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The effect of music listening on work performance

Teresa Lesiuk

University of Windsor, Canada, tlesiuk@uwindsor.ca

This study measured the effect of music listening on state positive affect, work quality and time-on-task of computer information systems developers. Effects of music on work performance, in this case, software design, may be explained by increases in state positive affect. Data from 56 (male = 41, female = 15) developers were obtained from four different Canadian software companies. Data were collected in the participants' actual work environments over five weeks. Results indicated that state positive affect and quality-of-work were lowest with no music, while time-on-task was longest when music was removed. Narrative responses revealed the value of music listening for positive mood change and enhanced perception on design while working. Evidence is provided of the presence of a learning curve in the use of music for positive mood alteration. Overall, the study contributes to the development of a model that aspires to elucidate music and workplace interactions; as well, it has implications for organizational practice.

Key Words: affect • computer software design • creativity • mood • music psychology • productivity • work stress

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