

EXPLORING THE INTERPLAY OF MUSIC PREFERENCES, PERSONALITY TRAITS AND COPING STRATEGIES AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Abstract

When utilized as a means of expressing unsaid sensations and emotions that can occasionally be stifled and perplexing to a person, music has been referred to as the global language of emotions. The current study used a quantitative research methodology to explore the relationship between music preference, personality, and coping. 126 students participated in this study. Three questionnaires were used to gather information from the respondents: the Short Test for Music Preference (STOMP), which measures musical preference; the Mini-IPIP, which measures personality traits; and the Coping Inventory, which measures coping mechanisms. Correlation analysis indicated that there is a negative correlation between Reflective & Complex Music Genre and Disengaged coping. There is a positive correlation between reflective and complex music genres and the conscientiousness personality trait. There is a positive correlation between reflective and complex music genres and intellect and imagination personality traits. The intense and rebellious music genre has a positive correlation with intelligence and imagination personality traits. There is a positive correlation between engagement, coping, and the agreeableness personality trait. There is a negative correlation between disengagement coping and the conscientiousness trait. There is a negative correlation between disengagement coping and intelligence and imagination.

Keywords: Music Genre, Personality Traits, University Students, Coping, Music Preferences

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I. INTRODUCTION

Music has been at times pointed out as the universal language of emotions, where it is used as a way one expresses unspoken emotions and feelings, which happens to be at times strangled and confusing to an individual. The majority of individuals in this generation have access to music in their pockets, giving them flexibility over the time or period of usage, the sort of music they choose to listen to, and other factors based on their convenience. Music genre association has been demonstrated to be expressive and reflective in nature, and it has aided people in expressing their own emotions, feelings, etc. in their own words. Numerous studies have been carried out in an effort to determine how various people's musical preferences relate to how those choices affect consumers' lives both generally and specifically. Since each community has its own form of culture, which undoubtedly includes the wide variety of musical instruments, which in a way complements and adds value and norms to their own culture and functions as one of their identities in such diversity, North East India is also regarded as one of the most culturally diverse hubs. Every generation gradually adapts to the new eclectic music genres that are available in the context and era of globalization, which results in variations between the old and new generations in terms of how each works and adjusts to the dynamics of society. The current study explored the music genre preferences of various personalities and how those preferences can aid those personalities in coping with the stress of daily life. The study focuses on the relationship between musical preferences, personality, and coping among university students. These students come from the North Eastern region of India and the Mainland, where their cultural, religious, and family backgrounds can be seen as influences. These influences combine with their own choices and preferences for media consumption and other cultural activities to create a new persona that describes or represents them in a new way.

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

- 1. Music:** Sound that is arranged in time serves as the medium for music, an art form and cultural activity. Common aspects of music include pitch, rhythm, dynamics, and auditory characteristics like timbre and texture. Some of these characteristics may be emphasized, diminished, or omitted in various musical styles or genres. Music is performed using a wide variety of instruments and vocal styles, from singing to rapping; there are compositions that are entirely instrumental, entirely vocal, or that blend singing and instruments.
- 2. Music genre:** It is a conventional category that designates some pieces of music as belonging to a set of conventions or a shared tradition. A powerful human characteristic that can be as pleasurable as drugs is a broad love of music.
- 3. Personality:** An individual's distinctive character is made up of a variety of traits or qualities. The Personality Project's researchers define personality as "the coherent pattern of affect, cognition, and desires (goals) as they lead to behaviour." It is described by the American Psychological Association (APA) as individual differences in defining patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting.
- 4. Coping:** Susan Folkman and Richard Lazarus described coping as "constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands

that are appraised as taxing” (Cummings, et al, 1991, p. 92). Generally speaking, coping is a taught or natural technique of reacting to a particular problem, changing environment, or circumstance. Coping may be adaptive or maladaptive. Adaptive coping reduces the distress brought on by stressful circumstances and helps the person deal with them efficiently. Maladaptive coping can cause unwanted suffering for the person and those connected to them or the stressful event. Problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping were fundamentally different from one another, according to Lazarus, Folkman, and their colleagues in 1984. Taking action to eliminate or avoid the stressors or to lessen their physical touch may be part of problem-focused coping. The goal of emotion-focused coping is to avoid, minimize, or lessen this distress.

III. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Although awareness, advancements, expansion, and growth of the mental health sector have been observed over the past several years, Northeast India's primary region is remote, and its accessibility to mental health services is minimal. ‘Why Mental Health Care in India Needs to Go Mainstream Now’, an article published by The MINDS Foundation on June 6, 2017, discussed the need for mental healthcare services to be incorporated into India's primary health care systems in order to reduce the burden of mental illness in India. According to the statistics they provided, there are more people living with mental diseases in India than the total population in South Africa. Currently, people with mental illnesses make up nearly 6.5% of the population of the nation; it is predicted that by 2020, this percentage will soar to a startling 20%. One in every 22 people suffers from depression; suicide rates among people between the ages of 15 and 29 are alarmingly rising; and more than 60 million people have a common or severe mental health disorder. The present study focuses on the music genre preference of individuals, their personality traits and coping strategies, and the relationship between these variables. The type of music has been found to have an impact on coping mechanisms, identity, and way of life. Stress is now a common occurrence. Despite having a variety of music genres to pick from, a person chooses one that best captures their emotional state. In fact, a certain music genre really enables the person to express their feelings and manage stress. Young people are significantly affected by new musical genres and the culture they bring. The objective of this study is to comprehend how the factors under investigation are related to one another. The findings of this study may contribute to our understanding of how to manage stress in daily life through the use of music.

IV. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Prashant, Ahsan, and Bochare (2020) investigated the relationship between music preferences and personality among 100 college going students. The instruments utilized were the Big Five Inventory (1984) and Short Test of Music preferences- Revised (2003). This study reported that there is a significant positive correlation between music preference and personality traits among college students. Nelson, et al. (2016) conducted experimental research on the utilization of music-assisted rehabilitation with teenagers undergoing spinal fusion. The effectiveness of the music-assisted relaxation technique was assessed by the parents. Open-ended questions were employed in a parent survey created for this study to get parents’ opinions. The questionnaire asked the following questions: 1) Did your youngster feel more relaxed after the music therapy session? 2) Did your child's music therapy help them cope with their pain? 3) How would you characterize the comfort level of your child

following the music therapy session? After providing music therapy to all of the participants, it was seen that both the participants' pain and anxiety had greatly decreased. 12 out of 14 parents said the child was more relaxed, and 11 out of 14 parents reported that the therapy reduced their children's pain. According to Ter Bogt et al. (2016), the majority of participants use music as a form of comfort, with the lyrics and music itself being chosen over sentiments of unity or togetherness. This study demonstrated that listening to music for comfort is a common activity. Adolescents and young adults may be more equipped to deal with daily stress and disappointment while being comforted by music, contributing to sound psychological development. Australian teenagers' self-reported mood management and musical tastes were compared by McFerrana et al (2015). The information was gathered in 2007 from 111 teenagers attending an inner-metropolitan school in Melbourne, Australia. The outcome showed that certain genres were connected to subjective mood worsening or improvement. According to the study, young people who are upset are more inclined to listen to metal music and purposefully look for musical lyrics with emotions of anger. The findings also showed that when young individuals are depressed or under stress, listening to music is less effective at regulating moods. Treacy (2013) investigated the effect of music preference on three psychological variables; personality traits, coping skills & perceived scholastic competence. The study found no evidence of a substantial beneficial relationship between music choices and personality characteristics, coping mechanisms, or perceived academic aptitude. The findings did indicate that learning to play an instrument makes you enjoy more complex music. Langmeyer, et.al (2012) studied the relationship between music preferences and personality among 422 young Germans, between the age of 21-26. The result indicated that participants preferring reflective and complex music and intense and rebellious music had high open to experience traits and they disliked upbeat and conventional music types. Personality traits extraverts preferred upbeat and conventional and energetic and rhythmic types of music.

A meta-analytical study by Miranda et al. (2010) focused on the variations in internalizing psychopathology. The authors have given a conceptual framework that argues that everyday music listening may have influences on internalizing psychopathology because of certain factors associated with it. They stated that music can have psychotherapeutic effects, and it usually evokes positive emotions (e.g., happiness and elation) and provides developmental resources. Nater et al. (2005) conducted a study among 53 healthy participants with a mean age of 26.5, out of which 26 were males and 27 were females. Heart rate, electrodermal activity, skin temperature, and pulse volume amplitude were checked during the course of the study. The result of this study indicated significant differences when the sample was exposed to a fast and aggressive stimulus versus a slow and relaxing stimulus. The result indicated that sensation seeking was significantly correlated with psychological arousal and activation induced by the stimuli. Rentfrow and Gosling (2003) conducted a series of six studies that investigated individual differences in music preferences. The participants were taken from the University of Texas, and the mean age of the participants was 18.9 years. The result of study 1 indicated that music is at least as important as most other leisure activities. Studies 2 and 4 showed that there is a clear, robust, and meaningful structure underlying music preferences. Study 5 gave valuable information about the music attributes that differentiate the music-preferences dimension by their levels of complexity, emotional valence, and energy level. The result of Study 6 gave more information on variables that link individuals to their music of choice. Schwartz and Fouts (2003) reported in their study that adolescents preferring heavy music were more likely to be independents or

anti-conformists who demonstrated lower self-esteem and higher self-doubt. The teenagers who preferred light music were more likely to be concerned with doing upright things and keeping their emotions in control. They were likely to have two developmental concerns: their sexuality and relationships with their peers. When it comes to sexuality, individuals frequently struggle to reconcile their early sexual desires with adult sexual attitudes and the competing social norms that surround sexual expression. Teenagers who preferred a wide variety of musical styles demonstrated fewer difficulties navigating puberty. In terms of self-concept, coping with authority, worrying about their sexuality, or peer relationships, they did not demonstrate any substantial problems, which suggested that they were adaptably using music in accordance with mood to reflect on and validate change.

According to North et al. (2000), music is significant to teenagers because it enables them to express themselves to others and meet their emotional needs. Scheel and Westefeld (1999), in their study, focused on understanding the relationship between preference for heavy metal music and vulnerability to suicide. The results indicated a significant negative correlation only with heavy metals. Rawlings and Ciancarelli (1997) reported that open individuals like a wide range of music types, and the extraverts had high scores on the popular music factor. Additionally, it was discovered that women prefer popular music genres to men. Arnett (1990) compared adolescents who liked heavy metal music with those who did not. The main focus was on reckless behaviour. The findings showed that boys who enjoyed heavy metal music reported engaging in a variety of risky behaviours at higher rates, including driving, sex, and drug use. Additionally, their satisfaction with their familial bond was lower. Girls who loved heavy metal music had low self-esteem and were more reckless in areas like stealing, sexual behaviour, vandalism, and drug usage. In terms of sexuality and dating, both genders were more confident, and they were also higher in their need for sensation seeking.

V. OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

1. To study the different music genre preferences of a person with different personality traits.
2. To study the relation of music preference and different personality traits.
3. To study the correlation between music preferences, personality traits and coping strategies.
4. To study the relationship between the coping strategies and its association with different personality traits preferring specific music genre.

VI. HYPOTHESIS

1. There is no relation between Music Genre Preference and Personality traits.
2. There is no relation between Music Genre Preference and Coping.
3. There is no relation between personality trait and Coping.

VII. METHODOLOGY

1. **Research Design:** The Researcher followed the quantitative scaling measures to collect the data for the current study. Quantitative Research is used to quantify the problem by way of generating numerical data or data that can be transformed into usable statistics.

2. **Sample:** Using Simple random sampling technique 126 Students were selected from Assam Don Bosco University, Guwahati for the present study. The age group will be ranging from (18-25 years). There were 75 male (59.52%) and 51 female (40.48%) participants. This study was carried out between May 2019 to December 2019.
3. **Tools used:** Three instruments were employed for this study. They are: 1) STOMP scale by Rentfrow & Gosling for assessing Music Preference. 2) Mini- IPIP (International Personality Item Pool) by Goldberg (1999) was used for assessing the big five dimensions. 3) Coping Strategy Inventory by David L. Tobin to measure coping thoughts and behaviours in response to a specific stressor.
4. **Statistical Method:** Pearson product moment correlation was employed to find out the correlation between the variables.

VIII. INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA

1. Demography Study Participants

Age	Mean	S.D	Min	Max
(18years-25years)	21.75	1.85	18	25

The above table shows the mean 21.75; S.D 1.85; Minimum 18 and Maximum 25 in the age group taken from study which ranged from 18-25 years. The mean age of the sample was 21.75 years.

2. Descriptive Statistics:

Table 2: Shows the Mean, Standard Deviation, Skewness, Kurtosis of all the variables under study

Variables	N = 126	Mean	S. D	Skewness	Kurtosis
R&C		4.45	.918	-.438	.087
I&R		4.34	1.27	.142	-.427
U&C		5.21	.835	-.669	.420
E&R		4.78	1.27	-.609	.140
Engagement		81.01	16.47	-.076	.253
Disengagement		76.25	19.94	.084	.373
Extraversion		10.93	2.82	.029	-.475
Agreeableness		14.16	2.58	-.265	.130
Conscientiousness		12.62	2.96	.268	-.533
Neuroticism		12.00	2.65	.168	.110
Imagination		13.80	2.67	.487	-.238

Note: R&C: Reflective & Complex, I&R: Intensive & Rebellious, U&C: Upbeat & Conventional, E&R: Energetic & Rhythmic. Ext: Extraversion

Table 3: Shows the mean, Standard Deviation, Skewness, Std of Skewness, Kurtosis & Std Error of Kurtosis of Music Genre Preference

Variables	Mean	S.D	Skewness	Std of Skewness	Kurtosis	Std of Kurtosis
R&C	4.45	.918	-.438	.216	.087	.428
I&C	4.34	1.273	.142	.216	-.427	.428
U&C	5.21	.835	-.669	.216	.420	.428
E&R	4.78	1.271	-.609	.216	.140	.428

Note: R&C: Reflective & Complex, I&R: Intensive & Rebellious, U&C: Upbeat & Conventional, E&R: Energetic & Rhythmic. Ext: Extraversion

The above Table shows the mean, standard of, mean, standard deviation (S.D), skewness, standard error of skewness, kurtosis & standard error of kurtosis of all the four division of Music genre.

3. Correlations

Table 4: Correlation between Music Preference and Coping.

Music	Engagement	Sig.(2tailed)	Disengagement	Sig.(2-tailed)
R&C	.012	.893	-.306*	.001
I&R	.114	.205	-.035	.693
U&C	.103	.235	.086	.341
E&R	.089	.321	.015	.870

Note: R&C: Reflective & Complex, I&R: Intensive & Rebellious, U&C: Upbeat & Conventional, E&R: Energetic & Rhythmic. Ext: Extraversion

There is a negative correlation between Reflective & Complex Music Genre and Disengaged coping $r = -.306$ at $p = .001$ which is significant at 0.05 level ($p < 0.05$) thus we may infer that people who prefer this Reflective and complex music from the sample may have the tendency not to use Disengagement coping and vice versa. Intense and Rebellious, Upbeat & Conventional, Energetic & Rhythmic Music styles was statistically not significant with any of the both Engagement and Dis-Engagement type Coping Strategy.

Table 5: Correlation between Music Preference and Personality Traits

Variables	Ext	Sig. (2-tailed)	Agree	Sig. (2 tailed)	Cons	Sig. (2-tailed)	Neuro	Sig. (2-tailed)	Image	Sig. (2-tailed)
R & C	-.027	.767	.035	.700	.243*	.006	.007	.934	.320*	.000
I & R	-.150	.093	-.128	.152	.031	.733	.007	.394	.293*	.01
U & C	.023	.794	.077	.937	.07	.937	.146	.102	-.118	.190
E & R	-.004	.964	-.001	.987	.071	.430	-.052	.560	.024	.791

Note: R&C: Reflective & Complex, I&R: Intensive & Rebellious, U&C: Upbeat & Conventional, E&R: Energetic & Rhythmic. Ext: Extraversion, Agree: Agreeableness, Cons: Conscientiousness, Neuro: Neuroticism, Image: Imagine/Intellect.

There is a significant correlation between reflective and complex music genre and conscientiousness personality trait $r=.243$ at $p=.006$ which is significant at 0.05 level ($p<0.05$) hence it may be inferred that participant who prefer or do not prefer reflective and complex music genre may have the tendency of having high or low conscientiousness personality trait respectively in the sample taken for this particular study.

There is a significant correlation between reflective and complex music genre and intellect and imagination personality trait $r=.320$ at $p=.001$ which is significant at ($p<0.05$) hence we may infer that the participants who prefer or don't prefer reflective and complex music genre may have the tendency of having high or low intellect and imagination personality trait respectively in the sample taken for the research study. Intense and Rebellious music genre has a significant correlation with Intellect and Imagination personality trait $r=.293$ at $p=.001$ which is significant at 0.05 level ($p<0.05$) we may infer from the observed correlation value that participants preferring or not preferring Intense and Rebellious music genre may have tendency of having high or low Intellect and Imagination trait respectively in the sample taken for this study.

Table 6: Correlation of Coping & Personality

Variables	Extra	Sig. (2-tailed)	Agree	Sig. (2-tailed)	Consc	Sig. (2-tailed)	Neuro	Sig. (2-tailed)	Imagi	Sig. (2-tailed)
Eng	.071	.431	.297*	.001	.113	.208	.042	.664	.105	.240
Diseng	-.053	.554	.082	.363	-.225*	.011	.056	.530	-.245*	.006

* $p=0.05$

Note: Eng: Engagement; Diseng; Disengagement; Exta: Extraversion Agree: Agreeableness; Consc: Conscientiousness; Neuro: Neuroticism; Imagi: Imagination/Intellect.

There is a positive correlation between Engagement, Coping & Agreeableness Personality trait $r= .297$ at $p= .001$ which is significant at 0.05 level ($p<0.05$) further we may infer from observed correlation that participants of this study who uses Engagement Coping Strategy may have high trait of Agreeableness or vice versa respectively on their use of coping among Engagement & Disengagement. There is a Negative correlation between Disengagement coping and Conscientiousness trait $r=-.225$ at $p=.011$ which is significant at 0.05 level ($p<0.05$) further we may infer from the observed correlation that participants who uses Disengagement coping strategy may have low Conscientiousness trait and vice versa according to the use of coping strategy among Engagement and Disengagement. There is a Negative correlation between Disengagement coping and Intellect and Imagination trait $r=-.245$ at $p=.006$ which is significant at 0.05 level ($p<0.05$) we may infer from the observed correlation value that the participants using Disengagement coping Strategy may have low trait of Intellect and Imagination and vice versa according to the use of coping strategy among Engagement and Disengagement Coping.

IX. MAJOR FINDINGS

1. There is a negative correlation between Reflective & Complex Music Genre and Disengaged coping.
2. There is a positive correlation between reflective and complex music genres and the conscientiousness personality trait.
3. There is a positive correlation between reflective and complex music genres and intellect and imagination personality traits.
4. The intense and rebellious music genre has a positive correlation with intelligence and imagination personality traits.
5. There is a positive correlation between engagement, coping, and the agreeableness personality trait.
6. There is a negative correlation between disengagement coping and the conscientiousness trait.
7. There is a negative correlation between disengagement coping and intelligence and imagination.

X. IMPLICATIONS

The present study indicates correlation between Music Genre Preference, Personality Traits & Coping styles of the sample taken from Assam Don Bosco University. According to the findings the relation between these variables has shown both negative and positive correlation among them. As the emerging adulthood time period brings forth a lot of changes in everyone's life, being mentally healthy and engaging in an activity helps an individual to become better and stronger mentally and it should be of prior importance to everyone. A person's life can be greatly impacted by something as easy as listening to music, whether it be emotionally, cognitively, or spiritually. As a result, considering how one chooses to consume music can greatly assist one shift perspectives and practice bringing change with a ease. Music preference is subjective and evaluating oneself helps a lot in making choices in different situations hence consumption of music style can also be used to bring forth some desired changes in an individual's life. Since the concepts of music preference, personality, and coping differ depending on the time, place, circumstances, and each individual as well, these activities should be included in the academic curriculum and should be encouraged to be practiced more both in daily life and as a subject. Since not everyone has access to a mental health facility, people can use a variety of musical genres to relieve their psychological problems and express or channel their emotions into something that may also be beneficial to the user and provide them deeper meaning.

XI. CONCLUSION

The present study was undertaken to know the correlation between music genre preference, personality traits and coping. The outcome of the present study indicates a significant correlation between music genre, personality traits & coping. The result indicates that individuals who preferred more of reflective & complex music genre type, the personality trait conscientiousness & intellect/imagination rises or falls based on their consumption of the music genre. It is noticed that there was a positive correlation between intense and rebellious music genre and intellect/imagination personality trait. Therefore, it can be said that participants who preferred intense and rebellious music genre that consist of

music types such as alternative, rock and heavy metal have high or low intellect/imagination personality trait depending on the consumption of these music genre style. Reflective and complex music genre which consists of music such as classical, blues, folk and jazz according to the result indicates that there is a negative correlation with dis-engagement coping, consisting of styles such as problem avoidance, wishful thinking, social withdrawal and self-criticism. It can be said that reflective and complex music genre when consumed, the coping disengagement factors may go down as well and vice versa. Among the personality traits and coping the result indicates that there is a positive relationship between agreeableness trait and disengagement coping, whereas conscientiousness and intellect/imagine trait had negative correlation with disengagement coping. The findings of the current study show a significant correlation among the variables i.e., music preference, personality & coping in the sample.

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