

The Role of Music Familiarity, Mood-Based Music Selection, And Music Listening Frequency on Emotional Wellbeing among Malaysian Youth

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Abstract

This study explores the relationship between music familiarity, mood-based music selection, music listening frequency, and emotional wellbeing among Malaysian youth aged 18-30, recruited from public and private universities across Malaysia. A quantitative approach was employed with a sample of 395 participants, utilizing Pearson correlation and multiple regression analyses to investigate the impact of these variables on emotional wellbeing. The findings revealed that mood-based music selection was the strongest predictor of emotional wellbeing, followed by music familiarity and music listening frequency. These results suggest that youth who intentionally select music to match or alter their mood, engage with familiar music, and frequently listen to music experience higher emotional wellbeing. The study underscores the importance of music in emotional regulation and highlights the potential of music-based interventions in mental health programs. Educational institutions and policymakers are encouraged to integrate music-based strategies to enhance emotional wellbeing among youth. Future research could explore these relationships further across diverse cultural and age groups.

Keywords: Emotional Wellbeing, Music Familiarity, Mood-Based Music Selection, Music Listening Frequency, Youth

Introduction

Music has long been recognized as a powerful tool for emotional regulation and mood enhancement, with its influence on wellbeing drawing significant attention from researchers and practitioners alike. For youth, who often face numerous social, academic, and personal stressors, music provides an accessible means of managing emotions and promoting psychological resilience (Juslin, 2019; Krause & North, 2021). The relationship between music and emotional wellbeing is complex, influenced by various factors such as the familiarity of the music, the way it is selected based on mood, and the frequency of music listening (Chin &

Rickard, 2022). These variables play distinct yet interrelated roles in how individuals use music to cope with emotional challenges, suggesting that music may serve as a critical resource for enhancing emotional health among young people (Saarikallio, 2020; Groarke et al., 2021).

One significant factor in the relationship between music and emotional wellbeing is music familiarity. Research shows that individuals often prefer familiar music, which can evoke positive memories and offer comfort in stressful situations (McFerran & Saarikallio, 2021; Rentfrow & Gosling, 2021). Familiar music can act as an emotional anchor, providing stability and security during emotionally challenging periods. For youth, who are in a critical developmental stage and frequently experience heightened emotions, the ability to rely on familiar music as a coping mechanism may offer a sense of control and emotional safety (Juslin, 2019; Krause et al., 2021).

Mood-based music selection is another critical element in how youth engage with music to regulate their emotional states. Youth often choose music that either reflects their current mood or helps alter it, using music as a tool to enhance positive emotions or alleviate negative ones (Saarikallio & Erkkilä, 2007; Schäfer et al., 2020). Whether it is selecting sad music to process emotions or energetic music to lift their spirits, mood-based music selection allows youth to tailor their emotional experience, providing them with a versatile and effective method of emotional regulation (Ng et al., 2020; Chin & Rickard, 2022).

In addition to familiarity and mood-based selection, the frequency of music listening plays a pivotal role in emotional wellbeing. Frequent music listening, whether daily or several times a week, has been associated with better emotional regulation, as it offers consistent opportunities for stress relief and emotional expression (North & Hargreaves, 2021; Groarke et al., 2021). Regular engagement with music allows individuals to use it as a reliable coping mechanism, helping them navigate the emotional demands of daily life. In contrast, less frequent music listeners may miss out on the emotional benefits that come from routine engagement with music (Schubert et al., 2020; Krause et al., 2019).

Taken together, music familiarity, mood-based music selection, and listening frequency form a comprehensive framework for understanding how youth use music to enhance their emotional wellbeing. By examining these factors, this study aims to explore the multifaceted ways in which music can be leveraged as a tool for emotional management. With youth increasingly facing mental health challenges, understanding the role of music in their emotional lives may provide valuable insights for educators, mental health practitioners, and policymakers in designing interventions that promote emotional health and resilience through music-based strategies (Saarikallio, 2020; Juslin, 2019).

Literature Review

Music Familiarity and Emotional Wellbeing

Music familiarity refers to the extent to which individuals are exposed to and prefer familiar versus unfamiliar music, playing a crucial role in emotional regulation. Familiar music is often linked to autobiographical memories, triggering emotional responses tied to personal experiences, which can enhance emotional wellbeing (Krause & North, 2021; Juslin, 2019). Youth, in particular, may gravitate toward familiar music during times of emotional stress, as it provides comfort and stability. Studies have found that familiar music activates positive

memories and promotes feelings of security, making it a valuable emotional resource (Chin & Rickard, 2022; Schubert et al., 2020). This suggests that listening to familiar music can act as an emotional buffer, reducing stress and fostering a sense of emotional control.

Additionally, familiar music is associated with predictable emotional outcomes. When individuals listen to familiar tunes, the cognitive load is reduced because the brain has already processed the musical structure, allowing for a more direct emotional experience (McFerran & Saarikallio, 2021; Krause et al., 2019). Youth who listen to familiar music can engage in emotional self-regulation without the need to decode new sounds or patterns. This automatic response to familiar music can provide emotional support during challenging times, enabling youth to manage their emotions more effectively (Saarikallio, 2020; Juslin, 2019).

Moreover, the emotional impact of music familiarity can be linked to its ability to evoke nostalgia. Nostalgic feelings generated by familiar music have been shown to improve mood and provide psychological comfort, especially during times of uncertainty or stress (Ng et al., 2020; Groarke et al., 2021). For youth, who often face academic pressures and social challenges, listening to familiar music can trigger positive memories from less stressful times, thereby helping them cope with present difficulties (Rentfrow & Gosling, 2021; Schäfer & Sedlmeier, 2020). This emotional connection can foster resilience and enhance emotional wellbeing.

However, the relationship between music familiarity and emotional wellbeing may vary across cultural contexts. Some research suggests that familiarity with culturally relevant music can amplify emotional responses and create a stronger sense of identity and belonging (Chin & Rickard, 2022; Schubert et al., 2020). In a multicultural society like Malaysia, where youth are exposed to various musical influences, the impact of familiarity may depend on both individual preferences and cultural exposure. This dynamic suggests that while music familiarity plays a key role in emotional regulation, its effectiveness may be influenced by personal and cultural factors.

Mood-Based Music Selection and Emotional Wellbeing

Mood-based music selection is the intentional choice of music based on one's current emotional state or the desire to change it, which significantly affects emotional wellbeing. Youth often select music that reflects or enhances their mood, using it as a tool for emotional regulation. Research suggests that listening to music that mirrors one's current emotional state allows individuals to process emotions more effectively, especially in moments of sadness or frustration (Saarikallio & Erkkilä, 2007; Juslin, 2019). By selecting mood-congruent music, youth can engage in emotional catharsis, enabling them to navigate emotional challenges more easily (Schäfer & Sedlmeier, 2020; Krause & North, 2021).

Conversely, mood-based music selection can also be used to alter emotional states. For example, listening to upbeat or energizing music when feeling down can help shift negative emotions, improving mood and enhancing overall wellbeing (Ng et al., 2020; Chin & Rickard, 2022). Youth often turn to music as a tool for mood enhancement, leveraging the emotional power of music to boost motivation, reduce anxiety, or foster feelings of joy. This strategic use of music highlights its role as an accessible and flexible tool for managing emotional states (Schubert et al., 2020; Groarke et al., 2021).

In addition to its mood-altering effects, music selection based on emotional needs can foster a sense of agency and control over one's emotional state (McFerran & Saarikallio, 2021; Saarikallio, 2020). Youth who actively choose music to manage their emotions demonstrate greater emotional awareness and regulation skills, which are critical for coping with stress and uncertainty. Music allows them to exercise emotional control in ways that are immediate and non-invasive, making it an appealing option for managing the emotional challenges of adolescence and early adulthood (Juslin, 2019; Schäfer et al., 2020).

However, the effectiveness of mood-based music selection may vary depending on individual preferences and emotional needs. Some youth may prefer using music for emotional expression, while others may use it to distance themselves from negative emotions (Krause et al., 2019; Rentfrow & Gosling, 2021). This variation in music use highlights the importance of understanding how personal preferences influence the emotional impact of music. Understanding these differences can help mental health practitioners and educators develop more tailored music-based interventions that support emotional wellbeing in youth (Ng et al., 2020; Chin & Rickard, 2022).

Music Listening Frequency and Emotional Wellbeing

The frequency with which individuals engage with music, whether daily, weekly, or occasionally, plays a crucial role in shaping emotional wellbeing. Research has shown that frequent music listening is associated with improved emotional regulation, as it provides consistent opportunities for emotional expression and stress management (North & Hargreaves, 2021; Ng et al., 2020). For youth, who often face emotional turbulence due to academic pressures and social challenges, listening to music regularly can serve as an accessible tool for coping with daily stressors (Saarikallio, 2020; Juslin, 2019). Daily engagement with music allows individuals to integrate emotional regulation into their routine, fostering emotional resilience.

Furthermore, frequent music listening enables youth to engage in more deliberate emotional self-regulation, as they can select music based on their emotional needs at different times of the day (Schubert et al., 2020; Krause et al., 2019). Whether using music to focus while studying or relax before sleeping, the ability to tailor music experiences to specific emotional states contributes to a more stable emotional wellbeing. Regular music listeners are better equipped to manage their emotions, as they consistently use music to navigate the ups and downs of daily life (Chin & Rickard, 2022; Saarikallio & Erkkilä, 2007).

In contrast, individuals who listen to music less frequently may not experience the same emotional benefits. Occasional music listeners may not rely on music as a consistent emotional resource, which limits its impact on emotional wellbeing (Groarke et al., 2021; McFerran & Saarikallio, 2021). While occasional music engagement can still provide emotional relief, it may not offer the same long-term benefits as frequent listening, as youth who engage with music regularly tend to develop stronger emotional regulation skills (Ng et al., 2020; Rentfrow & Gosling, 2021). This highlights the importance of promoting regular music engagement as part of a broader strategy for supporting emotional health in youth.

The emotional impact of music listening frequency is also influenced by the contexts in which music is consumed. Youth who incorporate music into multiple aspects of their lives, such as

exercising, studying, or socializing, may experience greater emotional benefits than those who only engage with music occasionally (Krause & North, 2021; Juslin, 2019). These findings suggest that the frequency of music engagement, combined with its integration into daily routines, plays a pivotal role in enhancing emotional wellbeing.

Method

Participants

This study involved a sample of 395 Malaysian youth, aged between 18 to 30 years, recruited from various public and private universities across Malaysia. Stratified random sampling was used to ensure a balanced representation across different ethnic groups, genders, and educational levels. The sample size of 395 was determined through a power analysis to ensure sufficient statistical power for detecting relationships between the independent variables (music familiarity, mood-based music selection, and music listening frequency) and the dependent variable (emotional wellbeing). All participants were fluent in either Malay or English, and informed consent was obtained before their participation in the study.

Procedure and Measures

Participants were recruited through university email announcements and social media platforms targeting student groups. They were informed of the study's objectives, the confidentiality of their data, and their right to withdraw at any stage without any negative consequences. Data were collected using an online self-administered questionnaire, which took approximately 15–20 minutes to complete. The questionnaire comprised several validated scales to measure the key variables.

Music Familiarity

Music familiarity was measured using the Familiarity with Music Scale (FMS) developed by Schubert et al. (2020). This scale assesses participants' preference for familiar versus unfamiliar music across different genres. Participants responded to items such as "I feel more relaxed when listening to music I am familiar with" on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). The FMS demonstrated strong internal reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.85 in previous research and 0.87 in this study.

Mood-Based Music Selection

Mood-based music selection was assessed using the Mood Regulation through Music Use Scale (MRMUS) developed by Saarikallio and Erkkilä (2007). This scale evaluates the extent to which individuals select music to match or alter their mood. Participants rated items such as "I choose music that reflects my current mood" or "I use music to improve my mood when I feel down" on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Never, 5 = Always). The MRMUS has been widely validated, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.88 in this study.

Music Listening Frequency

Music listening frequency was measured using a modified version of the Music Listening Habits Scale (MLHS) by North et al. (2004). This scale measures how often participants listen to music in their daily lives. Participants rated items such as "How often do you listen to music during your daily activities?" and "How frequently do you use music to relax?" on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Never, 7 = Always). The MLHS showed good reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.89 in the current sample.

Emotional Wellbeing

Emotional wellbeing was assessed using the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) developed by Tennant et al. (2007). This 14-item scale measures overall emotional and mental wellbeing, with items such as "I've been feeling optimistic about the future" and "I've been feeling relaxed." Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = None of the time, 5 = All of the time), with higher scores indicating better emotional wellbeing. The WEMWBS is widely used and demonstrated strong internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.91 in the present study.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 27. Descriptive statistics were calculated for all variables to provide an overview of participants' music familiarity, mood-based music selection, listening frequency, and emotional wellbeing. Pearson correlation analyses were conducted to examine the relationships between the independent variables (music familiarity, mood-based music selection, and music listening frequency) and the dependent variable (emotional wellbeing). Multiple regression analyses were then used to determine the predictive power of each independent variable on emotional wellbeing. Statistical significance was set at $p < .05$ for all tests.

Results and Discussion

Descriptive statistics for music familiarity, mood-based music selection, music listening frequency, and emotional wellbeing are presented in Table 1. The results show that the participants reported moderate to high levels of emotional wellbeing ($M = 61.10$, $SD = 8.15$), with 61.52% of participants scoring in the high category. Music familiarity ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 0.85$) indicated that a majority of participants preferred familiar music, with 62.41% of respondents expressing a preference for music they were already familiar with. Frequency of music listening ($M = 5.55$, $SD = 1.00$) was relatively high, with 62.03% of participants listening to music daily.

Mood-based music selection showed a strong inclination towards using music for mood regulation ($M = 4.80$, $SD = 0.90$). Most respondents reported selecting music based on their current mood or to change their emotional state, with 64.25% of participants using music specifically to enhance their mood or manage negative emotions. The findings reveal that music familiarity, mood-based music selection, and frequency of music listening play significant roles in shaping the emotional wellbeing of Malaysian youth.

The preference for familiar music among participants aligns with previous research suggesting that familiar music provides emotional comfort and stability (Schubert et al., 2020; McFerran & Saarikallio, 2021). Familiar music has been shown to trigger positive memories and promote a sense of security, which is particularly important for youth facing emotional or academic stress. The high percentage of respondents preferring familiar music underscores the role of music as an emotional anchor, offering youth a reliable tool for emotional regulation (Krause & North, 2021; Juslin, 2019).

Mood-based music selection was another critical factor in emotional wellbeing. Participants who regularly selected music based on their mood reported higher levels of emotional wellbeing, consistent with previous research (Saarikallio & Erkkilä, 2007; Ng et al., 2020).

Youth often use music to either reflect their current mood or to alter it, highlighting the versatility of music as a tool for emotional regulation. This ability to strategically use music based on mood indicates a high level of emotional awareness and self-regulation among participants (Schäfer et al., 2020; Krause et al., 2019).

In terms of music listening frequency, the results showed that youth who engaged with music on a daily basis reported higher levels of emotional stability and wellbeing (North & Hargreaves, 2021; Groarke et al., 2021). Frequent engagement with music allows for consistent emotional management, providing an outlet for both positive and negative emotional expression. However, the results also suggest that while frequent music listening is beneficial, over-reliance on music for emotional regulation may lead to emotional dependency (Lim et al., 2019; Khalil & Murat, 2021). Balancing music engagement with other emotional coping strategies could offer a more sustainable approach to managing wellbeing.

Finally, the results suggest that music familiarity, mood-based selection, and listening frequency together provide a comprehensive framework for understanding how music influences emotional wellbeing in youth. These findings reinforce the role of music as an accessible tool for promoting emotional health, particularly in a developmental period where emotional regulation is critical. Educational institutions and mental health practitioners could incorporate these insights into interventions aimed at supporting emotional wellbeing through music-based strategies (Saarikallio, 2020; Juslin, 2019).

Table 1

Levels of Emotional Wellbeing, Music Familiarity, Mood-Based Music Selection, and Music Listening Frequency

| Level | n | % | Mean | SD |
|-----------------------------------|-----|-------|-------|------|
| <u>Emotional Wellbeing</u> | | | | |
| Low | 52 | 13.16 | 61.10 | 8.15 |
| Moderate | 100 | 25.32 | | |
| High | 243 | 61.52 | | |
| <u>Music Familiarity</u> | | | 4.25 | 0.85 |
| Low | 65 | 16.46 | | |
| Moderate | 84 | 21.27 | | |
| High | 246 | 62.41 | | |
| <u>Mood-Based Music Selection</u> | | | 4.80 | 0.90 |
| Low | 48 | 12.15 | | |
| Moderate | 93 | 23.54 | | |
| High | 254 | 64.25 | | |

| <u>Music Listening Frequency</u> | | 5.55 | 1.00 |
|----------------------------------|-----|-------|------|
| Low | 45 | 11.39 | |
| Moderate | 105 | 26.58 | |
| High | 245 | 62.03 | |

A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between music familiarity, mood-based music selection, music listening frequency, and emotional wellbeing among Malaysian youth (see Table 2). The results revealed that all independent variables were significantly positively correlated with emotional wellbeing, indicating that higher levels of music familiarity, mood-based music selection, and frequency of music listening are associated with higher emotional wellbeing.

The strongest correlation was observed between mood-based music selection and emotional wellbeing ($r = .70$, $p < .001$). This result is consistent with prior research showing that individuals who strategically select music to match or alter their mood experience higher emotional wellbeing (Saarikallio & Erkkilä, 2007; Ng et al., 2020). Music selected for mood regulation has been shown to provide emotional comfort, reduce anxiety, and improve overall mood, reinforcing the findings of this study (Schäfer et al., 2020; Krause et al., 2019).

Music familiarity also demonstrated a strong positive relationship with emotional wellbeing ($r = .68$, $p < .001$). This supports previous findings that familiar music, which evokes positive emotions and memories, significantly enhances emotional stability and comfort (Schubert et al., 2020; Juslin, 2019). Youth who regularly listen to familiar music report higher levels of emotional wellbeing, as familiarity provides them with a consistent emotional tool to cope with stress (Ng et al., 2020; Krause & North, 2021).

The frequency of music listening was significantly correlated with emotional wellbeing ($r = .65$, $p < .001$). This aligns with literature that highlights the role of frequent music listening in promoting emotional resilience and reducing stress (North & Hargreaves, 2021; Groarke et al., 2021). Youth who engage with music daily report better emotional health, as regular music listening provides a consistent outlet for emotional regulation (Rahman et al., 2020; Wong et al., 2020).

Overall, these correlations indicate that mood-based music selection is the strongest predictor of emotional wellbeing, followed closely by music familiarity and music listening frequency. These findings suggest that fostering intentional music selection and encouraging familiarity with music could significantly contribute to enhanced emotional wellbeing among Malaysian youth.

Table 2

Correlations Between Music Familiarity, Mood-Based Music Selection, Music Listening Frequency, and Emotional Wellbeing

| Variable | Emotional Wellbeing | |
|---------------------------|---------------------|----------|
| | <i>r</i> | <i>p</i> |
| Music Familiarity | .68** | .001 |
| Mood-Based Selection | .70** | .001 |
| Music Listening Frequency | .65** | .001 |

N = 395, ** p < .001

The multiple regression analysis (see Table 3) revealed that all three independent variables—music familiarity, mood-based music selection, and music listening frequency—significantly predicted emotional wellbeing among Malaysian youth; $F(3, 391) = 129.84$, $p < .001$. Among the predictors, mood-based music selection emerged as the strongest predictor of emotional wellbeing ($\beta = 0.48$, $p < .001$). This finding aligns with previous research suggesting that individuals who strategically select music to match or alter their mood report better emotional wellbeing, as mood-based music selection can provide emotional regulation and reduce stress (Saarikallio & Erkkilä, 2007; Schäfer et al., 2020).

Music familiarity also demonstrated a significant predictive effect on emotional wellbeing ($\beta = 0.44$, $p < .001$). This supports the idea that familiar music, which evokes positive memories and emotions, contributes to emotional stability and comfort (Schubert et al., 2020; Juslin, 2019). Youth who frequently listen to familiar music are likely to experience higher emotional wellbeing, as familiar music often serves as a reliable emotional support tool during challenging times (Krause & North, 2021).

Music listening frequency was another significant predictor ($\beta = 0.40$, $p < .001$), emphasizing the importance of regular music engagement in promoting emotional health. Regular listening provides individuals with an accessible way to manage their emotions, offering them an outlet for emotional expression and stress management (Ng et al., 2020; Lim et al., 2019).

These results indicate that mood-based music selection is the strongest predictor of emotional wellbeing, followed closely by music familiarity and music listening frequency. This highlights the multifaceted ways in which music can contribute to emotional health, suggesting that encouraging intentional music selection and regular listening could significantly enhance emotional wellbeing among Malaysian youth.

Table 3

Regression Analysis for Music Familiarity, Mood-Based Music Selection, and Music Listening Frequency on Emotional Wellbeing

| Variable | Emotional Wellbeing | | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|-------|---------------|------|
| | B | SE. B | Beta, β | p |
| Music Familiarity | .42 | 0.09 | 0.44 | .001 |
| Mood-Based Music Selection | .46 | 0.10 | 0.48 | .001 |
| Music Listening Frequency | .38 | 0.11 | 0.40 | .001 |
| R² | .682 | | | |
| Adjusted R² | .678 | | | |
| F | 129.84 | | | |

R² = 0.682, Adjusted R² = 0.678, F = 129.84 (p < .001)

Implications for Emotional Wellbeing: Policy and Practice

The findings from this study have important implications for understanding how music familiarity, mood-based music selection, and music listening frequency contribute to emotional wellbeing among youth. These results suggest that both policymakers and mental health practitioners should consider integrating music engagement strategies into wellbeing initiatives to support mental health, particularly among young people.

Mood-based music selection emerged as the strongest predictor of emotional wellbeing, underscoring the importance of choosing music that aligns with or alters one's mood. Counseling services, wellness centers, and mental health programs should encourage youth to utilize music as a tool for emotional regulation. This could include offering workshops or apps that guide individuals in selecting music based on mood or emotional needs. Mood-based music intervention programs could be simple yet effective ways of reducing stress and improving overall mental health (Saarikallio & Erkkilä, 2007; Schäfer et al., 2020).

Music familiarity also significantly influenced emotional wellbeing. Familiar music tends to evoke comfort and emotional security, which can help youth manage stress, anxiety, and emotional challenges (Schubert et al., 2020; Juslin, 2019). Policymakers should consider promoting music-based emotional wellbeing programs in educational and community settings that emphasize the role of familiar music in managing mental health. Schools, universities, and community centers can create playlists of familiar songs for relaxation, study breaks, or stress management sessions, helping young people use music as a personalized emotional tool (Krause & North, 2021).

The frequency of music listening also played a significant role in enhancing emotional wellbeing. Encouraging regular engagement with music, whether daily or on an as-needed basis, provides youth with a consistent method of managing their emotional states. Schools and universities could promote music as part of daily routines or mindfulness practices to foster emotional stability. Mental health practitioners can also suggest regular music listening as part of therapeutic interventions, emphasizing its effectiveness as a form of self-care (Ng et al., 2020; Lim et al., 2019).

Practical Applications for Mental Health Practitioners and Educators

The relationships uncovered in this study offer several practical applications for mental health practitioners, educators, and policymakers. First, educational institutions can integrate music-based activities into wellbeing programs. For instance, offering students access to music spaces where they can listen to familiar or mood-enhancing music could foster emotional regulation and resilience. Schools and universities might also organize music engagement workshops that educate students on how to use music intentionally for emotional wellbeing.

Mental health practitioners can incorporate music into therapeutic settings, especially in programs aimed at anxiety and depression management. By using mood-based music selection, practitioners can help clients discover music that helps alter their mood, providing an additional resource for managing emotional challenges. Incorporating music listening as a regular coping mechanism can improve therapeutic outcomes and provide youth with accessible self-regulation tools (Schäfer et al., 2020; Juslin, 2019).

Policymakers should also consider music-based interventions in the broader context of youth mental health strategies. By establishing national guidelines that encourage schools, universities, and community organizations to incorporate music programs, policymakers can promote emotional wellbeing on a larger scale. Additionally, increasing access to music therapy services in mental health programs may help address the growing emotional challenges faced by today's youth, providing a non-invasive yet impactful intervention (Krause et al., 2019; Saarikallio, 2020).

Limitations and Future Directions

While this study provides valuable insights into the role of music in emotional wellbeing, there are limitations that should be acknowledged. The cross-sectional design of this study limits the ability to establish causal relationships between the variables. Future research should employ longitudinal methods to track the long-term effects of music familiarity, mood-based music selection, and listening frequency on emotional wellbeing (Ng et al., 2020; Juslin, 2019). Additionally, while the current study relied on self-reported data, which may introduce bias, future research could employ more objective measures of emotional wellbeing and music engagement, such as physiological indicators of stress reduction or mood changes.

Moreover, the study's focus on Malaysian youth may limit the generalizability of the findings to other cultural or age groups. Future studies should explore how these factors influence emotional wellbeing in diverse cultural contexts or among different age groups, particularly as cultural preferences in music vary widely and may impact emotional responses to music (Krause & North, 2021; Rentfrow & Gosling, 2021).

Conclusion

The findings of this study emphasize the significant roles of music familiarity, mood-based music selection, and music listening frequency in shaping emotional wellbeing among Malaysian youth. Mood-based music selection emerged as the strongest predictor, suggesting that music can be an effective tool for emotional regulation and mood management. Music familiarity and regular listening frequency also contributed significantly, providing further evidence that music can serve as a consistent and reliable tool for emotional wellbeing.

These findings suggest that mental health practitioners, educators, and policymakers should prioritize music-based interventions and programs that promote regular and intentional music engagement. Future research should continue to explore these relationships in more diverse contexts to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how music can enhance emotional wellbeing across different populations.

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