

Effects of Autonomy on Worker Performance

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Abstract

Having autonomy can produce positive effects on an individual's well-being as well as overall job-satisfaction. Research has shown that background music influences listener attention and is associated with the listeners fondness of the music (Huang & Shih, 2011). This study investigates the effects that autonomy may also have on performance levels in the workplace. Specifically, the effects of listening to music of preference and the effects it has on attention, concentration, and enjoyment of task. In this study worker autonomy is operationally defined as preferred genre of music. Performance will be measured by participants score on a recall task that mimics a medical scenario where a healthcare worker would have to recall specific patient information. We hypothesize that participants autonomy preferred background music will have a positive effect on worker performance. If the predicted results are found, this research could be beneficial to companies that are considering implementing new policies to encourage autonomy and in turn produce greater success in the workplace.

Psychologically healthy workplaces are beneficial to organizational performance and employee well-being (Psychologically, 2019). Autonomy is an important part of psychological health and being in control of one's life is an important determinant of that psychological health (Warr, 2007). However, not all employers give their employees the autonomy they need in the workplace to be healthy, despite autonomy having a direct impact on individual workers and team performance (Leach, et al., 2011). The current proposed study will experimentally investigate the effects of autonomy in the workplace. Specifically, we aim to examine music choice in the workplace and its effect on work performance through a word recall task.

Background music can influence attention based on worker preference, with enjoyment increasing attention (Huang & Shih, 2011). Our study will investigate the effects that music choice has on *performance*, as opposed to worker *attention*. We hypothesize that the more autonomy one has, the higher the subsequent performance. In a repeated measures design, participants (i.e., college students) will choose their preferred music genre from a list of three (e.g., pop, R&B, country), do a recall task, and then repeat with the other two music genres/recall pairings. In order to generalize the results, the recall task will mimic a medical scenario where a healthcare worker would have to recall specific patient information (e.g., blood pressure, presenting symptoms). A manipulation check will be given to ensure participants did feel a sense of autonomy, and participants' attention and enjoyment will be assessed. Data analysis (e.g., ANOVA) will compare recall between all conditions. This kind of work performance has important applications for fields such as nursing and clerical work where memory performance for specific words, numbers, or phrases is a core part of the job. If the predicted results are found, businesses may want to implement policies that encourage autonomy in order to produce greater success in the workplace.

References

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