

“Let the Music Flow in You”: Music Listening, Health and Wellbeing in Everyday Life

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ABSTRACT

Background

This paper discusses music listening behaviours in relation to wellbeing in everyday life. Music listening is pervasive (MacDonald, 2013) and can address diverse aims (DeNora, 2013). While the field of music, health and wellbeing has attracted increasing interest (MacDonald et al., 2012), there is need for further research, in order to understand the outcomes and motivations of music listening for wellbeing purposes, within contemporary contexts.

Aims

This study focuses on the associations between music listening behaviours and wellbeing measures in the international general population. As a secondary aim, it explores the potential of online crowdsourcing for music psychology research.

Method

This study uses an online survey distributed through the crowdsourcing platform *CrowdFlower* to a diverse sample of the international, general population. The survey focuses on two themes: music listening behaviours and subjective health and wellbeing, using Likert scale self-report measures. Furthermore, the survey includes open-ended questions exploring the individual experience of music listening in relation to wellbeing and self-care practices.

Results

The participant sample ($N = 215$) comprises of 69% male, 30% female and 1% non-binary participants, from a wide age range (18-42) and 46 nationalities, while 33% of the participants reported facing physical/mental health difficulties.

The statistical analysis highlights the association between demographic factors, music listening behaviours and wellbeing measures. For example, the positive influence of music listening on wellbeing is associated with music listening frequency; participants who reported strong positive influence engage in music listening more frequently (chi-squared test, $\chi^2 = 62.75$, $df = 6$, $p < .001$), as a cause or result of their awareness of this positive influence.

Furthermore, themes and individual experiences emerging from the qualitative data, coded through thematic analysis, are discussed, regarding particular ways that music listening helps, and why and when it is ineffective.

Conclusions

These findings highlight the association between music listening behaviours and aspects of wellbeing in everyday life, as an intricate, complex form of self-care.

Keywords

music listening; subjective health; wellbeing; crowdsourcing; survey research; international

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