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Music Induced Happiness: An Impact on the Health of Older People

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Abstract:

Music holds on to the big impact on our lives. It stimulates the mood, the performance, the thinking process and stirs our imaginations. Music makes us happy, as has huge effect on our mood and life. Life of being is divided into three distinct aspects as: Well – being, Maintenance of basic human skills and Health. It has been found that passive consumption of music has a positive effect on all these three aspects of the quality of life. Music is just not attested to heal serious illnesses but also maintains basic cognitive and physical skills in old aged people. This research paper outlines on the same aspect that how music affects and reflects on the old aged people.

Keywords: *Effect, happiness, health, life, music, old aged people.*

1. Introduction

Lots of people are quite apprehensive about being old due to the reason of being old is associated to the fact that it would lead them to disabilities and illness as natural aging process leads to poor eyesight, hearing impairment and so on. Some old aged people even have phobia of dying next moment or the other that fills them with frustration and anxiety and loss of sleep. But then this is just not the general case to look at, there are many other old people who seems to be very satisfied and found to be at ease with themselves. Let's take for instance the, the singers who are in their old age like that of Pt. Jasraj, and Pt. Vishwa Mohan Bhatt, who still manages to perform for hours and go on tours. They look pretty satisfied and healthy. Music in the broader sense could be considered as a major key for quality of life at old age. It is found in the researches that – "Old musicians in comparison to old non musicians are found to have better motor skills and optimistic thoughts and approach towards life. They tend to be more melodically spiritually inclined in their life".

Music has the power to influence the human mental or psychic state and thus music can prevent older fragile people from illness and music induces one with happiness.

2. Music and Health of Older People

Music increases health by activating positive vibes all around the body that creates happiness within. 'Gembris (2008, p. 106-107)' showed that – "old people make music or listen to it because it makes them happy and that happiness is one of the most important points for them to attend an orchestra. In detail he found out that 62% of his 308 subjects stated that the function and meaning of music is to make them happy is completely true, 30% stated that music makes them happy is rather true and 7% said that this is less true, while only 1% of the old people mentioned that music makes them happy is not true at all (Gembris, 2008, p. 106). This observation together with further results discussed for well-being clearly indicates that music evokes happiness in old people and thus there appears to be a correlation between happiness and health".

Many studies have shown a significant correlation between happiness and physical health and furthermore these correlations are independent of age, gender, socio-economic status and personality. The results of these studies show that there is a statistical relationship between happiness and health but they do not show the direction of this relationship. They all proved that health at the beginning of the studies had an effect on later happiness. All these experiments had the same results. There was no significant relationship between health at the beginning of the study and later happiness. Based on these observations happiness must have caused the correlations between these two variables. A study of 'Hawkins and Booth (2005, p. 456)' also proved the effect of happiness at the beginning of the research on later health. The results clearly showed that "there was a stronger effect of starting happiness on later health than of starting health on later happiness". These findings therefore support the assumption that happiness contributes to health and that music can indirectly account for health via happiness.

But does music has the ability to heal people via happiness if they are suffering from illnesses, such as cancer? Referring to all the findings on increased longevity, it is not evident that the results are due to the fact that happiness has healed someone. The increase of

longevity is likely to be due to the fact that happiness can protect from getting ill. Thus it is interesting to know whether happiness can heal or protect.

For this reason 11 follow-up studies have been conducted to see if happiness can heal frail old people with serious illnesses or diseases. The results show that there were even more negative effects than positive ones (in the proportion 5:4). This majority of negative effects was, however, not statistically significant. Furthermore there were as much negative effects as no effects 'Veehoven, 2008, p. 455'. Consequently this doesn't show that happiness is not negative for old and frail people, nor does it show that happiness has the ability to heal old and seriously sick people. Therefore the increase of longevity must be due to the fact that happiness protects old people of getting ill. This interpretation is supported by studies which found a positive effect in relatively healthy samples such as veterans in an old age home, heart patients of all ages and persons with spinal cord injuries. "One exception was a study with cancer patients with a relapse, which also found positive effects of happiness on the illness (Veehoven, 2008, p. 455)". Maybe happiness thus has the power to contribute to the cure of more simple illnesses but not serious diseases.

Another interesting and supporting point is according to 'Cohen et al, (1995)' that –

- "Chronic unhappiness leads to an increase in blood pressure and a decrease of the immune response".

Furthermore, 'Stephoe and Wardle' mentioned that –

- 'Depression and anxiety are related to cardiovascular disease risk, diabetes, progression of disability and premature mortality (2005, p. 108)'.
- "In addition psychosomatic medicine demonstrated an influence of unhappiness or bad mood on health (Veehoven, 2008, p. 459). Moreover a good mood leads to a better immune response (Cohen et al., 1995). These findings also support the hypothesis that happiness protects from illnesses."

It has also been shown that happy people tend to have better health behavior. This means that they watch their weight - 'Schulz, 1985, p. 52', pay attention to possible symptoms of illnesses - 'Ormel, 1980, p. 350' and are able to face tragic situations – 'Aspingwall & Brunhart, 1996'.

Also happy people tend to live healthier, which means that they practice more often sports 'Schulz, 1985' and that they smoke and drink moderately 'Ventegodt, 1997, p. 180-184'.

It has also been found that happiness is activating and keeping the body fit and persistent, thus contributing to health. Depression in contrast leads lowers the body's functioning and makes people more vulnerable to illnesses. These results are evidence for happiness as a major factor to maintain health and to protect from getting ill. Music is one key to happiness for old persons and therefore it may increase health for older people.

But it was also indicated that happy people have a greater mortality risk, because they tend to have a more risky life-style – 'Friedmann et al., 1993'. This shows us that happiness could also lead to something bad, but this is no valid argument for the hypothesis that happiness increases health, because in this case the persons do not die from illnesses or bad health conditions. Instead they die because of living too risky. Furthermore old people are usually not at danger from a risky life-style.

In support of these arguments 'Stephoe and Wardle - 2005, p. 110' pointed out that happier people showed stress responses than less happy people. They found out that the more happy men were, the lower was their heart rate. This phenomena was not identified for women. Raised heart rate leads to a bigger risk of cardiovascular disease and mortality. Moreover they verified that there is a connection between happiness and systolic blood pressure and happiness and salivary cortisol. Greater happiness leads to lower systolic blood pressure and lower cortisol levels. All these findings were independent of age, socioeconomic status, psychological distress, body mass and smoking – 'Stephoe and Wardle, 2005, p. 110-111'.

These finding have been proved to be important for old people.

'Such effects may be particularly relevant to older sectors of the population, among whom aging processes and the accumulation of risk factors leads to a high incidence of chronic disease. The maintenance of positive well-being with advancing years may help protect against in age-related morbidity'.

These positive effects are due to protecting people of getting ill and not because of healing illnesses. The positive effects of happiness are due to the fact that they lead to lower biological health risks and that they cause people to tend to a better healthy behavior. Significant effects of greater happiness on biological functioning were lower systolic blood pressure, lower cortisol levels, lower heart rate in men and a low stress. If these parameters of biological functioning are too high they can lead to serious diseases and to higher mortality. Protecting of illnesses is especially important for old fragile people.

3. Conclusion

Music increases health in an indirect way via happiness. It has been proven that music induces and increases happiness in old people. Thus it is possible to argue that music indirectly increases health via happiness, since happiness has the power to increase health. A statistically significant correlation between happiness and health was found. Follow-up studies did not support the counterargument that this correlation could be due to the effect of health on happiness. Chronic unhappiness, depression and anxiety can lead to higher blood pressure, decreased immune response, cardiovascular disease risk, diabetes, progression of disability and premature mortality. These observations support the hypothesis because they demonstrate that lack of happiness has a negative effect on health. Thus it concludes that music increases health of old people in an indirect way via happiness.

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