

Chapter 15

More Than Background Sound: Investigating Impact of Work–Related Podcasts on Employee Wellbeing

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ABSTRACT

As an intriguing concept, podcasts have been increasingly popular and one of the fastest-growing media in recent decades. While podcast listening has attracted the growing attention of scholars from a variety of disciplines, no studies to date have explored podcast listening in management literature. In this context, the current study aims to investigate the motivations and consequences of work-related podcast listening in terms of employee wellbeing. Data were collected from 12 academicians from a variety of fields via a semi-structured interview, and thematic analysis was performed using MAXQDA software. The current study demonstrated that (1) academicians have different podcast listening habits in terms of gender, generation, and position; (2) academicians have motives for work-related podcast listening, including information-related motivation, creativity-related motivation, and relaxation-related motivation; and (3) work-related podcast listening is related to different aspects of employee wellbeing, such as hedonic wellbeing, social wellbeing, and eudaimonic wellbeing.

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INTRODUCTION

In the recent decade, employees' physical and mental wellbeing has been one of the primary concerns of organizations from many countries (Schaufeli, 2017). A New Gallup survey revealed that globally, 44% of employees feel stress, and its resultants, 51% of employees are watching for or actively seeking new jobs, and 59% of employees are quiet quitting (not engaged with their jobs and organizations) (Gallup, 2023). Besides, long working hours, work overload, work pressures and lack of job resources harm employee wellbeing (Hamilton Skurak et al., 2018). Given the importance of enhancing and elevating the general health and wellbeing of the workforce for work performance, scholars and practitioners have given ample attention to comprehension of factors and mechanisms contributing to wellbeing in the workplace.

More specifically, organizations develop wellness programs for the promotion of physical, social and emotional aspects of wellbeing within the workplace through activities such as fitness centers for exercises and health education programs (Carne-thon et al., 2009), coaching and mentoring (Minter & Thomas, 2000), mindfulness training, stress reduction program, and yoga centers (Kunte, 2016).

In addition to organizational activities for enhancing their wellbeing, employees also use and benefit from self-managed practices to protect their mental health and wellbeing. Previous studies have investigated a variety of practices, such as meditation (Shonin et al., 2014; Barua et al., 2019), choir singing (Giæver, 2019), and participation in arts activities (Jensen & Bonde, 2018).

Music listening is also one of the employees' self-managed practices for maintaining their wellbeing. Nevertheless, whereas past studies have investigated the concept of music at the individual level, few studies have discussed music as an essential factor in the workplace (Landay & Harms, 2019). Also, previous studies have investigated the impact of employees' music listening habits on creative performance (Zhu et al., 2022), cognitive performance (Taheri et al., 2022), work-related stress (Raglio et al., 2020), attention (Huang & Shih, 2011), positive and negative affectivity (Lesiuk, 2005) in management literature. Indeed, music is a simple, inexpensive, unconventional approach to enhancing productivity (Keeler & Cortina, 2018). However, empirical and theoretical research investigating the role of employees' music listening habits on their wellbeing remains nascent in the literature. In consequence, boundary conditions and mechanisms for the impact of music on employee health and behavior require a comprehensive theoretical background for leveraging the management literature (Keeler & Cortina, 2018).

On the other hand, in line with music listening, podcast listening has growing popularity in recent years. According to the Wearesocial report, 21.2% of internet users listened to podcasts in terms of listening to online audio content in 2023, which

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