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## The Effects of Sad Music on Mood

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# The Effects and Benefits of Music on Mood

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## Introduction

Studies analyzing motivations for listening to sad music typically report claims by listeners that an improved mood is amongst the primary reasons for listening to sad music (Saarikallio, 2008; Saarikallio & Erkkilä, 2007; Van den Tol & Edwards, 2011). The effects or benefits of listening to sad music may not produce the same positive outcome for individuals that are considered emotionally stable compared to those suffering from depression or unhealthy thinking patterns such as ruminators.

However, Papageorgiou and Wells (2001) found that despite the negative consequences of rumination, participants in their study believed that such behavior helped them to better understand past mistakes. This study will assess whether sad music has a negative impact on participant's mood after listening to a song they believe is sad.

## Method

This study utilized a sample of 50 students recruited from Dominican University of California and other universities ranging from grades freshmen through seniors. Eligibility for this study includes having access to the internet and knowledge of music that is considered sad or can generate negative emotions.

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## Measures

### Positive and Negative Affect Schedule--Modified PANAS

(Hepler & Albarracín 2013).

Positive and Negative emotions were measured on a 40-item, 5 point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5)

### Rumination--Reflection Questionnaire

(Trapnell & Campbell 1999)

Whether an individual was a ruminator or non-ruminator was measured on a 24-item, 5 point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5)

### Like Sad Music Scale

(Garrido, & Schubert 2013).

Enjoyment of listening to sad music was measured on a 11-item, 5 point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5)

## Hypotheses

- I hypothesize that sad music will have a more negative impact on ruminators compared to non-ruminators.
- I hypothesize that people who enjoy listening to sad music more experience more benefit.

## Results

- Non-hypothesized pre-post comparison that showed people felt less positive emotion after music.  
Positive: ( $t(47) = 5.13, p < .001$ ), Negative: ( $t(47) = 0.02, p = .987$ )
- The results proved that sad music did not have a more negative impact on ruminators compared to non-ruminators.  
Positive: ( $t(46) = -1.99, p = .052$ ) Negative: ( $t(46) = .92, p = .362$ )
- The second hypothesis was not correct because there was not a difference between people who did or didn't enjoy listening to sad music.  
Positive: ( $t(46) = 0.08, p = .937$ ), Negative: ( $t(46) = -.88, p = .386$ )

Figure 1: Means of Positive Terms Pre Music and Post Music

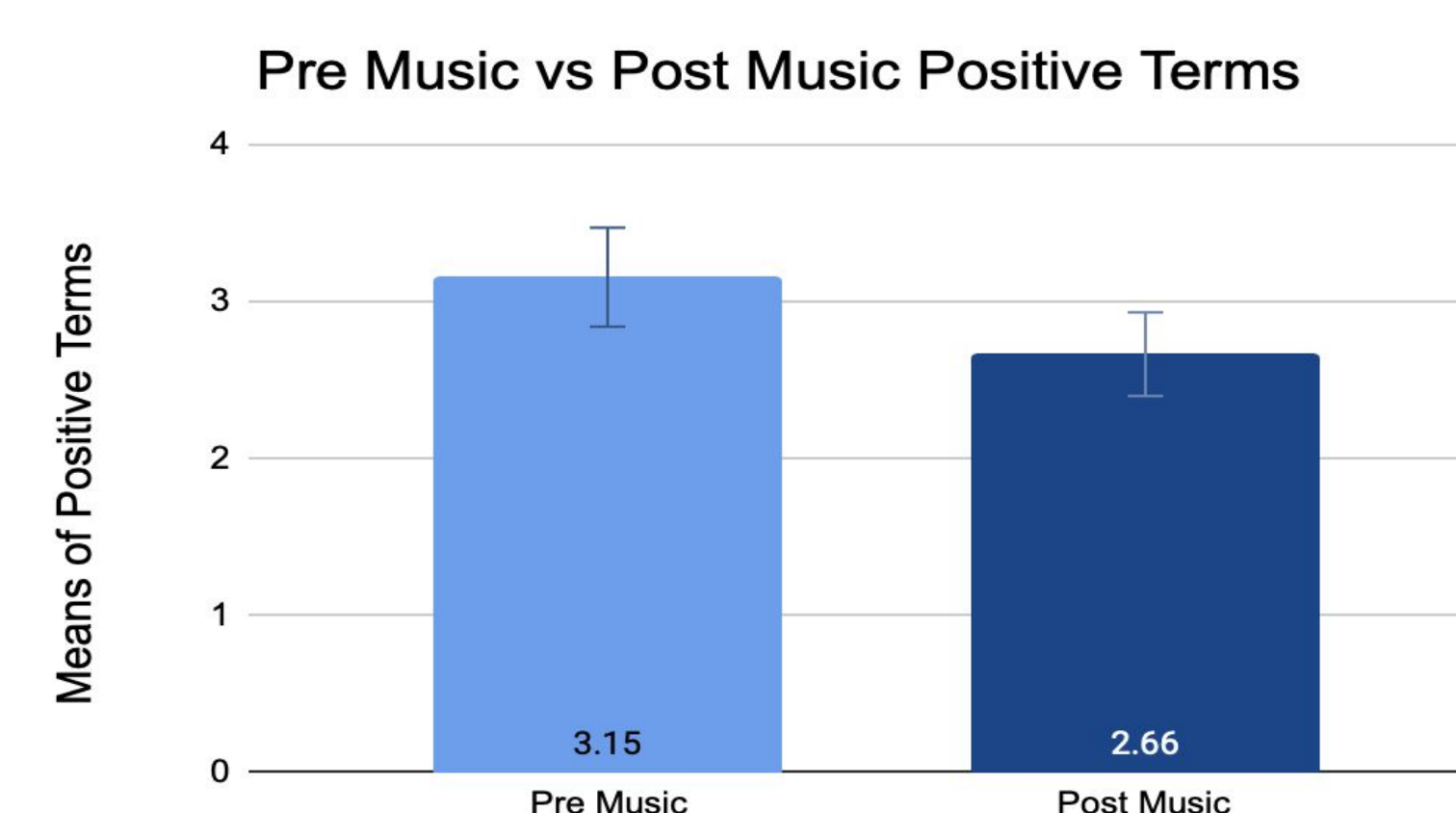
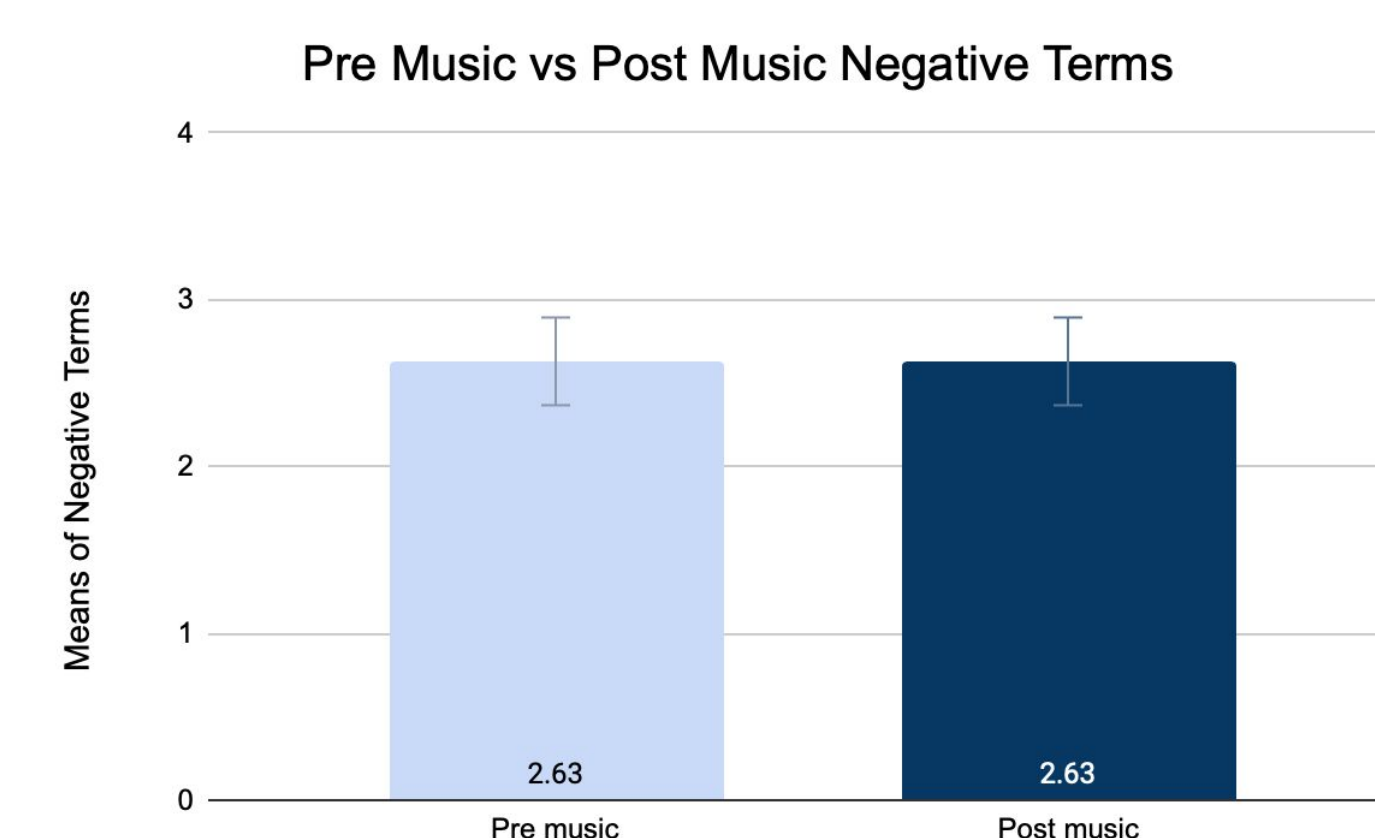
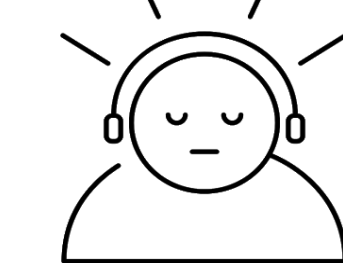


Figure 2: Means of Negative Terms Pre Music and Post Music



## Discussion

- As hypothesized, ruminators recorded feeling worse after listening to the song they selected compared to how they were feeling at the beginning.
- In this current study and closely related to Papageorgiou and Wells(2001) study it was seen that ruminators believe that they are improving their mood by listening to sad music but they are actually making it worse.
- The results did not support the second hypothesis meaning that there wasn't a difference between people who did and didn't enjoy listening to sad music in regards to perceived benefit.



## Limitations

- Some participants did not return to the survey after listening to the song which means their answers could not be used.
- Another limitation was the statement of them finding a song that they believe is sad could have affected the responses as well

## Future Directions

- Future studies can focus directly on the benefits of music on an individuals regardless of whether the music is sad or not.
- Future studies can focus on individuals suffering from mental illnesses such as depression and analyze whether sad or happy music is beneficial them.

