

The Impact of Music in Media and Its Impact on Its Audience

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Imagine riding down the street on a hot summer's day listening to your favorite song on the radio on your way to the coffee shop; nothing but sunny skies, birds chirping, and a soothing sense of wind; the scenery + music just make you feel so energetic and wanting to just party and have fun. Once you enter the shop, relaxed jazz music is playing to calm the nerves and relieve the brain, putting someone in the mood to read a book or sit and chill in a house. Music directly affects one's emotions so strongly that it can “change the world because it can change people” (Bono). This simple yet complex statement holds an essential truth about music: it uniquely influences our emotions, shapes our moods, and affects our mental state in ways many other artistic forms aren't capable of doing. Whether a song makes one want to dance, evokes a feeling of relaxation, or even brings tears to one's eyes, the power of music to evoke an emotional reaction is undeniable. This is seen daily, from dramatic scenes in movie soundtracks designed to intensify emotions to calming melodies that help unwind after a long workday to upbeat music used in workout playlists to boost motivation. Music can move, relax, and energize. Music's capability to affect emotion has led to various therapeutic contexts, especially for managing stress, promoting mental health, and even regulating physical health, like heart rate and blood pressure. Music can uphold a relationship between one's emotions and the relation to one's actions. Arguably, music can temporarily alter an individual into a different person. The changes that occur in a person because of music alone can be seen through neurological effects, reviewing cognitive theories, understanding psychological effects, and witnessing the impact music in the media has on society as a whole.

### **Neurological Effects**

#### *Therapeutic Use*

Music therapy is the use of music to regulate and influence one's emotions, especially for some individuals dealing with stress, anxiety, or mental health challenges. The research shows that music can trigger the release of mood-enhancing waves and chemicals such as dopamine and serotonin while reducing cortisol levels, which is associated with the hormone related to stress (Aiello). Many music therapy sessions include music personalized to what one likes, which releases relaxation and even emotional catharsis, which improves one's psychological responses, such as heart rate and blood pressure. Music serves as a tool to help individuals with emotional security and stable well-being.

Thus, music therapy is necessary because it can influence one's emotions, which tends to calm emotions or heighten mood if needed, reopen memories that were lost, and reduce pain, which is essential in the recovery process of many. The key aspect of music therapy is that it allows one to be alone while being productive in one's emotional state of mind, not having to wait for others to express how one feels, and/or not being heard by others when talking. Music can reduce the stress, depression, and anxiety that one is carrying (*Music therapy interventions in trauma depression*) to initiate healthy emotional regulation.

The use of music therapy can be implemented in different therapeutic ways, starting with active engagements like playing instruments, singing, or even making the tunes and beats; selecting different songs to listen to, to relax, or as a source of therapy, and lastly, it is used for the “self-expression, distraction, comfort, and support” (*Music therapy*) which are all indications that music therapy is necessary and valuable. As of 2023, there were approximately 10,000 board-certified music therapists in the U.S. (Burkett), which highlights the credibility of this usage. Music therapy is also found in schools, hospitals, and individual practices, indicating the key importance of music in therapy. Statistics show that music therapy reduces 40% of

depression and anxiety symptoms (Tang et al.), showcasing the importance of its usage. This is highly useful for children and adolescents as their brains are still developing, and they seem to deal with ASD, ADHD, and trauma (Ke et al.); with adults, it can help with the reduction of stress, mental health, focus, and rehabilitation (*Music therapy*); it is beneficial for elders with dementia and Alzheimer's as it can recall specific memories (The Connecticut Hospice). Overall, the usage and success of music therapy vary depending on the condition and purpose for which it is being used, rather than age. Essentially, there are also benefits to the use of music and the depiction it can have on one's comprehension-based perception of what the usage of the music is intended to achieve. This has led individuals to different cognitive theories regarding how music works.

### ***Cognitive Theories***

Cognitive theories aim to understand how people interpret, inherit, and process different information given to them. This process analyzes the different aspects of the brain, and other actions within, such as attention span, memory, and problem-solving skills, are evaluated under certain circumstances. Various theories are created based on those results. The importance of having cognitive aspects helps the understanding of different human perspectives on how one understands and takes in information. This elevates the way of learning, which people can use in schools and other learning environments, so that the students can comprehend information more easily. This can help the world so people can be more innovative and improve their comprehension level.

There are many aspects to how different cognitive theories work and how the interpretation of music occurs within the developmental system of the brain. One such theory, the 'cognitive appraisal' theory, provides a foundation for understanding how individuals

interpret music and its emotional impacts. This theory suggests that emotions arise from a person's interpretation of a stimulus's musical characteristics, like the tempo, rhythm, and melody. For instance, a fast tempo might be interpreted as exciting, while a slow tempo might be construed as calming. Arjmand et al. showcased how different shift changes within the frontal brain lobe are disproportionate during various music exposures, essentially correlated with emotional/personal experiences. These cause triggers within the frontal lobe, ultimately responsible for positive emotions. This aligns with the idea that music can trigger areas within the brain to evoke authentic emotional responses. For this, different studies were run to see music has effect on the cognitive system.

The importance of having an authentic response is that the emotion being showcased depicts how one is 'Truly feeling' and not the actions of your feelings being manipulated into feeling something different. The difference between one's authentic and unoriginal response is that an unoriginal response is often an emotion affected by others' interpretation and depiction of an event, changing one's emotion rather than a genuine emotion, which is one's emotional response to an event. Often, when people lead by authenticating the emotional aspect of their feelings, emotional decisions are made during specific situations. Emotional choices are influenced by one's current emotional state rather than being purely rational or logical. Music can help with decision-making, and coming to more logical decisions helps a more intellectual process of one's life. Listening to music can also call to mind and connect things that happened in the past.

### *Association and Memory*

The ability of music to uphold memories and emotions is rooted in the power it has within. Certain songs or melodies can tie into personal experiences, which creates emotional

experiences. This sensation might occur due to popular music hits and engagement in different parts of the brain areas, including the regions linked to memory and emotion, such as the hippocampus and amygdala (Liss). A simple thing like listening to a recognizable song can give people a sense of the past or, in particular, a sense of joy, sadness, or nostalgia. These are music highlights with the associations in the role of not only a source of entertainment but also a tool that can be used for emotional calmness or even therapeutic use.

Nostalgia is a sense of remembering the past, which can stem from things such as watching an old show from childhood, seeing places where memories were created, or even listening to a song associated with such: “Songs that I listened to when I was younger never meant more to me than now” (Stern). This is because, as kids, one's developmental state is happening, and one essentially creates memories, which later, one uses songs to make those memories, and achieves nostalgia. This mechanism can also be used with clients with dementia or Alzheimer's, as it is hard for them to obtain memories on their own, so the usage of music has the power to recall those memories for people who can't remember those on their own (Music and dementia: An overview). Using this impacts one's emotional response to different things.

The heightened point for nostalgia starts when a person is a young adult, mainly around the ages of 12-22, as there is a developmental aspect of the rapid growth within the neurological system, which is why we create the most memories throughout the years. This is why people often think of their childhood memories, the depiction of their young teen years, and their relationship to other teens when talking about growing up. Many core relationships are built from stored memories within these developmental years; as people grow older together, they tend to relate to the bond of the core memories. Many memories can include songs, which people can use to create memories, including things like prom, dances, parties, and birthdays. This is

why many people use music to recall memories that may have been from the past. This can lead to an emotional impact on a person.

## **Psychological Effects**

### ***Emotional Impact***

Music not only affects the immediate emotions that one has, but also has a strong influence on mental health and the psychological sense of a person. Aiello states that listening to happy or smooth music can release serotonin and dopamine, which are linked in the brain. Music can slow heart rates and lower cortisol levels, showing another sense of stress management. There aren't specific kinds of music that fit the genre of emotional relaxation because classical music, like jazz, and heavy metal, like rock, can be seen as therapeutic, which is the overall listener's preference. De Leeuw highlights how music also tends to pick up physical and emotional impacts and boost life expectancy.

The emotional impact of music can stem from the different connections with the song and the beats/tunes of the song. Slow jazz music that your older grandparents used to play while at their house will calm you, as you would use it to relax and debrief, while your uncle plays more upbeat rap music, and you would use this to energize you before a big moment. Both impact your emotions, but they are used in different ways due to the tunes of the music. All this can also be tied to how people inherit the lyrics and words of these songs and music as they flow with the sound waves of the songs.

Music can overtake the emotions of many people to create a perception that it may be going for. Music has implicated waves within songs that can make one feel the way a song may intend the listener to think, unless there is a certain relationship to the song connected with one particular memory. The waves and tunes are placed in a specific pattern to evoke a core emotion,

such as happiness, anger, sadness, or a calm feeling. This psychological effect is why people listen to many different songs; some use it to mirror that initial emotion, although others may use it to change it to what they want to feel. This effect benefits the producer and audience as they achieve the emotion they're going for. The change in rhythm and tunes is why we like songs that we listen to and dislike others. This perception is also created by how one utilizes the interpretation of music.

### ***Interpretation of Lyrics and Music***

The tie between the lyrics and the sounds/melodies depicts a listener's interpretation depending on the relation to the song. De Leeuw's research shows that meaningful and impactful experiences evoke a sense of love or spiritual connection, shaping an emotional foundation. Lyrics are often a connecting point in relatable narratives, while the beat is what catches the listener. Similarly, *Pfizer* believes music can trigger emotional memories in parts of the brain, even for people with brain injuries. For example, a melancholic ballad combined with a soft instrument can strengthen the sorrow and sadness. Arjmand et al. believe melodies have unexpected changes in a song's foundation and stability. Those shifts create an intriguing dynamic, boosting emotional response and making the lyrics more relatable. These different aspects help users understand and sit with the music personally, allowing them to individually link them to their own experiences and memories, creating a unique relationship to the lyrics.

Lyrics keep a listener engaged in what is happening; relating to lyrics makes the music more relatable and hooks the listener's attention. Lyrics are a key asset in capturing the attention of the listeners. Listeners like artists such as Lil Wayne and J. Cole because of their ability to create lyrical content, which is why people enjoy and relate to these artists more; they feel a connection to what the artists are saying within the songs. The key to the lyrics and their

undermined effect relates to how your mind processes and the connection to your behavior: listening to violent words stemming from the music would make a person want to commit violent actions, but on the other hand, the wording coming from a love song will convince a person to want to fall in love or commit acts of love. These different implications within the music dynamics can contribute to how one feels daily, creating a sense of regulation within one's mood.

### ***Mood Regulation***

Music is essential because it's a powerful tool for mood regulation, self-awareness, and social relatedness, allowing listeners to express their emotions consciously (Schafer). Daily music can enhance well-being by reducing stress and increasing motivation (Aiello). Pfizer would agree that music improves by stimulating different brain areas associated with pleasure and emotional regulation. People often create playlists to help boost or even shift their mood. This use of music has been seen as a coping mechanism that provides mental health and builds emotional strength. Music is a tool to enhance emotional balance, whether through the tunes of upbeat music to help boost energy, or even the calming melodies to relax and unwind. The regulation of mood can also be regulated in the media you may watch.

### **Music in Media**

#### ***Film Scores***

Film scores are an emotional connection that helps viewers understand the film's highs and lows. The music and visual aspects create an experience and intensify the viewer's emotions. Arjmand believes that the music's tempo and intensity can trigger shifts in brain activity. Similarly, Aillo states that calm and uplifting music sends waves to certain parts of the brain, while scary and suspenseful music sends waves to a different part. The filmmakers can

manipulate the audience's emotions using sounds and other scores. There are many different perceptions of this happening.

For example, in scary movies and games, the different film scores, called diegetic sounds and non-diegetic sounds, play a role in the connection between the audience and the game; these are used to build tension, create suspense, and evoke fear within people (Kendric). Diegetic sounds are associated with things inside the movie's world, including knocking, screaming, or whispering. Non-diegetic sounds are more like added sounds or original sounds within movies, like suspenseful music that is used to heighten the tension and emotion of the audience. This is a sense of music manipulation implemented in games, films, and even advertising to continue connecting an audience and visuals.

### ***Music in Advertising***

Advertisement companies use music to engage the audience and convey the message they're trying to convey. Schafer highlights the music's role in regulating moods, which can make the selling product more appealing to the audience. For instance, upbeat music can generate more excitement for the audience to want to buy a product, and a soothing melody can make the audience feel like there are more luxurious games. Pfizer's research implies that the research activates something within the limbic system, evoking a feeling of pleasure and nostalgia, which are essential for marketing options. The music's ability to connect with human emotions is key to influencing consumers' decision-making. Usually, similar implications are also included within video games.

### ***Video Games***

Many video games use music to create more of an emotional expression towards the games, making it feel like a journey within the game, not just a game being played. In a German

TEDx, he explains how soundtracks in in-game action heighten tension and emotional engagement. De Leeuw highlights how music can adopt a sense of connectedness, making the audience feel more connected to the game and the characters' actions. Using the two connections showcases Schafer's finding, which shows how music plays a role in self-awareness and mood.

Many games use the benefits of music within the game to enhance the connection between the player and the game. Music can heighten the emotional aspect and help achieve a better point of view to understand how to play the game better. This usually makes the gamer feel more inclusive and attuned to the game, as the effectiveness of film scores is high, and one may choose a game over another. This is also the key to why games may thrive over others.

### **Conclusion**

Imagine a life without the use of music. There isn't a favorite song you have, no favorite album, or no particular tune to help you relate, depict, or contrast your emotions. Imagine you are at a party, and there's nothing to listen to but the people talking and the shoes squeaking. It's hard to do because of music's impact on our day-to-day lives; music is implicated in everything one does. Music is essential for humans to keep and maintain control of how we feel, the things we remember, and the things we connect with. Music is the link to the past, a source of inspiration and emotional influence, and arguably the most interesting. Music is a key aspect of the growth of the community. Music is used in many different ways, based on the neurological effects presented; music can be a way to connect, control, and relax the emotions one can feel, bring back forgotten memories, even to patients with mental incapacities, as many cognitive theories play a part in how music works. This also showcases the different effects it has on the emotional impact it has, the ability to mirror and change the emotion one may be feeling at a specific period, how the lyrics of music can have detrimental effects on how one acts, and the

ability it has to create a mood regulation for a person. Lastly, music plays a role in media, and different film scores can intensify one's emotions; advertising can hook a viewer's attention to keep them focused on what is being showcased. Video games allow a connection between the scene being showcased and the player playing the game. As showcased, music is everywhere, and the use of music is highly impactful. The objective here today is to pay attention to the effect that music has on you.

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