

The Positive Emotional Effects of Chinese Traditional Music on the College Students

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Abstract

The therapeutic capacity of Chinese traditional music for addressing anxiety, distress and stress has not been well studied. It is a noninvasive music psychotherapy method, often practiced in Southwest Jiaotong University (SWJTU) and proves to be quite effective and lasting. Although extreme metal music was reported done well with anger processing, individuals in psychological counselling mentioned that listening to metal music especially at all time everyday could cause psychological symptoms such as stress and anxiety. The purpose is to clarify the positive effect of Chinese traditional music which has had a long history. Students can choose healthy music for better adjusting their mood to be their own best psychological counselors. Chinese traditional music will be their own psychological tool to get a better college life. 60 participants from freshman to sophomore have been recruited, in which 53 participants completed the study. The 21-item Depression Anxiety Stress Scale was used as a pre- and post-intervention measure in this study. SPSS Statistical Analysis Software was used for paired-samples T-test. The result shows *that* the students' psychological mean scores are significantly reduced ($P = 0.004$) after listening to Chinese traditional music. Differences in pre-MT (BMT) and post-MT (AMT) scores indicated significant reductions in the mean scores of anxiety ($P = 0.002$), and stress ($P = 0.015$). The mean score of depression ($P = 0.089$) is also lowered from 38.1887 to 34.9811, which is not a so significant reduction and the reason needs to be explored. However, the study indicates that MT with Chinese traditional music can effectively achieve positive effect and improve mental health level on our campus.

Keywords

Positive Effects, Chinese Traditional Music, Music Therapy, College Students

1. Background

Music therapy was also called music treatment. It is a noninvasive music psychotherapy method (Rossetti et al., 2017). Modern music therapy studies have shown that music can directly or indirectly affect the human emotions and the body. Extreme metal music was reported to be done well with anger processing (Sharman & Dingle, 2015), Chinese traditional music will be their own psychological tool to get a better college life (Yang, 2016). Music therapy was usually considered a kind of psychological treatment. The influence of music on emotions can change the mental state of people, thus changing the human mind, and finally achieving the purpose of treatment (Yan, 2018).

Classification of music is important to research that examines the effects of music on these responses (Hirokawa & Ohira, 2003). A bone flute made in the Neolithic Age might be the origin of Chinese traditional music. It can be traced back to 7000 - 8000 years ago. In ancient times, only royal families and dignitary officials had the opportunity to enjoy music, and most of the music was played on chimes and bells. After Buddhism and Islam were accepted by Chinese, Chinese music was combined with exotic and religious melodies. People at fairs could hear music organized by religious temples. Since then all the common Chinese have the opportunity to enjoy traditional music.

With the prosperity of foreign music, these elements have been absorbed into Chinese traditional music group. Chinese traditional music is related closely to instruments. For instance, Horse-Headed Fiddle is a bowed stringed instrument with a scroll carved like a horse's head. It is popular in Mongolian music.

Why do we recommend Chinese Traditional Music?

The Chinese Traditional Music is created by traditional musical instruments in a traditional music repertoire; it contends Five Tones which always sound harmonious. They are called Gong (Do), Shang (Re), Jiao (Mi), Zhi (Sol), Yu (La), which correspond to heart, liver, spleen, lung, and kidney. A famous ancient writer Ouyang Xiu (Song Dynasty) wrote his own adjustment of depressive mood with music in his Farewell Message to His Friend Yang Zhi.

In Louis Armstrong Center for Music & Medicine of New York Mount Sinai Hospital, Music therapists prescribed Chinese traditional music for patients who had cancer and were receiving CT examination at the hospital. And the Chinese traditional music worked well and helped the patients a lot, especially bringing them calm, peace and joy when they were at hospital.

In addition, since the pandemic of COVID-2019, more and more college students are coming to our psychological center for psychological aid. They seem to have more and more psychological problems, which are much harder for the psychological counselors to deal with. The main problems are stress, anxiety, and depression.

2. Literature Review

As a result of technological advances, music is widely available as a means of

modifying social occasions (Dees & Vera, 1978). The selection of music is a vital technique in MT (music therapy), including factors such as patients' culture, and patient preferred music should be used through MT. To observe the effect of Chinese traditional music on the emotion of university students, 14 students received Chinese traditional music relaxing therapy for 4 weeks, and the other 14 students randomly selected as control group did not receive Chinese traditional music relaxing therapy. Compared with control group, the total scores of SAS, PSQI in the experiment group were significantly decreased after having received Chinese traditional music therapy for 4 weeks ($P < 0.05$), and the total scores of the all scales had no significant differences ($P > 0.05$) in control group. The Chinese traditional music relaxation training could decrease anxiety and improve sleep quality (Hu & Liang, 2018). The Meridian flow injection TCM music therapy is based on the meridian flow injection and takes music as the treatment method. According to the meridian injection theory, the human viscera should choose specific times to adjust with different natural music. The results of this study show that the SAS and SDS scores of the trial group are lower than those of the control group ($P < 0.05$), indicating that the Five Elements Music Therapy can significantly improve the negative mood of decompensated cirrhosis patients and promote the psychological recovery of patients (Sun, Wang, & Qian, 2018). A group of the elderly who resided in a nursing home has been measured by the 21-item Depression Anxiety Stress Scale, after 10 weeks of daily music-based sessions (each 90 minutes). Differences in pre- and post-intervention scores indicated significant reductions in mean scores of anxiety ($P = 0.004$), stress ($P = 0.001$), and depression ($P = 0.001$) in the intervention group as compared with the control group (no music) (Mohammadi et al., 2011). Patients with KOA have better effect in relieving pain and bad emotions by using five-element music therapy (Li et al., 2021). All these studies reveal that Chinese traditional music plays an effective role in reducing anxiety and stress, it can promote positive emotions quite efficiently in our society and campus life.

3. Method

Listening to Chinese traditional music 15 minutes once a week at 3:50 pm on Wednesday, 15 weeks in total. Altogether 60 students were recruited. The data of 7 students was invalid because of absent, 53 kept completing the Chinese traditional music listening. Those participants are from freshman ($N = 35$) to sophomore ($N = 3$), also including Junior ($N = 12$) and senior ($N = 3$), female ($N = 21$), male ($N = 32$), aged from 17 to 23. This study has passed the ethical review and the participants were informed.

- 1) Three pieces of traditional Chinese music: Listen to the Pine (Erhu, Solo), About Mountain and Moon (Zither, Solo), Water Town (Chinese dulcimer, Solo).
- 2) Depression Anxiety Stress Scale 21 (Gong et al., 2010).
- 3) Before listening, allow themselves to get a comfortable seat. Their eyes closed when listening to the music.

4. Results

Negative stress is a serious risk factor for the onset and progression of a wide range of physical illnesses and emotional problems (De Witte et al., 2022). The average score of college students decreased after music treatment. Chinese Traditional Music had a significant effect on anxiety level ($T = 3.325$, $P = 0.002$), stress level ($T = 2.525$, $P = 0.015$), compared with aromatherapy and music therapy as separate interventions. Although the depression level ($T = 1.735$, $P = 0.089$) is not quite significant, the mean is reduced from 11.7925 to 11.0755. Chinese traditional music enhances college students' mood. After 15 days listening, their scores of anxiety, stress and depression decreased. Positive effect has been achieved after MT (see Table 1).

The results suggest that Chinese traditional music may be effective for improving Positive Emotion of the College Students, reducing anxiety, stress and depression level among college students in SWJTU (Wang et al., 2021). After continuous listening to Chinese traditional music, a positive emotional guidance has been achieved among college students, $P = 0.004$, less than 0.05, "paired T test" results are significant, the overall score of the scale dropped after MT, significant assessment scores reveals that the Chinese traditional music can cause psychological positive influence of college students.

5. Discussion

Though the study of music therapy has been more and more common and deep, however, there are very few research and study that focus on Chinese traditional music and its effect, and few of the research has been published on the international magazines. Therefore, this article is a literature to talk about the benefits of using Chinese traditional music therapy sessions for people with stress, depression and anxiety disorders (Santos et al., 2019). It is obvious that college students have more psychological problems than before, which are more difficult to handle within a traditional way. Chinese traditional music has a long history,

Table 1. Mean change and T-test between pre- and post-MT measurements.

	N = 53	Mean Change	SD	T	Sig. (2-tailed)
Stress (Post-MT)		12.6604	4.61579	2.525	0.015 (*)
Stress (Pre-MT)		13.7925	4.07317		
Anxiety (Post-MT)		11.2453	3.68941	3.325	0.002 (**)
Anxiety (Pre-MT)		12.6038	3.64976		
Depression (Post-MT)		11.7925	3.67088	1.735	0.089
Depression (Pre-MT)		11.0755	4.1503		

Abbreviations: MT = music therapy; $P < 0.05$ (*) Statistic difference, $P < 0.01$ (**) Significant statistical difference, $P < 0.001$ (***) A very significant statistical difference.

thousands of years of accumulation and development have formed a unique style, it is the power source of the continuous development of the Chinese national culture and an important symbol of the vigorous development. Its enlightening role in the process of youth quality education is irreplaceable, and it plays an important role in the aesthetic pursuit and personality quality of teenagers especially college students. Chinese Traditional Music had a significant effect on anxiety level ($T = 3.325$, $P = 0.002$), stress level ($T = 2.525$, $P = 0.015$), compared with aromatherapy and music therapy as separate interventions. Although depression level ($T = 1.735$, $P = 0.089$) is not shown quite significant, the mean decreased from 11.7925 to 11.0755. The different results of anxiety, stress and depression reveal that we have a long way to handle with depression with Chinese traditional music. Anyway, Chinese traditional music can help students change their mood to some positive aspect. The results suggest that Chinese traditional music may be effective for improving the emotion of the College Students, reducing anxiety, stress and depression level among college students. The subjects in this study are all Chinese. Music is stateless, it expresses the mutual mood of human beings, the experimental results will not deviate due to the subjects' cultural acceptance and identity.

There is no boundary in music regardless of listeners' nationality, So not only the Chinese can benefit from the traditional Chinese music, but also all the music lovers around the world can do so. Using Chinese traditional music in MT is not ridiculous for the participants and they will benefit a lot by gaining a positive mood. We encourage more and more music therapists to use Chinese traditional music in MT.

6. Conclusion

With the development of education on campus, more attention should be paid to the psychological health of college students. In fact, under all kinds of pressure such as study, interpersonal interaction, career planning, various college students have demonstrated various problems in psychological health, such as anxiety, nervousness, and loneliness. The mental health status may have very negative influences on college students. For this reason, many universities have created the psychological education courses for college students. At present, the psychological center on our campus starts to focus on music therapy in psychological research (Yi, 2019). This method proves to be an excellent way to handle the mental health problems of college students. Chinese traditional music has a long way to go for helping people solve their mental problems such as stress, depression, and anxiety. The aim of this study was to check out music therapy of the positive effects of using Chinese traditional music therapy for college students. 53 students participated in this study. The results showed that after the Music Therapy, their stress and anxiety scores have reduced significantly and depression scores have lowered quite a bit. This indicates that MT with Chinese traditional music can effectively achieve positive effect and improve mental

health level on our campus.

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Conflicts of Interest

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

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