefore, the millennials utilized various technological advances to connect as far as having group musical activities were concerned.

The American Music Therapy Association (AMTA) notes that live music is the most effective way to produce the desired results for various needs. The MT-BC (Board Certified Music Therapists) intentionally uses live music performance to achieve individualized care goals. Therefore, millennials used music as a powerful tool in their homes to escape boredom and depression.

An electroencephalogram (EEG) tests the electrical activity in the brain to detect any abnormalities. The frontal lobe primarily connects neurons that trigger emotions, critical thinking, discourses, and movements. The neurons process and send information from one lobe to the other. They use electrical and chemical signals to generate neuronal oscillations,

commonly known as brainwaves or EEG signals. These signals inform the different lobes to respond to various mental functions. The amplitude and frequency range of the brain dictates how the brain reacts to certain situations. For instance, deep, dreamless sleep amplitude and frequency ranges are 10-100 and 0-4, respectively. When the frequency range is 4-8, and the amplitude is 10-50, the brain is normally subconscious with some focused attention and able to respond emotionally.

A relaxed mental state has a frequency range of 8-12 and an amplitude of 5-25. An intense, focused mental activity comprises of 12-16 frequency range and an amplitude of 0.1-1. An anxious alert brain consists of a 16-30 frequency range and less than 0.1 amplitude. Furthermore, a frequency range of 30-99 and anything less than 0.1 amplitude is a hyper brain activity. Usually, hyper brain activities and anxious alert minds will be prone to depression and other negative emotions. In such a case, the music will reduce the frequency range while increasing the amplitudes to balance the brain activity to a relaxed state. Therefore, when individuals listen to music, they increase their amplitude and decrease the frequency to a relaxed state or the level of refocusing and attentiveness. As a result, the emotions will respond positively towards activity.

Emotions can be classified as both positive and negative for the sake of processing in the brain. Positive emotions are processed at the left anterior hemisphere, also known as the brain's prefrontal cortex. In contrast, negative emotions are processed on the right side of the brain. Hypothesis in the right hemisphere hypo-arousal or left anterior hemisphere hyper-arousal triggers symptoms of depression. The EEG machines are used to detect possible abnormalities in the brain activity in cases of depression in the left anterior hemisphere when it is inactive at the

right and vice versa. This indicates that depression has differential stimulus processing for people with depression compared to people without the condition.

Based on the EEG algorithms, people make choices based on their needs and preferences. Therefore, during the lockdowns, different people changed their listening niches based on the need and situation. They spent more time at home as opposed to the times they spent on transit and socializing with friends when attending some cultural activities. In that regard, the millennials dedicated most of their time in the house to listen to music as a companion and consolation to connect to the world and friends. Spotify and streaming services provided the much-required platforms for connecting people with the world through music. Most students used Spotify with their siblings and parents during the lockdown more than after the lockdown when campuses were reopened.

An experiment that sought to determine the most used features in Spotify showed that 36.1% of users played the songs they loved that year wrapped up with the release radar following with a 24.8% and the discover weekly coming third 22.6%. These features targeted the trends of using the Spotify platform to listen to music. In addition, many users explored the “On Repeat” feature, which comprised songs that they believed they could not get enough of at any given moment. The statistics above indicate that users had enough time to explore more features in the Spotify platform when listening to music at home compared to when they were on campus. The more time they had at home, the more they explored the features, thus dedicating more time to listening to music.

While listening to music and the trends are not the main focus of this research, the change in listening niches and exploration of possible new features affected millennials' perceptions of listening to music. The users compiled songs and collections they wished they had discovered before, which is a feature that the Spotify platform offers users. Although the platform does not provide the demographical representation of its subscriptions, the research understands that the overall representation of percentages indicates that more people had dedicated their time to connect with the world through music and discovering newer music releases.

Participants in some studies had an option to choose songs they considered their signature songs from a list of many collections. Once they made their choices, the researchers asked them to explain their choices, which they unanimously stated that their signature songs triggered a “feel-good” feeling in their bodies and made them feel relaxed. In addition, some participants stated that the songs were connected to a place and or event that made them nostalgic and positive emotions. Some research examined the underlying reasons each student selected a signature song mentioned quarantine 42.5% of the time, while an association with a person and place was at 20.3%. Significant data indicate that 35.7% of the signature songs were discovered during the pandemic, while 25.2% and 25.6% were related to nostalgia and mixed emotions. Therefore, these statistics indicate that the quarantine period was the most evident trigger for listening to music. Negative emotions motivated many people to listen to music during the past pandemic.

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