

An Exploratory Study on Frisson: An Examination of Physical Sensations and Emotional Reactions to Music



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Abstract:

This pilot study examines the frisson phenomenon. Frisson is “a sudden strong feeling, especially of excitement or fear” (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.), elicited by music listening.

Methods:

Replication of Craig’s (2005) exploratory study on music-induced chills (i.e., frisson).

Stages:

- Pre-selection of participants
- Musical experience
- 1. Pre-Baseline
- 2. Baseline (Gregorian Chant: Mass of Christmas Day - Communio Viderunt Omnes)
- 3. Familiar Piece (Participant’s Pre-Selected Musical Piece)
- 4. Unfamiliar Piece
- 5. Gregorian Chant: Mass of Christmas Day - Communio Viderunt Omnes
- Questionnaires and Diagrams

Results:

1. Frisson can be induced in a lab setting.
 - 11 out of 11 entries experienced frisson.
2. Individual differences in physiological reaction
 - Notable sensations were felt in places like the arms, legs, neck, stomach, shoulders, face, hands, feet, hips, and chest.
3. Patterns in emotional and cognitive reactions
 - Examples of emotional reactions include sad, serene, interest, joy, ecstatic, inspired, and many others.
 - Examples of cognitive reactions include thinking, song, felt, listen, heard, music, time, and others.

Conclusions:

- It is possible to recreate frisson in the lab setting.
- People experience frisson differently physiologically, emotionally, and cognitively.
- There may be patterns in these findings, however, a larger scale study with better instruments and methodology is needed.
 - Real-time measurement of frisson.
 - Minimal obstruction

Future Research:

- Frisson Measurement
- Mediating and moderating factors (e.g., music preference, personality) on frisson.
- Examination of music and nervous system, brain functioning, and self.
- Examination of music, frisson, and ADHD.