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Cultivating Self-Compassion Through Music Listening

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ABSTRACT

Music listening exerts a powerful effect on human emotion. However, self-compassion, a strong predictor of mental health, has received little attention in existing music listening literature. As such, this study seeks to advance the current literature by investigating music listening and its role in cultivating self-compassion with a primary focus on its three key aspects: self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness, as well as its opposite elements: self-judgement, isolation, and overidentification.

As a result of the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, many people have experienced increased mental health concerns, feelings of isolation, and depression, with research indicating that young adults are using music as a coping mechanism during the pandemic. A total of 153 university students residing in Australia aged 18 – 33 years ($M = 19.84$, $SD = 3.01$) completed a mixed-methods questionnaire measuring self-compassion, music listening preferences, and well-being. Preliminary results indicate that 81% of the sample experienced self-compassion while listening to music during the Covid-19 pandemic, while 32% experienced it's opposite. A thematic analysis of the open-ended responses regarding individual experiences of self-compassion as a result of listening to music is currently underway. The findings aim to enrich existing literature on music and emotions, build on previous studies demonstrating self-compassion's ability to improve mental health and broaden understanding of the pandemic's impact.