

Reference :- Musical prescriptions for mood improvement: An experimental study: Sandra Garrido , Emery Schubert , Daniel Bangert

Music has been used for mood regulation purposes for centuries. In modern times, too, music is used in a variety of health contexts for mood improvement purposes. Pre-recorded music is widely available and can be accessed as needed, making it a resource for mood management that could be broadly beneficial. While only a small percentage of people with depression will seek professional help, media use such as music listening increases when people are depressed. Music may therefore be a particularly useful resource for people who do not access professional treatment, and instead experience increased isolation and lack of social engagement. This study thus focuses on the use of music listening to improve mood and wellbeing.

However, while music can be effectively utilized for mood improvement purposes by most people, research demonstrates that for people with low mood this resource is less effective. People in a depressed mood show a decreased liking for energetic music and an increased attraction to sad music. Garrido and Schubert, 2015a, Garrido and Schubert, 2015b have shown that while listening to sad music can have positive psychological functions for most people, particularly when in a low mood, it often results in a worsening of mood in people with tendencies to depression, while listening to 'happy' music can result in an improved mood.

This connection between depression and negative music listening outcomes is not surprising when one considers the role depression plays in impairing abilities to regulate affect and in decreasing motivation to engage in mood-improving activities, believed to be related to diminished dopamine processing. People with depression also demonstrate an attentional bias towards negative stimuli and difficulty disengaging from negative stimuli, suggesting that they may not recover from negative emotions induced by music listening as quickly as others.

The negative effects of music may in fact be due to the potential for music to amplify general patterns of maladaptive coping strategies, such as rumination or emotion-focused coping. Thus Segal et al. (2006) found that depressive relapse could be predicted by reactivity to sad music in some participants.

However, some people have only minimal awareness of the effect such music is having on their mood, tending to believe that they will benefit from their behavior. This is like findings in relation to the rationales offered by people with depression for other maladaptive behaviors.

Therefore, researchers and clinicians interested in tapping into the potential of music to provide highly accessible and cost-effective means for self-regulation of mood are faced with a conundrum: music usually has more positive mood effects when self-selected, yet people who are depressed may have difficulty making optimal music selections to enhance mood. Thus, treatment programs involving completely self-selected music in health contexts without the presence of a therapist to moderate negative effects, such as in residential aged care facilities or in mobile applications for self-use by depressed adolescents, run the risk of facilitating the use of music in such a way as to exacerbate existing mental health issues.