

# Music Preference and Emotion Regulation in Young Adults

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**Abstract:- Music is a ubiquitous part of everyday life and greatly influences individuals in their day-to-day activities. The present paper studies the relationship between Music Preference and Emotion Regulation. A sample of 114, aged between 18-25 years participated in the study. Short Test Of Music Preferences (STOMP) by Rentfrow, P. J., & Gosling, S. D. (2003) and Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) by Gross, J.J., & John, O.P. (2003) were used to measure the variables. Pearson's correlation coefficient and independent sample t-test were used for statistical analysis of data. The results found that music preference dimensions were positively correlated to emotion regulation dimensions and vice versa except Intense & Rebellious music, as it was not found to be correlated with Expressive Suppression. Implications are discussed.**

**Keywords:- Music Preference, Emotion Regulation, Young adults.**

## I. INTRODUCTION

Music is a significant aspect of human culture that has the power to evoke various emotions and feelings. The different characteristics of music, such as its melody, rhythm, and lyrics, can impact one's mood in different ways. For instance, a fast-paced and upbeat song can raise someone's mood and get them excited, while a slower and more calming tune can help them relax and feel peaceful (*The Importance of Music in Our Society*, n.d.). Furthermore, music uniquely expresses a wide range of emotions, from happiness and joy to sadness and anger. This expressive quality of music makes it a powerful tool for conveying emotions and connecting with others (The Editors, 2022). Listening to music can give peace and joy to the mind, inspire people to do something better in life, and even provide a sense of catharsis for those going through difficult times. In summary, music is an essential part of human culture that can have a significant impact on our emotions and well-being. Whether we listen to music for pleasure or as a means of self-expression, its ability to evoke different feelings and moods makes it an important aspect of our lives.

Also, research suggests that emotions play a central role in our everyday lives. The three most central emotions experienced by people were joy, satisfaction, and sadness. Joy was found to be the most central emotion, followed by satisfaction, while the slightest central emotion was contempt (Trampe et al., 2015). In a more recent study conducted by Wilms (2020), found that joy was also the most frequent emotion experienced by people, followed by love and anxiety. The study further explored how often and

consistently predictors for emotion regulation choice occur in daily life. These findings indicate that positive emotions are more commonly experienced than negative emotions, and that joy is a particularly central and frequent emotion in everyday life. Understanding the role of emotions in daily life can help individuals better regulate their emotions and improve their overall well-being.

Psychologists, neuroscientists, and musicologists have studied the relationship between music and emotions. Music can evoke a wide range of emotions: Studies have shown that music can evoke emotions such as joy, sadness, nostalgia, awe, and anger, among others (Schaefer, 2017). The emotional response to music is subjective: Different people can have different emotional reactions to the same piece of music, and the same person can have different emotional responses to a piece of music at different times. The emotional response to music is complex: The emotional response to music is not just a simple one-to-one mapping of music features to emotions (Mori & Iwanaga, 2017). Instead, it is a complex interplay between the musical features, the listener's characteristics, and the context in which the music is heard. Certain musical features can evoke specific emotions: Certain musical elements such as tempo, mode, and dynamics are associated with specific emotions. For example, fast tempo and high volume are often associated with excitement, while slow tempo and low volume are often associated with sadness (Liu et al., 2018). The brain responds to music emotionally: Neuroimaging studies have shown that listening to music activates the same brain regions involved in processing emotions, such as the amygdala and the prefrontal cortex (Schaefer, 2017). Music is an effective tool for regulating emotions. For example, listening to music can help reduce anxiety and improve mood. Overall, the research on music and emotions suggests that music is a powerful tool for affecting our emotional states and that the emotional response to music is a complex interplay between musical features, individual characteristics, and context.

A research paper published by Cook et al. (2019) explored how music preferences were related to students' regulation of emotions. The researchers discovered that pop, rap/hip-hop, soul/funk, and electronic/dance music had good correlations with the usage of music to generate emotional arousal. Preferences for soul and funk music were also positively correlated with using music to enhance good emotion and reduce negative emotion. More generally, dynamic and rhythmic music was favorably related to all tested musical emotion regulation techniques, indicating this aspect of music is particularly helpful in emotion modulation. These findings demonstrate the potential of

music as a method of emotion control. Singh and Goyal (2018) also studied differences in the musical preferences and the accompanying emotional states and the orientation toward life in a sample of 100 female college students from the age group of 17-22 years. It was found that positive emotional experiences were reported by all of the participants who favored upbeat and energetic music, whereas negative emotional experiences were discovered in the subjects who liked reflective and intense music. The research found that the individuals' emotional states and outlooks on life varied, with their preferences for upbeat or reflective music, respectively.

In the light of recent times, Martín et al., (2021) studied 1377 Spaniards who were confined to their homes during COVID-19 from March 14 to June 20th, 2020. According to their findings, music has been a crucial all-around support for coping with isolation and a potent tool for emotional self-regulation and loneliness treatment. Although there has been a 56% increase in the daily usage of music for emotional self-regulation, older people have higher consumption rates, especially when alone, and a clearer understanding of this kind of artistic expression. Yet, those who were between the ages of 18 and 40 stood out for using music as a tool to combat loneliness. These findings support the idea that music has emerged as one of the most popular art forms for overcoming isolation, connecting with others, or enduring undesirable psychological and emotional states including anxiety, anguish, and sadness, among others.

#### D. Tools and Techniques

Variable	Tool used	Authors	Dimensions	Reliability (□)
Music Preference	Short Test Of Music Preferences (STOMP)	Rentfrow, P. J., & Gosling, S. D. (2003).	Reflective & Complex	0.81
			Intense & Rebellious	0.74
			Upbeat & Conventional	0.70
			Energetic & Rhythmic	0.71
Emotion Regulation	Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ)	Gross, J.J., & John, O.P. (2003)	Cognitive Reappraisal	0.73
			Expressive Suppression	0.82

#### E. Statistical analysis

Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the findings. The data was analysed using IBM SPSS 2.0 software. Mean and standard deviation were employed in descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlation approach was used in inferential statistics to evaluate the hypothesis.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables

Variable	n	M	SD
Reflective & Complex	114	16.7	5.4
Intense & Rebellious	114	12.3	4.4
Upbeat & Conventional	114	18.3	5.1
Energetic & Rhythmic	114	13.4	4.3
Cognitive Reappraisal	114	30.1	8.1
Expressive Suppression	114	18.6	5.6

A lot of studies have highlighted the effects of music preference on personality, stress and anxiety reduction, emotional intelligence etc. but studies assessing effects of music preference on how individuals regulate emotions are limited. This study aims to see if there is a correlation between Music Preference and Emotion Regulation among college students in India. The findings of this study may contribute to the importance of understanding emotion regulation styles of individuals depending on the type of music they listen to often.

## II. METHODOLOGY

### A. Objectives

- To study the relationship between Music Preference and Emotion regulation in Young adults

### B. Hypothesis

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is a no significant relationship between Music Preference and Emotion Regulation in Young Adults

### C. Sample

The study used a descriptive survey method of research to understand the relationship between Music Preference and Emotion Regulation. A sample of 114 participants was approached. There were 57 undergraduate and 57 postgraduate students who participated. Their age range was from 18 to 25. Individuals who listen to music at least 1 hour a day were included. The data was collected using convenient sampling technique.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results are discussed in accordance with above hypothesis which states that:

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is a no significant relationship between Music Preference and Emotion Regulation in Young Adults

A sample of 114 participated in this study that belonged to the age group of 18-23. The above table discusses the Mean and Standard Deviation of the data collected. The mean score for Reflective & Complex type of music is 16.7 with a standard deviation of 5.4. The mean score of Intense & Rebellious type of music is 12.3 with a standard deviation of 4.4. The mean score of Upbeat & Conventional type of music is 18.3 with a standard deviation of 5.1 and the mean score for Energetic & Rhythmic type of music is 13.4 with a standard deviation of 4.3. The scores can be interpreted as that Young Adults aged 18-23 might be preferring to listen to more of Upbeat & Conventional music that includes the genres like Country, Religious, Pop and Soundtracks.

Similar results were also observed in an interrogative study done on young adults in countries Kazakhstan, Poland, Ukraine and Russia showed that all 4 countries' youth preferred pop music the most and the possible reasons

could be social-class differentiation, the rave culture of the modern society or the pop idols associated with the music genres. It was believed to be helping the young individuals feel belonged in their respective social communities (Teslenko, 2016).

The mean score for Cognitive Appraisal is 30.1 with a standard deviation of 8.1 and the mean score for Expressive Suppression is 18.6 with a standard deviation of 5.6. These scores can be interpreted as those Young adults aged 18-23 might be using Cognitive Reappraisal as a strategy to regulate emotions more extensively compared to the Expressive Suppression strategy. Cognitive appraisal refers to changing one's interpretation of a situation to decrease negative emotions felt in that situation. In this study, the sampled population seems to be using Cognitive Reappraisal as an effective tool to regulate their emotions in daily situations.

Table 2: Showing Correlations between Music Preference & Emotion Regulation Sub-scales among Young Adults

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 Reflective& Complex	-					
2 Intense& Rebellious	0.52**	-				
3 Upbeat& Conventional	0.74**	0.63**	-			
4 Energetic& Rhythmic	0.57**	0.61**	0.72**	-		
5 Cognitive Reappraisal	0.36**	0.26**	0.42**	0.34**	-	
6 Expressive Suppression	0.21*	0.16	0.25**	0.21**	0.32**	-

\* $p > 0.05$  \*\* $p > 0.01$

To see the relationship between Music Preference and Emotion Regulation, Pearson's correlation co-efficient was used. As we can see in Table 1, the results indicate that Cognitive Reappraisal has a strong significant positive correlation with Reflective & Complex ( $r = .36$  with a corresponding  $p$  value of 0.00) Intense & Rebellious ( $r = .26$  with a corresponding  $p$  value of 0.00), Upbeat & Conventional ( $r = .42$  with a corresponding  $p$  value of 0.01), Energetic & Rhythmic ( $r = .34$  with a corresponding  $p$  value of 0.00) music dimensions. This means, individual with higher scores on Cognitive Reappraisal are seen to prefer wide range of genres from all four music dimensions. Similarly, individuals having a higher preference to various genres of music in these four dimensions might have a tendency to cognitively reinterpret emotional situations in a more positive light. The results also indicate that Expressive Suppression has a moderate significant positive correlation with Reflective & Complex ( $r = .21$  with a corresponding  $p$  value of 0.02) and Energetic & Rhythmic ( $r = .21$  with a corresponding  $p$  value of 0.02) but has a strong positive correlation with Upbeat & Conventional ( $r = .25$  with a corresponding  $p$  value of 0.00) music dimensions. Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected.

The results are consistent with literature available. A study done by Chin and Rickard (2012) found that individuals who like listening to music are more likely to use cognitive reappraisal to control their emotions. In another study done by Gross & John (2003) listening to sad music has lowered the levels of negative affect and increased positive emotions. In contrary, some studies indicated that when compared to music or emotion regulation alone, the combination of music and cognitive reappraisal did not significantly improve the effect of emotion control (Baltazar et al., 2019). Also, people who used expressive suppression as a general method of regulating their emotions were less likely to listen to music and reported feeling less well-being in relation to music than people who did not use expressive suppression (Saarikallio & Erkkilä, 2007).

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The Following conclusions are drawn on the basis of hypothesis tested and objectives formed.

- There is a significant relationship between Music Preference and Emotion Regulation.
- Reflective & Complex, Intense & Rebellious, Upbeat & Conventional, Energetic & Rhythmic are all positively correlated with subscale Cognitive Reappraisal
- Reflective & Complex, Upbeat & Conventional, Energetic & Rhythmic are all positively correlated with subscale Expressive Suppression.

#### IMPLICATIONS

The present study has important implications for studying how individuals use music as a way to regulate their emotions. Especially young adults aged 18-23 were found to prefer certain genres of music that help them control or express their emotions in day-to-day activities. The findings of this study show that indeed genres like jazz, classical, blues, hip-hop, rock etc. are helping individuals to change their perspective towards a situation and see it in a positive light. But it also reveals that these individuals might also be using music as a distraction to suppress their expression of emotions. This needs to be given great importance and further research studies can be encouraged in this matter. This study can hopefully be a useful tool to understand how musical genres have an effect on emotion regulation among young adults and steps to be taken to help them regulate emotions better. It is believed that this study can be useful in developing music therapy interventions and techniques.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

#### CONFLICT OF INTERESTS:

The author declared no conflict of interests.

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