

Stress Management through Music Therapy: Efficacy of Sufi Music

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Abstract

Stress is a part of life and everyone experiences stress daily, but people may differ in their level of stress experience, and it may range from mild to severe. It can be evaluated as potentially harmful, uncontrollable or exceeding our resources for coping life styles and pressures of everyday life. Stress has become an issue of great concern and worry because stress can have damaging physiological and psychological effects. The study attempts to find out the efficacy of Sufi music on stress before match after design was used. General Stress Scale was the tool used for the study. The sample consisted of 120 people within the age range of 20-40 years. Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was used for analyzing the data. The results indicate that Sufi music had a significant influence on managing stress.

Keywords: Stress; Sufi music; Music Therapy.

Introduction

Stress is one of the major areas of research interest in many fields as it is an equal-opportunity destroyer. Irrespective of rich and poor, young and old, male and female, and so on, it affects everyone. It is easy to learn the concept of stress management, but using the techniques and putting the skills to practice is difficult for majority of the people. Though good stress management is common sense, but common sense is not too common when people are continuously fallen under stress. Anyone can learn the best coping skills and the best relaxation techniques, but if it is not practiced, then they are wasted.

Stress is a state of bodily or mental tension resulting from factors that tend to alter an existent equilibrium. It is an unavoidable effect of living and is especially complex phenomenon in modern technological society. Stressors are events or situations in our

environment that cause stress. They are events that are perceived as endangering one's physical or psychological well being. Stress causing factors range from major changes that affect large number of people such as war, floods, earthquakes to major changes in an individual's day to day lives such as getting married, birth of a child, moving to a new residence, taking a new job and so on. Even daily hassles of life can cause events that cause stress. Stress affects the mind as well the body. The body responds to stress by initiating a sequence of complex responses. Prolonged stress may lead to physical disorders such as ulcers, high blood pressure and including heart diseases. It damages the body's immune system, decreases the body's ability to fight diseases. The experience of stress is greatly felt by the level of control we have over it.

Coping with stress is all about managing stressful demands. People who use coping strategies feel less depressed during and after the stressful situation. It is not possible to eliminate stress altogether. The objective of managing stress is not to eliminate stress but to keep it at the minimum level possible and to reduce its adverse physical and psychological affects. As a result stress being one of the key areas of applied research in many disciplines. Management of stress is one of the prominent areas of research in applied psychology. The management strategies ranges from counseling, different forms of psychotherapy, art therapy, relaxation exercises, meditation, yoga, music

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therapy and so on. The effectiveness of any forms of stress management is purely based on the person concerned. Even then listening music seems to be one of the main strategies used by a good number of persons even without knowing the scientific use of music as a therapeutic technique for managing stress.

Music therapy is applied to a variety of clinical problems across the life span, from infancy to old age (Darrow, 2004). Music is used in a variety of ways to accomplish therapeutic objectives. Continuous music is used to structure desired responses. Pelletier's meta analysis (2004) showed that both music activities and music paired with assisted relaxation procedures significantly decrease measure of stress. Music therapy is effective in mental health settings, since patients typically respond quickly and with great interest. It is here Sufi music has its importance. Sufi music is the devotional music of Sufis which has been in use for centuries. Sufism has been offered to as heart and soul of Islam. Sufism offers a comprehensive approach to sacred psychology with the aim of self knowledge and self acceptance. It reveals to us the principal aspects of our nature and transforms ourselves to become true manifestation of Divine consciousness and action.

Sufi songs are the 'soul of the music'. It not only soothes our senses, but also makes it space in our heart. Sufi music is an interpersonal process in which the therapist uses music and all of its facets like physical, emotional, mental, social, aesthetic, and spiritual areas to help clients to improve or to maintain their health. The Sufi music has the ability to affect emotions and social interactions. Sufi music can help counter act or prevent the damaging effects of chronic stress by promoting not only relaxation, but also health. Sufi music also helps prevent the stress response from causing damage to the body and help keep creativity and optimism.

Aktan and Yarar (2014) did a study to find out whether reed music (Sufi music) affects perceived stress. In order to evaluate the stress levels of participants who are 49 psychology students of Anglia Ruskin University, the perceived stress scale was used in the pre test and post test procedure. According to the pre test scores participants were equally matched and split into three groups such as two control groups and one experimental group. The experimental groups attend six reed music sessions during three weeks. Results indicated that reed music may influence perceived level of stress of university students.

To manage the stress experienced people adopt various methods which are tedious and time

consuming. But majority does not get benefitted out of it. Whereas music therapy needs very little time and it soothes the senses without extra strain. The objective of the study is to find out the efficacy of Sufi music on stress and to see whether regular listening to Sufi music reduces stress.

Materials and Methods

Design

Two groups before match after design were used to find out the efficacy of Sufi music on managing stress. The matching process and random assignment of subjects to the experimental and control groups minimize between group and within group variance so as to yield better results. Subjects were matched based on their stress score and selected demographic factors.

Sample

Calicut district of Kerala state was identified as the Universe of the study. Sample comprises of randomly selected 120 participants who are interested in being part of the study were taken as the population of the study. The selected 120 sample consisted of 52 males and 68 females. The total samples consisted of three religious groups Hindu, Christian and Muslim with a population of 88, 24, and 8 respectively. From each of the three religions both male and females were included. The age of the participants ranged from 20 to 40 years. The total sample was also divided into three categories, namely urban, semi urban and rural on the basis of their locale. In the urban category there were 11 participants, in rural 63 and in semi urban category there were 46 participants. The sample consisted of 68 unmarried and 52 married participants.

Of the total 120 participants, twenty four participants were selected for the experimental study. The samples selected for the experimental study was based on their stress score. The total samples were grouped as high average and low stress based on the Mean +/- 1SD criteria. The high stress scorers were randomly assigned to experimental and control group comprises of 12 participants each. Thus the groups were matched based on gender and stress score.

Tools

The personal data schedule and stress scale were used as tools. The personal data schedule was used to collect the personal details of the participants, viz.,

religion, age, sex, education, occupation, income, locale, birth order, family-size, and marital status. General stress scale (Ajilal & Raju, 2003) designed to measure the general stress of the people was used to assess the stress. The scale consists of 14 items. The scale established good reliability (0.87) and criterion validity (0.89).

Technique used

Qawwali is a form of Sufi devotional music popular on the Indian sub continent was used as intervention technique to assess the efficacy on managing stress. It's a vibrant musical tradition that stretches back more than 700 years. It is originally performed at Sunni Sufi shrines throughout the sub continent, it has gained mainstream popularity. Often listeners, and even artists themselves, are transported to a trance state. The songs which constitute the Qawwali repertoire are mostly in Urdu and Punjabi. There is also Qawwali in some traditional languages. The central themes of Qawwali are love, devotion, and longing (of man for the divine). Qawwali's are classified into several categories namely Hamd, Naat, Manqabat, Marsiya, Ghazal, Kaafi, and Munadjaat. Majority of the participants preferred Ghazals as their first choice; the same was taken for intervention.

The form is originating in ancient Arabic poem in Arabia long before the birth of Islam. A Ghazal is a song that sounds secular on the face of it. These songs feature exquisite poetry, and can certainly be taken at face value, and enjoyed at that level. A ghazal may be understood as a poetic expression of both the pain of loss or separation and the beauty of love in spite of that pain. Ghazal is a poetic form consisting of rhyming couplets and a refrain, with each line sharing the same meter. The ghazal is composed of a minimum of five couplets—and typically no more than fifteen—that are structurally, thematically, and emotionally autonomous. Each line of the poem must be of the same length, though meter is not imposed in English. The first couplet introduces a scheme, made up of a rhyme followed by a refrain. Subsequent couplets pick up the same scheme in the second line only, repeating the refrain and rhyming the second line with both lines of the first stanza. The final couplet usually includes the poet's signature, referring to the author in the first or third person, and frequently including the poet's own name or a derivation of its meaning.

Procedure

The aim of the study was to find out the efficacy of Sufi music on stress. The 120 participants of this study

were met individually and made them understand the purpose of the study. After getting the consent, the tools were administered to the participants.

Among the available Ghazals 40 songs were selected for the intervention purpose. The total 40 ghazals were grouped into 4 sets each having 10 songs. The 12 participants of the experimental group were grouped together in a room which was distraction free and with proper ventilation on the first day of the intervention. The participants were given a brief description about the entire process. The first set of CD with songs was played on that day with the supervision of the researcher. The participants were instructed to listen to the music with a relaxed mind and in sitting posture. After one hour of listening to music it was stopped and they were told to continue this at home just like how they were administered. The factors to be taken care of at home were also briefed while listening music at home environment. As such they were asked to select a room with minimum distraction and proper ventilation to listen the music. The subjects were instructed to listen to the given CD regularly for a period of one hour.

The doubts were cleared and handed over the CD to the participants. The participants were asked to listen to the music regularly for period of six days and to reassemble on the eighth day at the same venue. On the eighth day the participants were asked to share their experiences while listening to the music. This was followed by a briefing by the researcher and then administered the second set of music for the participants. Similarly all the four sets of music were administered during the weekly meeting at the venue. The participants could listen to Sufi music for a period of 28 days and assembled for the concluding session. The post assessment was also carried out during the last visit immediately after the experience sharing by the participants. The control groups remain uninterrupted and were not given any intervention during this period. They were also asked to report on the 28th day for post assessment session.

Results and Discussion

The aim of the study is to find out the efficacy of Sufi music on stress. Before match after design was used and matching was done accordingly. Non-parametric tests were used to analyze the data and Wilcoxon Signed rank test was used for finding out the efficacy of Sufi music on managing stress by comparing the pre and post test scores of experimental and control groups.

In order to compare the stress scores of the experimental group across different assessment phases, as a preliminary step the mean and standard deviation of the scores are computed at each assessment phases. The mean and standard deviation of the stress scores of the study group at each of the assessment phases are given in the table1.

The mean and standard deviation obtained by the experimental group and control groups at pre and post were computed and presented. The results shows that the pre test mean score of the control group (41.83) and the experimental group (41.75) does not show much of a difference in their stress score and thereby validating the matching process. Whereas a marginal difference observed on the post test stress score of the experimental group, with not much of a variation in the post test score of the control group. Since there was a difference in the pre and post test scores, Wilcoxon signed rank test was used to find out whether there exist a significant difference in the pre and post assessment phase so as to generalize the results.

The results presented in table 2 indicates that there is no significant difference between the pre test scores of the experimental and control groups on their stress score as the Z score obtained was 0.05. Before match after design was used for carrying out the study and the groups were matched on the basis of their stress score, it could be ascertained that there may not be any significant difference in their pre test scores. The mean value presented in table 1 also shows that there is not much of a variation in their pre test scores.

The obtained z score of 2.35 shows that there exists a significant difference (0.01 levels) between the experimental and control groups on their post test stress scores. It indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the two post test scores. The results presented in table 1 show that the experimental group obtained a mean value of 33.50 whereas the control group obtained a mean value of 41.75. The visible difference in the mean value may be attributed to the efficacy of sufi music on managing stress.

On further analysis to substantiate the findings, the pre test and post test scores of the control group on their stress score were subjected to Wilcoxon signed rank test. The Z score obtained was 0.10, and was not statistically significant. The results indicate that there is no statistically significant difference exists between the pre and post test stress scores of the control group. There is only a meager difference in the mean values of the stress score of pre (41.83) and post (41.75) test of the control group. The control group

was kept uninterrupted without any intervention and it might be the reason for no reduction in their stress score on both the assessment phase, It should also noticed that there is no increase in their stress score as it is expected that the stress may increase if it is not managed properly.

As final step, the pre and post test scores of the experimental group were subjected to analysis. The obtained Z score 3.08 shows a statistically significant difference 0.01 level. The results indicate that there is a visible difference in the stress scores of pre and post assessment of the experimental group. The mean values presented in table 1 shows that the experimental group obtained 41.75 as their pre test mean score and 33.50 as their post test mean scores. It could be attributed that listening to qawwali, the sufi devotional music was effective in managing stress. The one hour music listening per day for twenty-eight days seems very effective in managing the general stress. The review also shows that music therapy was useful in managing stress. Clark et al (2006) reported that music reduces the stress level. Sezer (2009) found that listening to music is a considerably effective factor on stress and test anxiety among university students. In a recent study by Aktan and Yarar (2014) reported that reed music may influence perceived level of stress of university students. The present findings also in support with these observation and sufi music, more specifically listening to ghazals could reduce the stress level.

Thus, the study clearly emphasizes the role of Sufi music in stress management. The soothing power of Sufi music is established and it proves to be an extremely effective stress management tool. The results reveal that listening to Sufi music can have a remarkable relaxing effect on our minds and bodies. As music can absorb our attention, it acts as a great aid to meditation also. Musical preference varies widely between individuals, so only you can decide what you like and what is suitable for each mood. But even if you don't usually listen to Ghazal it may be worth giving it a try. When people are much stressed, there is a tendency to avoid actively listening to music. Perhaps it feels like a waste of time, not helping to achieve anything. But as we know, productivity increases when stress is reduced, so this is another area where you can gain vast rewards. It just takes a small effort to begin with.

By adopting Sufi music it has been widely held that practicing this will help solve the stress problem involving physical and mental aspects. This study supports the effect of music therapy and there are so many who indulge in this practicing so that they get relief from the hazardous result of capturing the

mental health aspects. In case no attention is paid to this that may result in weakening of health. The study thus confirms the effect of stress on mental sphere;

therefore it is imperative that people should devote special attention to do away with stress impacts if sufficient attention is not taken at the appropriate time.

Table 1: Mean (M) and Standard Deviation (SD) of stress scores of experimental and control groups at pre and post assessment phases

Assessment Phase		SD	Mean
Pre Test	Control group	41.83	10.73
	Experimental Group	41.75	10.03
Post Test	Control group	41.75	11.84
	Experimental group	33.50	9.16

Table 2: Results of Wilcoxon signed rank test

Assessment phase	Z score	Significance level
Pre experimental – pre control	0.05	Ns
Post experimental – post control	2.35	0.01
Pre control – post control	0.10	Ns
Pre experimental – post experimental	3.08	0.01

Conclusion

The present study aimed at finding out the effect of Sufi music on stress shows significant positive effect of music. Some people may not even feel the physical and emotional warning signs of stress until hours or days of stressful activities. But when you notice a stiff back or that you are cracking at your friend, pay attention to the signs and listen to what your body is telling you. The warning signs of stress are not anything to take lightly or ignore. By becoming aware of how you respond to stress, you can manage it better and in healthy ways, which will help your body itself, reducing the high cost and care of chronic, long term health problems.

Another major area is Scholastic difficulties among the students. Likely sources of stress include excessive homework, unclear assignments, and uncomfortable classrooms. In addition to academic requirements relations with faculty members and time pressures may also be a source of stress. Facing a deadline at work, financial difficulties, health problems and many other problems may trouble a person. If the resources to cope up with it are at a lesser amount with the person then he undergoes inconsistency. So dealing with these problems appropriately can reduce feeling stressed day by day. Here, music plays the characteristics that bring the biggest healing benefit to an individual. Sufi music can be helpful to many such issues. Sufi Music holds your interest and sustains attention, thereby stimulating and utilizing many parts of the brain. Music taps into memories and emotions. It can thus delight all the senses and inspire us. The current work analyzed the effects of

Sufi music and on the level of stress, demonstrating that listening to Sufi music reduces the stress levels of individuals. It creates opportunity for positive, successful, and pleasurable experiences not otherwise available to them.

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