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A study on Music Preference, Sensation Seeking and Mental Well-being among Young Adults

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Abstract: This research investigates the interrelationship between music preference, sensation seeking, and psychological well-being among a total sample of 30 in the age range of 18-30 in Delhi, India. Utilizing Standardized tools data were collected to assess participants' music preferences, sensation seeking tendencies, and psychological well-being. The findings indicate significant positive correlations between various music preferences and personality traits. Specifically, reflective and complex music preferences were associated with intense and rebellious, upbeat and conventional, and energetic and rhythmic music choices, as well as sensation seeking behaviors. Moreover, intense and rebellious music preferences were found to be positively linked with upbeat and conventional, energetic and rhythmic music preferences, sensation seeking traits, and psychological well-being. Similarly, upbeat and conventional music preferences demonstrated correlations with energetic and rhythmic music preferences and sensation seeking tendencies. Additionally, energetic and rhythmic music preferences showed positive associations with sensation seeking behaviors. Finally, sensation seeking tendencies were positively correlated with higher levels of psychological well-being. Overall, these findings underscore the intricate connections between music preferences, personality traits, and psychological well-being, suggesting potential directions for future research to explore causal mechanisms underlying these relationships.

Keywords: *Music Preference, Sensation Seeking, Psychological Well-Being, Young Adults*

1. Introduction

It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of music in the lives of young adults. In a time of swift technological progress and pervasive digital connectivity, music is a companion and a haven, providing comfort in times of isolation as well as camaraderie during social

gatherings. From private playlists tailored to each person's tastes and moods to group get-togethers pulsating with the beat of common songs, music crosses boundaries and creates ties of solidarity and friendship amongst disparate groups of young adults.

Furthermore, music takes on a therapeutic quality in addition to being a form of entertainment, providing a safe haven for introspection and emotional expression. Music offers a platform through which young adults can express themselves through lyrics that speak to personal experiences and melodies that elicit strong emotional reactions.

Most importantly, the impact of music on the psychological well-being of young adults. From easing the symptoms of anxiety and depression to boosting self-esteem and fostering a sense of community, it seems that music is a potent tool for promoting resilience and mental health. Whether they actively participate in music-making activities or passively consume music as a means of relaxation and emotional regulation, young adults use the therapeutic potential of music to help them navigate the rough waters of adolescence and emerging adulthood. Baker and William Bor (2008) researched on “Can Music Preference Indicate Mental Health Status in Young People.” The study surveys and discusses the evidence on teenage music preferences, listening patterns, and their relationships to teenage mental health. Studies have connected drug use, antisocial conduct, and suicide risk to a variety of musical genres. However, research refutes the notion that anything is caused by music, arguing that a person's musical preferences are a more accurate measure of their emotional receptivity. There are very few studies that have shown connections between music choices and mental health. Further study is needed to determine whether the musical preferences of teenagers with mental health disorders differ markedly from those of the general adolescent population.

Music Preference

Throughout all cultures and generations, music has a profound impact on people's feelings, actions, and perceptions. For many years, researchers and academics have been fascinated by the phenomenon of people favoring certain genres of music over others. In addition to illuminating individual variances, comprehending the psychological foundations of music preference offers insights into more general facets of human cognition, emotion regulation, and social interaction. The study of musical preference considers a wide range of variables, such as individual traits, sociocultural influences, and mental processes. People form preferences for musical genres, artists, and styles from an early age. These preferences can

endure and change over time. These preferences frequently fulfil several purposes, including identity and mood regulation.

Greasley and Lamont (2006) researched on "Music preference in adulthood: Why do we like the music we do." In Proceedings of the 9th international conference on music perception and cognition in Bologna, Italy: University of Bologna. A wide range of psychological approaches have been used in the study of music preferences and music in everyday life, yet none of these have successfully approached the complexities of meaning involved in people's everyday use of music. Two studies were carried out which aimed to map individual levels of engagement with music; to tap into the content and quality of people's emotional experiences with the music they prefer and why this valued; to investigate how technology affects the ways people engage with music; and to discover what it is about the specific characteristics of the music that is preferred.

Sensation Seeking

Sensation Seeking has attracted a lot of attention in psychological research because of its profound effects on decision-making, behaviour, and psychological health in general. Sensation seeking, which has its roots in the idea of seeking out new, exciting, and intense experiences, shows up in a variety of spheres of human life, impacting social interactions, a propensity for taking risks, and even professional decisions. Sensation seeking is ''a trait defined by the seeking of varied, novel, complex, and intense sensations and experiences, and the willingness to take physical, social, legal, and financial risks for the sake of such experience'' (Zuckerman, 1994).

Psychological Wellbeing

A key component of human flourishing and resilience is psychological wellbeing, a complex concept that lies at the nexus of mental health, subjective experience, and personal fulfilment. In a time of unparalleled social transformations, technological breakthroughs, and worldwide predicaments, comprehending and promoting mental health has become a critical issue for people, communities, and decision-makers alike.

Psychological wellbeing is fundamentally a state of optimal functioning marked by positive emotions, a sense of purpose, and successful coping mechanisms in the face of adversity. It goes beyond simply being free from psychological distress. The idea of psychological wellbeing, which has its roots in existential philosophy, humanistic psychology,

and positive psychology theories, aims to achieve a life full of meaning, energy, and genuine self-expression rather than just surviving.

Ryff (1995) is an associate director of the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Institute on Ageing and a professor of psychology. Her research focuses on the definition, assessment, and stability of psychological well-being throughout adulthood, as well as the experiential and attitudinal variables that account for individual differences in well-being.

Warr (1978) researched on topic "A study of psychological well-being. British journal of Psychology." The notion of psychological well-being is presented, and three distinct aspects of the scale are explained and tested on 1655 British participants. The results of both positive and negative affect measures are compared with those from North America, and most of the hypotheses are supported. There are two distinct clusters of anxiety items that are related to health anxiety and worry about money and family. Although it recommends other dimensions for a more thorough analysis, the third measure—ratings of present life in general—yields a significant cluster of happiness items. The study examines the correlations between several metrics, as well as those with employment position, motivation to work, job characteristics, and age. It is suggested that ordinary life be studied as "normal psychology."

2. Purpose

To investigate the relationship between sensation seeking, music preference, and mental well-being among young adults.

3. Hypothesis

There will be significant relation between sensation seeking and psychological well-being.

There will be significant relation between sensation seeking and musical preferences.

4. Methodology

4.1 *Measures*

***Sensation Seeking Scale*:** The Sensation Seeking Scale (SSS) was developed by Marvin Zuckerman in 1964 at the University of Delaware with the aim of better understanding personality traits such as neuroticism, antisocial behavior, and psychopathy The scale consists of 40 items, each with two options, focusing on four primary scales: Disinhibition, Boredom

Susceptibility, Thrill and Adventure Seeking, and Experience Seeking. These scales aim to measure different aspects of sensation seeking behavior

The Psychological Well Being Scale: The Psychological Wellbeing (PWB) Scale was developed by psychologist Carol D. Ryff is designed to measure six aspects of wellbeing and happiness: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. Each subscale has a range of scores from 18 to 108, with higher scores indicating greater psychological well-being for each subscale.

***STOMP Scale*:** The STOMP scale, also known as the Short Test of Musical Preferences, is a 14-item scale that assesses preferences in music genres. The scale was developed by Rentfrow, Goldberg, Stillwell, Kosinski, Gosling, and Levitin in 2012. The STOMP scale provides insights into individuals' music preferences and how these preferences relate to personality traits and other aspects of their lives. The STOMP scale evaluates musical preferences across five factors: Mellow (electronica/dance, new age, world), Unpretentious (pop, country, religious), Sophisticated (blues, jazz, bluegrass, folk, classical, gospel, opera), Intense (rock, punk, alternative, heavy metal), and Contemporary (rap, soul, funk, reggae).

4.2 *Sample*

A total of 30 Group of Individuals participated from across Delhi in the study. The age of the sample ranges from 18-30

4.3 *Procedure*

The participants were informed about the purpose of the research, and the questionnaires were filled through Google forms, each participant was thanked for their cooperation. Standardized Psychological Tests were administered to the participants.

5. Analysis of Data

Table 1. *N, Mean and Standard Deviation*

	Reflective and Complex	Intense & Rebellious	Upbeat & Conventional	Energetic & Rhythmic	Sensation Seeking	Psychological wellbeing
N	31	31	31	31	31	31
Mean	21.1	13.5	21.4	16.0	6.26	53.1
Standard deviation	4.43	4.17	3.93	3.50	2.13	8.52

Table 2: *Correlation between sensation seeking, psychological well-being and musical preferences*

	Reflective and Complex	Intense & Rebellious	Upbeat & Conventional	Energetic & Rhythmic	Sensation Seeking	Psychological wellbeing
Reflective and Complex	—					
Intense & Rebellious	0.522**	—				
Upbeat & Conventional	0.649***	0.696***	—			
Energetic & Rhythmic	0.573***	0.721***	0.618***	—		
Sensation Seeking	0.552**	0.877***	0.646***	0.675***	—	
Psychological wellbeing	0.269	0.461**	0.308	0.262	0.460**	—

Note. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

6. Discussion

The result found that reflective and complex had a positive correlation with intense and rebellious (r = 0.522, p < .01), upbeat and conventional (r = 0.649, p < .001), energetic and rhythmic (r = 0.573, p < .001), sensation seeking (r = 0.552, p < .01).

Intense and rebellious had a positive correlation with Upbeat and Conventional (r = 0.696, p < .001), Energetic and Rhythmic (r = 0.721, p < .001), Sensation Seeking (r = 0.87, p < .001), Psychological wellbeing (r = 0.461, p< .01) Upbeat and Conventional had positive correlation with Energetic and Rhythmic (r = 0.618, p < .001), Sensation Seeking (r = 0.646, p < .001). Energetic & Rhythmic had a positive correlation with Sensation Seeking (r = 0.675, p < .001). Sensation seeking had positive correlation with psychological wellbeing (r = 0.460, p < .01)

The findings suggest that individuals who enjoy reflective and complex music also tend to appreciate a wide variety of other music styles and show a higher inclination towards sensation seeking. This may suggest a broad and open musical taste associated with curiosity and novelty seeking traits. The findings further suggest that liking for intense music styles may be more mainstream than expected and is strongly tied to sensation seeking, which in turn is positively correlated with psychological well well-being Furthermore, even preferences for

more mainstream or conventional music are linked to high energy, challenging the assumption that only non-mainstream music is linked with sensation seeking. Additionally, high tempo music lovers tend to be active and thrill-seeking individuals. The results also suggests that individuals who score high in sensation seeking also report better psychological wellbeing.

7. Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study exploring the relationship between music preference, sensation seeking, and psychological well-being, several significant correlations emerged. Reflective and complex music preferences were positively correlated with characteristics such as intensity, rebelliousness, and a tendency for sensation seeking.

Similarly, individuals with intense and rebellious music preferences displayed a inclination for conventional, energetic, and rhythmic music, as well as sensation seeking behaviors, all of which were linked to higher levels of psychological well-being. Furthermore, upbeat and conventional music preferences were associated with energetic and rhythmic music choices and shared traits of sensation seeking. Energetic and rhythmic music preferences were also positively correlated with sensation seeking tendencies.

Finally, sensation seeking behaviors were associated with increased psychological well-being. In conclusion, this study sheds light on the intricate interplay between music preferences, personality traits, and psychological well-being. It suggests that certain music preferences may reflect underlying personality characteristics and behavioral tendencies, which in turn contribute to overall psychological well-being. However, further research is warranted to elucidate the causal pathways and mechanisms underlying these associations.

The sample population was limited to Delhi, and the sample size that was selected was only limited to one area that could have been expanded to include other areas as well, providing a broader view. The study solely concentrates on young adults; a slightly larger sample size would have provided more depth. Apart from this the research provides a valuable information on how different music preferences of individuals are connected with sensation seeking and their psychological well-being.

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