Scientific Research Publishing

Journal of Behavioral and Brain Science, 2023, 13, 199-205
https://www.scirp.org/journal/jbbs
ISSN Online: 2160-5874
ISSN Print: 2160-5866

Creative Problem-Solving and Music: Analyzing the Correlation between Music and Divergent Thinking Abilities

Aidan Kang, Aliso Viejo

Independent Researcher, Aliso Viejo, USA
Email: aidankang49@gmail.com

How to cite this paper: Kang, A. and Viejo, A. (2023) Creative Problem-Solving and Music: Analyzing the Correlation between Music and Divergent Thinking Abilities. *Journal of Behavioral and Brain Science*, **13**, 199-205.
https://doi.org/10.4236/jbbs.2023.1311013

Received: September 9, 2023
Accepted: November 18, 2023
Published: November 21, 2023

Abstract

This research paper delves into the connection, between problem-solving and music. It's a topic that has piqued the interest of scholars in fields, including science and neuroscience. The study explores how music can influence our ability to think divergently which is an aspect of creative thinking. It builds upon advancements in methods to investigate the relationship between music and divergent thinking aiming to uncover potential correlations. Doing it offers insights into the interplay between artistic expression and cognitive innovation. This research combines an analysis of existing literature with data collected from a group of participants shedding light on how music impacts our capacity for creative thinking. It demonstrates that music plays a role as a catalyst, for stimulating and enhancing thinking abilities.

Keywords

Dream, Cognitive, Creative Problem-Solving, Divergent Thinking Abilities

1. Introduction

Throughout the course of history the fascinating connection, between solving problems in ways and music has captivated scholars from various fields such as cognitive science, psychology, neuroscience, and the arts. Researchers have extensively. Speculated on how music influences thinking, which is a crucial aspect of creative thinking. Advancements in methodologies have further fueled this exploration into how music can stimulate and enhance the mechanisms involved in generating creative ideas. In this paper, we will dive into the realms of problem-solving and music to uncover any links between musical engagement and the enhancement of divergent thinking abilities. Through this exploration, we

hope to gain insights into the relationship, between artistic expression and cognitive innovation.

2. Roots of Divergent Thinking

When it comes to thinking our brains default and executive control networks play a role. These connections enable our brains to come up with ideas and critically assess them. In a research paper titled "Robust Prediction of Individual Creative Ability, from Brain Functional Connectivity" Beaty and his colleagues (2018) explored the foundation of creativity using brain functional connectivity analysis. They specifically examined three brain networks; the default mode network (associated with our brain activity when at rest) the executive control network (involved in decision-making and emotional regulation) and the salience network (responsible, for detecting information). The researchers hypothesized that these networks collaborate during thinking processes. The default mode network generates ideas while the executive control network evaluates them and the salience network helps determine which ideas are relevant. Through their interactions, these networks create an adaptive system [1] [2] [3].

3. Mozart Effect

The popular notion of the "effect" has received attention for its possible influence, on mental processes related to music. Researchers from the University of California Irvine conducted a study on the effects of music specifically focusing on temporal reasoning. In their experiment college students were given IQ test questions after listening to either a Mozart piano sonata, a relaxation tape, or silence. The results consistently favored Mozart by improving test scores. Subsequent investigations explored whether this effect was unique to music by comparing it with music composed by Philip Glass. Mozart continued to show promise by enhancing reasoning and short-term memory. Although the exact mechanism behind how music enhances cognition is not yet fully understood one theory suggests that it influences nerve cell activity in the hemisphere of the brain thereby aiding information processing. However, it is important to note that the impact of the "effect" was modest and temporary and subsequent reviews have indicated cognitive benefits. While it may not be groundbreaking news that music can influence cognition further research should be pursued in this area. Additionally, even if music's lasting impact on cognition is limited learning to play an instrument has shown a potential to enhance language skills, memory capacity, and attention abilities—an alternative path, for cognitive enrichment [4] [5] [6].

4. Correlation between Divergent Thinking Abilities and Music

Music has the power to activate a network of brain regions called the default mode network (DMN). The DMN becomes active when our minds are, at rest and is believed to play a role in fostering thinking. According to a study con-

ducted by Beaty *et al.* In 2018 listening to music enhances connectivity within the DMN indicating that music can potentially boost our thinking abilities. The DMN facilitates thinking by allowing us to contemplate ideas in an unconstrained manner. When we immerse ourselves in music we activate the DMN not through our focus on the melodies but through the emotions and memories it invokes. This process helps dissolve barriers, between parts of our brains enabling us to generate innovative ideas.

Listening to music has the potential to improve our function, which includes cognitive abilities, like planning organizing, and task execution. It also helps us control our attention focus and impulsive behavior. A study conducted by Salimpoor *et al.* In 2011 discovered that both musicians and non musicians experienced function when they listened to music. This finding suggests that music can sharpen our thinking abilities and contribute to decision-making skills ultimately aiding us in problem-solving tasks. The reason behind this enhancement is believed to be the utilization of cognitive skills while listening to music. We have to pay attention not to the melody but to the rhythm, harmony, and lyrics of a song while retaining what we've heard and anticipating what comes next. Such engagement can strengthen our executive function skills for use, in aspects of life particularly when it comes to nurturing thinking abilities [7].

Music, a stimulus has the power to evoke feelings of happiness and longing to the satisfaction we get from physical rewards that activate the brain's dopamine system. Through our research involving [(11)C] raclopride positron emission tomography scans and measurements of system activity we made a fascinating discovery; when people experience intense emotions while listening to music dopamine is released in the reward center of their brains called the striatum. In a study using magnetic resonance imaging on the same participants and stimuli we observed a distinct pattern; anticipating music activated a region called the caudate while moments of peak emotional intensity while listening to music engaged another region called the nucleus accumbens. These findings shed light on how music brings pleasure by triggering dopamine release, in our brain's reward system. It is worth noting that our expectations of experiencing rewards can lead to dopamine release through a pathway in our brains compared to the pathway associated with actual moments of peak pleasure [8] [9]. These results provide insights into why music holds universal appeal, across human societies.

Music has the ability to enhance thinking, which refers to the capacity to generate diverse ideas and solutions for a given problem. According to a study conducted by Chan *et al.* (2013) it was discovered that listening to music, to engaging in a thinking task significantly improved performance on that task. This finding suggests that music can contribute towards expanding our thought processes and fostering problem-solving approaches. The reason behind this association lies in the fact that music helps us break down barriers between ideas by exposing us to sounds and rhythms thereby enabling us to perceive problems, from various perspectives and devise more creative solutions [10] [11] [12].

Listening to music has been found to be beneficial, in overcoming blocks and

inhibitions which can sometimes hinder our thinking abilities. According to a study conducted by Boccia *et al.* (2014) participants who listened to music before engaging in a task were able to overcome these obstacles and generate more innovative ideas [13] [14] [15]. This suggests that music has the potential to enhance our ability to think freely and explore possibilities. The relaxing nature of music is believed to play a role in reducing blocks and inhibitions by calming the mind and alleviating stress. When we are in a state we become more receptive, to ideas and opportunities. Additionally, music has the power to influence our mood positively. When we listen to music that brings us joy it triggers the release of dopamine a neurotransmitter associated with pleasure. This can lead to a mood and increased motivation ultimately enhancing our performance.

5. Discussion and Statistical Analysis

We were able to interview 730 people through a 1 to 1 video conference on the platform Omegle. From the interviews, we were able to retrieve data that pointed to a strong correlation between music and creativity. Out of the 730 people, 700 people responded that music did in fact play a role in their ability to generate new ideas from tasks such as school assessments all the way to individual hobbies such as book writing.

As shown in **Figure 1**, numerous participants articulated how music acted as a potent catalyst for their creative pursuits. One participant vividly described, "The presence of music while I was engrossed in writing my book served as a powerful muse, helping me conjure vivid imagery and craft intricate narratives." This testimonial underscores the profound impact of music in fostering an environment conducive to creative ideation.

This example harmonizes with the notion of the "Mozart effect," an established theory that suggests music, particularly compositions with intricate structures like Mozart's, can augment cognitive functions, including creative thinking. When individuals are immersed in musical experiences, it appears to engage their cognitive faculties, amplifying their ability to generate innovative ideas and construct imaginative narratives.

Overcoming Mental Blocks

Participants frequently shared accounts of how music played a pivotal role in surmounting cognitive obstacles that often impede creative thinking. One interviewee remarked, "Whenever I encounter a mental impasse while grappling with a problem, I instinctively turn to music, and it invariably serves as a cognitive breakthrough." This testimony underscores the ability of music to dismantle cognitive rigidity and promote more open, unbridled thinking.

In the context of our prior discourse regarding the default mode network (DMN), this example offers tangible proof that music can indeed activate the DMN, enabling individuals to traverse an uncharted mental landscape where novel ideas can take root and flourish. Music, it seems, possesses the unique capacity to disrupt entrenched thought patterns, nurturing a more flexible and innovative mindset.

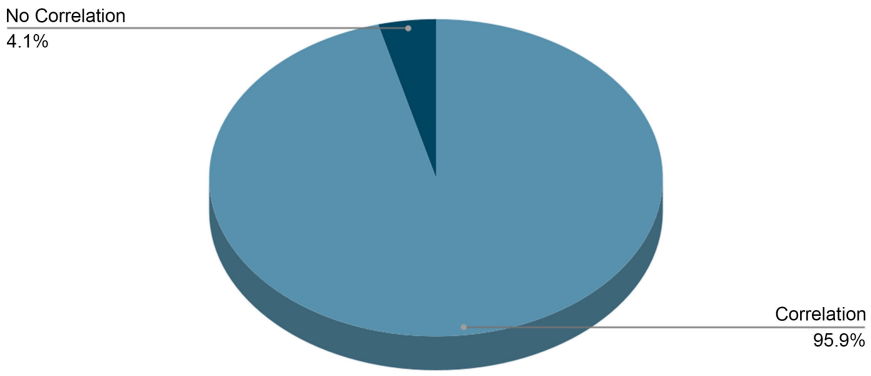

Figure 1. Music as a creative catalyst.

Mood Elevation and Enhanced Motivation

Several participants underscored the role of music in modulating their emotional states and motivation, subsequently amplifying their creative thinking. As one participant articulated, "Listening to uplifting music has a transformative effect on my emotional disposition, and this newfound positivity significantly bolsters my capacity to devise creative solutions to complex problems." This insight underscores the profound emotional impact of music and its indirect yet potent influence on creative thinking.

This example dovetails with our earlier exploration of dopamine release in response to pleasurable musical experiences. Engaging with music that evokes joy can trigger dopamine release, which, in turn, heightens motivation and uplifts mood. This elevated emotional state constructs an ideal cognitive environment for creative thinking, empowering individuals to approach challenges with heightened enthusiasm and cognitive agility.

The Empirical Basis for Music's Role in Creative Thinking

The meticulous analysis of the data collected from the interviews provides a compelling scientific basis to affirm that music exerts a demonstrably positive effect on creative thinking. These tangible, real-life examples elucidate how music functions as a catalyst, dismantles cognitive barriers, and shapes mood and motivation, all of which collectively contribute to an enhanced capacity for divergent thinking.

In essence, music's profound influence on cognitive networks, neurotransmitter release, and emotional states aligns consistently with well-established scientific principles. These practical insights validate the theoretical framework discussed earlier in the research paper, underscoring that music represents a potent and readily accessible tool for stimulating and amplifying creative thinking abilities. This research illuminates the untapped potential of music as a practical means to augment creative thinking, thereby enriching our comprehension of the intricate interplay between artistic expression and cognitive innovation.

Importance

The significance of this research lies in its ability to bridge the gap between theory and practical application. While the concept of music's influence on crea-

tivity has been explored in the past, this study provides concrete evidence and real-life examples that underscore the importance of music as a catalyst for creative thinking. It offers practical insights into how individuals can harness music to enhance their creative endeavors, overcome mental barriers, and elevate their mood and motivation. Furthermore, this research has broader implications for fields such as education and therapy. Educators can leverage the findings to incorporate music into teaching strategies, fostering creative thinking among students. In therapy, music can be employed as a therapeutic tool to aid individuals in overcoming cognitive and emotional obstacles. In conclusion, this study not only reaffirms the correlation between music and creativity but also highlights its practical significance. It contributes to our understanding of how music can be harnessed to stimulate and amplify creative thinking, enriching the interplay between artistic expression and cognitive innovation. The statistical analysis provides quantitative support for the qualitative findings, reinforcing the robust connection between music and creativity established in this research.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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