

“Moody Melodies”: An Analysis of Coping Strategies Exhibited by Listeners of Sad Music

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ABSTRACT

While existing research suggests that sad music can help listeners cope with trauma, it is unclear the ways in which sad music encourages listeners to exhibit different coping strategies and how these strategies may differ between sad vocal music and sad instrumental music. In order to answer the research question “How does sadness induced by sad vocal music help listeners cope with trauma compared to sad instrumental music?”, this paper employs a directed content analysis of YouTube comments from videos of sad music with lyrics and sad music without lyrics through codes derived from coping strategies identified by the Brief-COPE Inventory. The results indicate that the most prevalent adaptive coping strategies differed between both types of music with listeners of sad vocal music primarily coping through music-induced memories and listeners of sad instrumental music primarily relying on methods of self-reflection.

Introduction

Emotions Induced by Sad Music

With music streaming consumption growing by 25.6% from 2021 to 2022 (Luminate, 2023), it is important to consider the psychological impact that the music we listen to has on us. It has become a general consensus view in Western society that music carries the power to induce different emotions within the listener (Juslin & Sloboda, 2001). In particular, sad music, which is defined as music perceived by listeners to induce sad emotions (Garrido, 2016), has been found to induce strong feelings of sadness, melancholy, and nostalgia in listeners (Juslin & Sloboda, 2010). Although it may seem paradoxical that people would deliberately seek sadness by listening to sad music, researchers argue that sadness induced by sad music is inherently rewarding. Feelings of catharsis (the purging of negative emotions), apprehending expression (an improved understanding of the emotions present in response to art), savoring feelings (the satisfaction that arises from feeling emotion in response to art), understanding feelings (the opportunity to learn about one’s own feelings), emotional assurance (the confirmation in one’s ability to feel deeply), emotional resolution (the knowledge that an emotional state can be regulated), expressive potency (the pleasure that arises from expressing one’s feelings), and emotional communion (a connection to the feelings of the composer) are all healthy pleasures of sad music (Sachs et al., 2015). Additionally, people enjoy listening to sad music as it can trigger specific memories, distract them from current problems (Van den Tol and Edwards, 2013), and allow them to feel intense emotions without any real-world implications (Taruffi and Koelsch, 2014).

Literature Review

Coping with Trauma

After considering the therapeutic responses from listening to sad music, researchers also suggest that it can help listeners cope with traumatic experiences, which are defined by the CDC as an event causing a great amount of stress marked by horror, helplessness, injury, or death. In addition to its other pleasures, sad music allows individuals to confront and process their negative emotions in a safe and controlled way, which can help them feel less alone in their suffering and validate their emotions (Juslin & Västfjäll, 2008). This validation of emotions is especially helpful for individuals experiencing trauma, as they may feel overwhelmed and find it difficult to express or make sense of their emotions (Juslin & Västfjäll, 2008).

Differences Between Sad Vocal and Sad Instrumental Music

While these studies suggest that sad music can help listeners cope with trauma, they do not specify how emotional responses may change when listening to sad vocal music (sad music with lyrics) or sad instrumental music (sad music without lyrics). These studies fail to account for the possible impact that the absence or presence of lyrics may make on how listeners are able to cope. It is possible that the element of lyrics makes sad vocal music more effective in triggering positive emotional responses as Sloboda and O'Neil (2001) found that listeners had a tendency to rate sad vocal music as more emotionally intense and evocative of emotion than sad instrumental music, which corroborates with DeNora's (2016) findings that listeners rated sad vocal music as more emotionally powerful than sad instrumental music. Additionally, Sedikides et al. (2021) states that the lyrics of a song play a significant role in inducing feelings of nostalgia, which can elevate self-esteem, optimism, and inspiration. However, other studies suggest that the presence of lyrics may not change the emotional aspect of music at all as Brattico et al. (2011) found no difference observed in the intensity of emotions felt between sad vocal music and sad instrumental music. Additionally, a study by Eerola, Vuoskoski, and Kautiainen (2016) found that listening to sad music without lyrics did not hinder the positive, enjoyable, and moving experiences evoked by the music. Some researchers also suggest that listening to sad instrumental music may offer experiences not exhibited through sad vocal music as Rentfrow and Gosling (2003) find that individuals rated sad instrumental music as more melancholic and introspective compared to sad music with lyrics. The authors suggest that the absence of lyrics allow listeners to focus more on the musical elements of the piece, leading to a different emotional response. Overall, the research on the emotional impact of sad vocal music and sad instrumental music is mixed, with some studies finding a greater emotional response to sad music with lyrics, others finding no significant difference, and others finding a different emotional response entirely.

Present Study

Although research has already been done to identify differences in emotional responses to both sad vocal music and sad instrumental music, many of these studies yield conflicting results which make it difficult to identify clear differences. Without clear differences between the emotional responses induced by both types of music, it becomes difficult to identify how both types of music help listeners cope with trauma, considering the lack of studies that analyze the specific coping strategies exhibited in both types of music. Therefore, this study looks to address this gap through a direct comparison between coping strategies exhibited by listeners of sad vocal music and sad instrumental music, to identify the difference in the ways listeners cope in response to both types of music. Through a qualitative analysis of YouTube comments on videos of both sad vocal music and sad instrumental music, specific coping styles can be associated with each type of music. Since studies by

Sloboda and O'Neil (2001) and Rentfrow and Gosling (2003) have highlighted different emotional reactions exhibited by listeners of sad vocal music and sad instrumental music, it is hypothesized that the most prevalent coping strategies will differ across both videos. This review of the literature led to the research question: How does sadness induced by sad vocal music help listeners cope with trauma compared to sad instrumental music?

Method

Selected Videos

The two YouTube videos, whose comments have been subject to analysis, have been selected by general searches of keywords on the YouTube search engine for either sad vocal music or sad instrumental music. The keywords for sad vocal music was "sad music with lyrics" while the keywords for sad instrumental music was "sad instrumental music." A random number generator was then used to select one song from the 13 results that appeared for "sad music with lyrics" and another song from the 7 results that appeared for "sad instrumental music." The chosen sad vocal music is titled "This Song Will Make You Cry (Kodaline - All I Want) [Lyrics]" and the chosen sad instrumental music is titled "Crying Alone - Sad & Emotional Piano Song Instrumental." These two videos both aligned with the definition of sad music as they were intended for viewers to perceive them as sad songs capable of inducing sadness through their titles. To ensure that both of these songs had the same level of "sadness," both songs were analyzed by "Tunebat," which provides data on songs for "popularity," "energy," "danceability," "happiness," "acousticness," "instrumentalness," "liveness," "speechiness," and "loudness" based on their sentiment analysis AI. This AI was first trained on a large number of audio files assigned with predetermined values for energy, danceability, and happiness, and then was asked to make estimations for user-selected audio files based on these previous files and the associated values that it has looked at. The Tunebat AI found both songs to be equivalent in their level of "sadness" as they both received scores of 16/100 in terms of happiness. The biggest difference between the two songs was the "instrumentalness" score as the sad vocal music received a score of 15/100 while the sad instrumental music received a score of 90/100.

Sample Comments

Out of the 6,547 comments left on the sad vocal music and the 14,890 comments left on the sad instrumental music, the first 50 comments with the largest number of likes were selected to be analyzed for this study. Comments not exhibiting a coded coping strategy were excluded as they do not provide insight into the coping strategies encouraged by the type of music. These selected comments were extracted by using the "YCS - YouTube Comment Search" tool, which can sort comments based on their number of likes from greatest to least. Examining the most popular comments is an effective method of gathering general perceptions of how the song made listeners feel as Pablo Porten-Cheé and Christiane Eilders find that online media items with many likes suggest a societal consensus (2019). Filtering these comments based on the number of likes can then show what the majority of commenters feel are the consensus views or feelings associated with that song.

Brief-COPE Inventory Codes

This study consisted of a directed content analysis of comments left on both types of sad music based on a modified version of the Brief-COPE Inventory instrument to analyze the different coping strategies exhibited by listeners of sad vocal music and sad instrumental music. The Brief-COPE Inventory is an abbreviated version of the COPE Inventory and is one of the most frequently used instruments to measure individuals' coping strategies (Garcia et al., 2018). While the Brief-COPE Inventory consists of 8 adaptive coping strategies and 6

maladaptive coping strategies, only 3 adaptive strategies and 3 maladaptive strategies were used as codes for the current study as they serve most relevant to the statements expressed by online commenters. The 3 adaptive codes consisted of seeking social support, positive reframing, and acceptance while the 3 maladaptive codes consisted of behavioral disengagement, venting, and self-blaming. When individuals seek social support they hope for the company or support of others through different activities (Garcia et al., 2018). Individuals exhibit positive reframing when they strive for a positive outlook on their negative situation and look to persevere by uplifting themselves or others (Garcia et al., 2018). Individuals exhibit acceptance when they are able to come to terms with their traumatic situation and are able to move past it (Garcia et al., 2018). When individuals seemingly give up on attempting to cope with their traumatic situation, they exhibit behavioral disengagement (Garcia et al., 2018). When individuals say things only to let their negative feelings escape, they exhibit venting, and when individuals criticize and blame themselves for their negative feelings, they exhibit self-blaming (Garcia et al., 2018). After analyzing each of the 50 comments on each video with these codes, they will be categorized as either an adaptive or maladaptive coping strategy. Categorizing comments on whether they exhibit either an adaptive or maladaptive coping strategy can provide further insight into potential discrepancies between the abilities of sad vocal music and sad instrumental music to help listeners cope with trauma through a frequency chart.

Additional Codes

In addition to the codes derived from the Brief-COPE Inventory instrument, 2 more codes were created after discovering trends within the comments. The code of positive reminiscence was created to categorize comments where individuals described the music-inducing memories of past events that helped them cope with their traumatic situation. This code was labeled as an adaptive coping strategy as Garrido finds that the described feeling of helpful nostalgia can be a positive coping strategy (Garrido, 2018). Additionally, Susan Bluck and her colleagues support classifying nostalgia as an adaptive coping strategy as they find in their study that remembering stressful events such as death can sometimes bring comfort by connecting through a shared past experience (Bluck et al., 2010). However, the code of negative reminiscence was created to categorize comments where individuals experienced induced memories, but the feelings of nostalgia did not help them cope with their traumatic situation. Negative reminiscence was labeled a maladaptive code as listeners often relived the negative emotions associated with a traumatic event without finding any comfort. The findings of Garrido (2018) support negative reminiscence as a maladaptive coping strategy as she states that nostalgia can also be harmful for some, depending on the personality and coping style of the individual.

The goal of labeling comments as exhibiting one of the 8 different types of coping strategies was to highlight the exact similarities and differences between coping styles utilized by listeners of sad vocal music and sad instrumental music. By coding each comment on both types of music to a particular coping strategy, it can be identifiable how listeners may use similar or different coping styles when listening to either type of music.

Limitations of Methodology

Some possible limitations to this method of study include the possibility that comments may not have been authentic and accurately reflect the listeners' emotions. While comments that explain a traumatic experience in great detail are unlikely to be fabricated, there is still a possibility that a listener may have created a fictional event to gain likes or fit in with the experiences of other commenters. Another possible limitation that could skew results could be the differences in the structure of the two songs. While Tunebat found that the two songs are identical in their happiness levels, it also found that the two vary in energy, danceability, and loudness as the sad vocal music received scores of 41, 19, and -10db, while the sad instrumental music received scores of

6, 36, and -21db, respectively. These differences in the musical elements of the two songs could have possibly contributed to different emotional responses exhibited by commenters as the energy level of the music can possibly play a role in how the music is perceived.

However, this method of examining public comments left on YouTube videos is still preferred over other methods of research because commenters take it upon themselves to post their own reactions or feelings about the music in an online forum. Here, commenters’ responses are not limited by the predetermined answer choices of a survey or potential feelings of embarrassment. Behind an online screen, people can be more comfortable sharing their thoughts, feelings, and personal experiences when they know that there are virtually no consequences (Settanni and Marengo, 2015), compared to other methods where participants refrain from and are often uncomfortable in explaining in-depth personal experiences due to discomfort.

Results

Table 1. Adaptive Coping Strategies in Sad Vocal Music

Adaptive Coping Strategy Code	Frequency	Definition
Positive Reminiscence	15 (50%)	Individuals describe memories evoked by music that help resolve negative emotions
Seeking Social Support	2 (6.67%)	Hoping for the company/support of others
Positive reframing	4 (13.3%)	Positive outlook on negative situation and efforts to uplift themselves or others
Acceptance	9 (30%)	Coming to terms with the traumatic event and accepting that it has happened

Adaptive Coping Strategy Results- Sad Vocal Music

Of the 50 comments analyzed in the sad vocal music, 30 exhibited adaptive coping strategies. As shown in Table 1, 15 out of 30 of the adaptive coping strategies used by commenters aligned with the code of “positive reminiscence,” making it the most prevalent strategy utilized by listeners of sad vocal music. The next most prevalent strategy was “acceptance,” where 9/30 comments aligned with the code. 4/30 comments aligned with “positive reframing” and 2/30 aligned with “seeking social support,” making it the least prevalent adaptive coping strategy.

Ex. Positive Reminiscence

[I lost my girlfriend a year ago. She died of cancer and honestly I'm depressed but when I listen to this my depression passes. Thank you whoever made this]

This comment was coded as exhibiting the strategy of positive reminiscence because the commenter relates negative emotions that they felt from the loss of their girlfriend and then mentions how the music helped them work through these negative emotions. Because the music helped resolve negative emotions associated with a traumatic memory, the comment can be coded as positive reminiscence rather than negative reminiscence.

Table 2. Maladaptive Coping Strategies in Sad Vocal Music

Maladaptive Coping Strategy Code	Frequency	Definition
Negative Reminiscence	12 (60%)	Individuals relive negative emotions associated with traumatic memories
Venting	4 (20%)	Freely expressing negative emotions to let them escape
Behavioral Disengagement	2 (10%)	Giving up on coping or trying to improve situation
Self-Blaming	2 (10%)	Criticizing or blaming themselves for traumatic event

Maladaptive Coping Strategy Results- Sad Vocal Music

Of the 50 comments analyzed in the sad vocal music, 20 exhibited maladaptive coping strategies. As shown in Table 2, the most prevalent maladaptive coping strategy was negative reminiscence which was exhibited in 12/20 comments. The second most prevalent strategy, venting, was expressed in 4/20 comments. Behavioral disengagement and self-blaming were both exhibited in 2/20 comments, making them both the least prevalent maladaptive coping strategies.

Ex. Negative Reminiscence

[I lost my dad. I couldn't stop crying. He was my best friend and he was my hero. He left me when I was 6 years old now I am 9years old. I miss him soo soo much. When i go to sleep I always cry. He had a lot of children. I loved him soo soo much. I'm never happy. What I do is cry. Right now I feel like crying. It sounds like I enjoy crying but I don't. R.i.p dad. The best dad ever in the world. You meant everything to me.]

This comment was coded as negative reminiscence as the commenter expresses the memory of losing their father and does not indicate that the music helped resolve the negative emotions associated with this memory. While the commenter does not explicitly state that this memory was directly induced by the music, it is assumed that the song played some role in evoking the memory as the event occurred 3 years prior. The music allows the commenter to relive the traumatic event of losing their father, but does not assist them in moving forward.

Table 3. Adaptive Coping Strategies in Sad Instrumental Music

Adaptive Coping Strategy Code	Frequency	Definition
Positive Reminiscence	3 (11.5%)	Individuals describe memories evoked by music that help resolve negative emotions
Seeking Social Support	9 (34.6%)	Hoping for the company/support of others
Positive reframing	12 (46.2%)	Positive outlook on negative situation and efforts to uplift themselves or others
Acceptance	2 (7.7%)	Coming to terms with the traumatic event and accepting that it has happened

Adaptive Coping Strategies- Sad Instrumental Music

26 total comments exhibited adaptive coping strategies in the sad instrumental music. The most prevalent strategy was positive reframing as it was exhibited in 12/26 comments (Table 3). The second most prevalent strategy, seeking social support, was expressed in 9/26 of the comments while positive reminiscence was expressed in 3/26 comments. The least prevalent strategy was acceptance which was expressed in 2/26 comments.

Ex. Positive Reframing

[4 years ago I cried at the hospital car park after hearing that my mom died. I was so close. I was at the entrance but wasn't allowed to see her. After 8 hours, I get to see her. in a coffin. I lost a big part of me. And the only reason I'm still here is because of her. She wants me to prove to the world that she raised a good daughter. And although I struggle, I'm still trying.]

This commenter exhibits positive reframing as they reflect on their traumatic experience and find the courage to take a positive outlook on the situation to keep persevering. Although the commenter was close to giving up on coping altogether, they decided to reflect and keep pushing forward by recognizing that they

shouldn't give up because their mother would have wanted them to prove to the world that she raised a good daughter.

Table 4. Maladaptive Coping Strategies in Sad Instrumental Music

Maladaptive Coping Strategy Code	Frequency	Definition
Negative Reminiscence	2 (8.3%)	Individuals relive negative emotions associated with traumatic memories
Venting	7 (29.2%)	Freely expressing negative emotions to let them escape
Behavioral Disengagement	12 (50%)	Giving up on coping or trying to improve situation
Self-Blaming	3 (12.5%)	Criticizing or blaming themselves for traumatic event

Maladaptive Coping Strategies- Sad Instrumental Music

A total of 24 comments exhibited maladaptive coping strategies. The most prevalent maladaptive strategy of these comments was behavioral disengagement with 12/24 aligning with the code (Table 4). 7/24 comments aligned with venting while 3/24 comments aligned with self-blaming. The least prevalent strategy was negative reminiscence with 2/24 comments aligning with the code.

Ex. Behavioral Disengagement

[I came here to let my tears flow...I am a person who's always unhappy and can't find any meaning in a lot of things. I used to be happy at some point in my life but every time my smile stretches far beyond, I am confronted by tons of sad things. Over the years, I've developed this strong aversion to happiness to the point that whenever I think I will going to be happy, I always remind myself that for every ounce of happiness I show to the world, the world will give me tons of reasons to feel empty. I don't know why I'm like this. For this reason that many years ago I declared myself to be an unhappy person forever.]

This comment was coded as describing behavioral disengagement because the commenter expresses giving up on trying to cope and improve their emotional standing. The commenter accepts that they will be an "unhappy person forever," which shows that the music has not encouraged them to reflect and adequately cope with their negative feelings.

Adaptive Strategies Compared to Maladaptive Strategies Across Both Songs

Overall, when looking at both types of sad music, commenters expressed adaptive coping strategies more frequently than maladaptive coping strategies, but adaptive coping strategies were more frequently expressed in sad vocal music. While the difference between adaptive and maladaptive strategies in sad vocal music was 30, the difference was just 2 in sad instrumental music. This dramatic difference between adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies in both videos can suggest that sad vocal music may be more reliable for dealing with trauma. Sad vocal music is not as volatile with its emotional responses compared to sad instrumental music where listeners have varying reactions to the music. The coding results also revealed that the most frequent coping strategies utilized by listeners of sad vocal music are strongly related to different reactions to induced memories (either positive or negative reminiscence), whereas coping strategies utilized by listeners of sad instrumental music primarily depended on self-reflection (positive reframing or behavioral disengagement). The most prevalent adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies across both videos were two sides of the same spectrum. If the commenter was able to move on from the loss of a loved one, then they exhibited positive reminiscence, but if they weren't able to move on, they exhibited negative reminiscence. Similarly, if the commenter was able to self-reflect and have a positive outlook on their situation, they exhibited positive reframing, but if they weren't then they gave up on coping and exhibited behavioral disengagement. Based on these findings, the initial hypothesis that the most prevalent coping strategies across both videos will differ is supported.

Discussion

This research aimed to answer the question “How does sadness induced by sad vocal music help listeners cope with trauma compared to sad instrumental music?” From analyzing the YouTube comments left on videos of both sad vocal music and sad instrumental music through codes derived from the Brief-COPE Inventory, it was found that the most prevalent coping strategies differed in both videos, commenters' adaptive coping strategies outnumbered the maladaptive coping strategies.

This analysis also found that both types of sad music are effective in helping listeners cope with trauma, which further adds to Sach's study in 2015 where it was found that listening to sad music can often be pleasurable for listeners and help them cope with negative emotions (Sachs, 2015). However, the current study also extends on these previous findings as it was found that listeners exhibit different coping strategies when exposed to either sad vocal music or sad instrumental music.

While the primary adaptive coping strategy utilized by listeners of sad vocal music was positive reminiscence, the primary adaptive coping strategy utilized by listeners of sad instrumental music was positive reframing. A possible explanation for the difference in prevalent coping strategies could be due to the influence of lyrics triggering specific memories within listeners causing listeners of sad vocal music to align with the positive reminiscence code rather than the perseverance code exhibited by listeners of sad instrumental music. Commenters of sad vocal music would often recite specific lyrics and discuss how it relates to them and helps them deal with their traumatic situation. Lamont and Loveday support this emotional connection to lyrics in their 2020 study as they find that many of their participants reported song lyrics inducing memories describing similar events or sentiments (Lamont and Loveday, 2020). The lyrics may play a factor in how listeners cope as without any lyrics in the song, listeners of sad instrumental music rarely mention any specific memories as there are no words to relate to. These listeners instead utilize positive reframing as without any lyrics, the musical elements of the song may play a role in helping them resolve their negative emotions by developing a positive outlook. This view of instrumentals helping listeners reframe their emotions is supported by the findings of Rentfrow and Gosling who state that in the absence of lyrics, listeners are able to focus more on the musical elements of the song, allowing for introspection (2003).

In addition to differences between the most prevalent adaptive coping strategies, there were also distinctions between the maladaptive coping strategies utilized by listeners of both videos. In the sad vocal music, listeners primarily resorted to negative reminiscence while listeners of sad instrumental music resorted to behavioral disengagement. This could again be due to the role that lyrics play in triggering memories. While listeners mostly reacted positively to these memories, there were frequent instances where the memories induced by the vocal music did not help the listener cope with their traumatic event. A possible explanation for why listeners react differently to the memories triggered by the music could be because different people regulate their emotions in different ways as some may be more emotionally reactive while others may be more emotionally stable (Gross 1998). Those who are emotionally unstable and tend to have difficulty regulating their emotions may have a stronger emotional response to the music and may be more likely to exhibit positive reminiscence. Whereas, those who are emotionally stable and tend to not easily fluctuate between emotions may be more likely to exhibit negative reminiscence as their negative emotions prior to listening to the music aren't easily resolved after listening to the music. Taruffi and Koelsch (2014) support this difference in reactions depending on emotional stability as they find that the overall appreciation of sad music is greater among those with low emotional stability.

Additionally, listeners of sad instrumental music may resort to the maladaptive coping strategy of behavioral disengagement as in the absence of lyrics, listeners are left with their own thoughts and if they don't resolve these negative feelings through positive reframing, these unresolved feelings turn into expressions of venting and behavioral engagement. Of the comments exhibiting positive reframing, commenters frequently discuss their traumatic experience and negative emotions followed by how they decided to move past that experience and resolve those emotions. However, when commenters don't persevere, they describe their traumatic experience and their negative emotions and seemingly give up on moving past those experiences and emotions. The variance in how commenters exhibit either adaptive or maladaptive coping strategies could be once again explained by the difference in emotional stability within individuals as those who are more emotionally reactive may be more likely to exhibit positive reframing whereas those who are more emotionally stable may be more likely to exhibit behavioral disengagement. Taking these findings into consideration, it was found that sad vocal music helps listeners cope through induced memories, whereas sad instrumental music helps listeners cope through self-reflection positively reframing the situation.

Limitations

A major limitation of this study is that the conclusions were heavily reliant upon codes interpreted by only one person. Despite the comments being analyzed numerous times and continuously grouped into codes for maximum accuracy, the coding process was still conducted by only one person based on their own subjective views. Therefore, the researcher's own underlying biases could have influenced the grouping of comments into different codes. The researcher's subjectivity could potentially cause a miscount of adaptive or maladaptive codes for either type of sad music, which would significantly alter the conclusions drawn.

Additionally, due to the small sample size of comments analyzed for this study, there is a possibility that the results do not accurately reflect the entire comments. For example, it is possible that the most prevalent adaptive coping strategy in sad instrumental music could have been seeking social support rather than positive reframing, due to the difference in comments being just 4. A greater sample size of comments could have allowed the findings of this study to be more concrete and generalizable as it would have prevented the risk of sampling bias from skewing the data.

Conclusion and Future Instructions

In an era where the number of traumatic events people experience is inflated by the impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic, improving the efficacy of music therapy is especially important. Understanding the role that lyrics and acoustic features play in helping listeners cope can be particularly beneficial to the design of music therapy

(Garrido et al., 2015). By identifying how the two types of sad music differ in encouraging different coping styles, therapists can administer their patients the appropriate form of sad music tailored to their preferred coping style, allowing the patients to gain the most from the intervention. If a patient is more reflective, then listening to sad instrumental music could be more beneficial in helping them cope with trauma. If the patient wants to feel more connected with a lost loved one, then listening to sad vocal music may be more beneficial.

For future studies regarding this topic, researchers should use a greater sample size of comments to obtain results that may better accurately represent the total number of comments from each video. Additionally, future studies could use broader codes featuring a greater number of coping strategies to more accurately represent all of the different ways in which listeners cope in both types of music. Including more coping strategies as codes from the full COPE-Inventory test or other instruments used to measure coping strategies such as The Coping Self-Efficacy Scale or the Brief Resilient Coping Scale, may serve beneficial in gaining a more complete understanding of what coping styles are encouraged by the two types of sad music.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my advisor for the valuable insight provided to me on this topic.

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