A psychological study of relations between sad mood and music listening

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People in sad mood sometimes listen to sad music although bright music is more likely to be effective to improve their mood than sad music. This study investigated whether this puzzling behavior was a result of active selection to manage the sad mood. 337 university students were asked to recall their emotional states when they had listened to music in sad mood and to fill out a questionnaire about their mood and behavior at that time. The results showed that many of them were in sad and painful, spiritless, or sad mood after listening to music, and other than listening to music, they cried, slept, tried to be alone, or thought about the events which had caused their sadness. This finding suggests that participants did not try to change sad mood actively and tried to keep their emotional states passively, or, otherwise, they simply could not regulate their mood. Therefore listening to music in sad mood does not appear to be active mood management strategy but to be passive behavior.