

Self-Awareness and Emotional Intelligence Among Indian Classical Music Learners and Non-Learners: A Comparative Study

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ABSTRACT

Studies on impact of Indian classical music on an individual's body, mind, emotions and feelings. The present study explores whether learning Indian classical music for a considerable period of time (5 or more years) enhances one's self-awareness and emotional intelligence levels among its practitioners. A sample of 300 - 150 learners (vocalists, instrumentalists and dancers); 150 non-learners was collected and Self-Reflection and Insight Scale (SRIS) and Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT) were administered. T-test was used for the analysis. The results indicated that there was no significant difference between self-awareness and emotional intelligence levels among the Indian classical music learners and non-learners. However, among the learners, emotional intelligence levels were found to be higher in males than females.

Keywords: *Self-Awareness, Emotional Intelligence, Indian Classical Music, Young Adults*

Emotions play a very significant role in one's life. The way one perceives things changes the way he feels about it. Knowing what one feels enhances the process of building relationships, communicating effectively resulting in reduced stress levels. Theoretically known as emotional intelligence i.e., EI, having a higher EI helps you to connect with your own emotions which can lead you to take better and appropriate decisions during an emotional turmoil. Emotional intelligence has been defined, by Peter Salovey and John Mayer, as "the ability to monitor one's own and other people's emotions, to discriminate between different emotions and label them appropriately, and to use emotional information to guide thinking and behaviour". In simple words, as important as it is to understand and express emotions, it is equally important that one has the ability to interpret and understand others' emotions and respond to it accordingly. When a person is high on emotional intelligence, the ability to empathize with others is enhanced as well. Thus, emotional intelligence is known to play a major role in interpersonal dynamics resulting in the enhancement of thought and understanding of others as well.

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EI being an important part of one's personality, self-awareness and EI go hand in hand. Defined by Duval and Wick Lund, self-awareness is the ability to focus on yourself and how your actions, thoughts, or emotions do or don't align with your internal standards." Self-awareness is considered to be the first step of being emotionally intelligent. When one is aware of oneself, the individual knows the answers to what, why, how of a particular decision/action. Being self-aware gives oneself an understanding of who the individual is as a person and paints a clear picture of the aspects one needs to improve in. Being aware of what one is feeling is one of the fundamentals of having a healthy mental health. Feelings give rise to the thinking process which in turn determine how will one react to various situations. For example – a child starts crying because he got a scolding from his parents. The process of knowing whether the child cried because he felt bad, he was angry at his parents for scolding or because he was guilty of something he did is self-awareness. Knowing the reason behind the crying is self-awareness which would in turn determine how will the child react further to the scolding. Being aware of how this entire process works also determines the introspection of a person leading to self-evaluation. Reflecting upon the way one thinks, feels and act, i.e., focusing our attention on the inner self, one can self-evaluate the way he/she behaves. Self-awareness does not only focus on the emotional aspect one's life but the physical aspect as well. The physical aspects include being aware of your bodily sensations, your reactions, habits and behaviours. The way your mind and your brain process and accept things is reflected through the physical signals given by the body. We can say that physical signals are a response and a way of expression of the emotions the body feels. For example – when a person is feeling anxious, there's a weird feeling in the stomach; or when a person is tensed and afraid his hands start sweating and sometimes even body shivers may occur. Thus, this is body's way of communicating through physical signals. Being aware of these physical signals helps in understanding the language of the bodily processes. Emotional self-awareness in-turn helps in identifying stressors and managing your emotional reactions. Failing to recognize your emotions and not being able to manage them well can lead to stress.

Stress management is a crucial task in today's world. Dealing with stress creates a tornado of emotions and thus, emotional management becomes a difficult task. Listening to music is one of the most common methods people resort to when it comes to dealing with a stressful situation. It is often said that listening to music changes one's mood. It is scientifically proven that music induces an emotional response. Different genres of music produce different types of emotions. According to ancient books of Indian literature like *Natyashastra* and *sangeet-ratnakar*, there are 9 basic emotions a human being experiences known as the *Navarasa*. Those are as follows: *Karuna* (sadness, pathos), *Shringar* (love, joy), *Veera* (heroism, valor), *Hasya* (laughter, comedy), *Raudra* (anger), *Bhayanaka* (fear), *Vibhatsa* (disgust), *Adbhuta* (surprise), *Shanta* (peace). Traditionally, during the Vedic and the post Vedic times, performing mythological dramas was customary. In the dramas, the dancers used to depict the story, musical accompaniment was done by the instrumentalists and the story was told and sung by the vocalists. Hence, there is a historical reason why Indian classical music or *sangeet* is a three-fold art form. Indian classical music has been said to have a very powerful impact on oneself. In Indian classical music, a raga is presented using various permutations and combinations of the seven swaras by following certain guidelines for each raga. It is believed that every raga depicts a certain mood or emotion. The rhythm, the melody, the pitch, the tempo is some of the factors which contribute in depicting several emotions. The emotions produced by the ragas also depend on what time of the day the raga is played. The *navarasa* are the nine basic emotions portrayed, but the

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intensity of those emotions changes as other factors like the melody, time, environment come into picture. Thus, to present a raga, one needs to understand the emotion the raga has to portray. Without understanding the core essence of the raga, it'd be difficult to depict the actual mood of the notes.

This research focuses on whether Indian classical music has any effect on the self-awareness and emotional intelligence of a person.

Statement of the Problem

It is a known fact that music has an effect on an individual's mind, body and emotions thus helping a person divert and relax his state of mind. However, people are not aware about the positive effects Indian classical music, specifically. Exposure to the depth of Indian classical music will be beneficial to the society as a whole. In this research, I propose to investigate whether Indian classical music has the ability to enhance self-awareness and emotional intelligence levels among its practitioners.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Emotional Intelligence

Nogaj (2020) – in her research – *emotional intelligence and strategies for coping with stress among music school students in the context of visual art and general education students* focuses on the psychosocial functioning of young people with artistic abilities. The research was conducted on 354 students from the fields of music, art, and general education schools from the age range of 16 to 19 years. The author here highlights emotional intelligence and coping with stress in music education. The paper mentions that Musicians and music students with an appropriate, elevated level of emotional intelligence have an increased probability not only of functioning well at school or in the music profession but also of maintaining mental well-being and even better health. There is also evidence that the length of musical training increases the level of emotional intelligence (Petrides, 2006). The hypotheses formed were 1) Do music students differ from art and general education students in terms of their emotional intelligence and use of stress-coping strategies? and (2) Does gender differentiate the level of emotional intelligence and stress-coping strategies among students in music, art, and general education schools? The Popular Questionnaire of Emotional Intelligence (PQEI) and Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations (CISS) were administered. The results suggested that music students have greater emotional intelligence and use task-oriented coping strategies more often than art students. Higher levels of emotional intelligence are significantly seen in music students especially in terms of acceptance, expression, and the use of their own emotions in action, compared with art students. This indicates that they have a better ability to adapt to difficult situations. These results suggest that music students are more aware of the emotions they feel, both positive and negative; express their emotions more easily; and can effectively use their knowledge about the emotions they experience.

Self-Awareness

Morin and Everett (2002), in their study – *inner speech as a mediator of self-awareness, self-consciousness, and self-knowledge, a hypothesis.*, questions the type of cognitive tools the self uses for acquiring and processing information. This particular research article highlights the possibility that inner speech might represent one such cognitive process. Duval and Wicklund gave the theory of self-awareness and the self-consciousness, and the self-knowledge body of work that was inspired by it. The theory states that attention could

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be directed either externally toward the environment or internally toward the self. The latter half of the statement conveys that the individual becomes the object of its own attention, and can observe his or her own characteristics. In a state like this, attention is likely to focus on the aspects of self that are the most salient at the time. The author here says that one's current conscious awareness can be seen almost synonymous with our 'inner voice.' It is also mentioned in the paper that inner speech goes hand-in-hand with the state of self-awareness. It is observed that highly-conscious individuals use inner speech as a tool for introspection purposes. When taken into consideration the clinical frame of reference, the author suggests that it'd be beneficial if the idea of heightening self-awareness and promoting self-consciousness as well as self-knowledge through the appropriate use of inner-speech i.e., clinicians could use these findings to teach people how and when to talk to themselves about themselves, in the motive of encouraging self-observation and self-knowledge. They could also promote introspective self-talk instead of maladaptive self-talk in their clients. Lastly, the paper highlights the importance of self-regulation and self-awareness representing as a pre-requisite to self-regulation. A model of self-regulation given by Scheier and Carver is mentioned in the paper which the technique of self-focus is used by the individuals to compare their current states with their standards or goals which would help the individuals get encouraged to talk about themselves and self-regulate.

Indian Classical Music

Pudaruth (2016) in his research - *A Reflection on the Aesthetics of Indian Music, With Special Reference to Hindustani Raga-Sangita* focuses on the various aspects of Indian classical music. It is said that the practitioners of Indian Classical music aim at expressing emotions and creating the aesthetic. Raga-Sangita in particular is considered a spiritual pathway (nada sadhana) to attain salvation (moksha) through sound. This article focuses on The Theory of Rasa, given in the Indian aesthetics and its relation to Hindustani Raga-Sangita. The purpose of the article is to shed some light on the importance personal creativity and emotional expression in performing good music. The article mentions the importance of *Natyashastra*, a Sanskrit treatise on drama. The Rasa Theory is propounded by the sage-priest Bharata who says in the "*Rasadhyaya*" that 'no meaningful idea is conveyed, if 'rasa' is not evoked.' It is said that the experience of 'rasa' which is also known as 'aesthetic consciousness' is different from the emotions that one experiences in his day-to-day life. Bharata says, emotions such as anger, love, compassion, joy are either pleasant or unpleasant in ordinary real life but when these emotions are experienced through complete identification with any art-works, they are experienced, invariable, as delight, bliss, rapture, or ecstasy (*Ananda*). The paper mentions that, 'rasa is not mere emotion conveyed by, or expressed through the form of the raga; it is the emotive look of the raga-rupa (melodic form) itself.' (Saxena, 2009b). Lastly, the article mentions the seven *sadhakas* or the positive factors mentioned by Abhinavagupta in his *Abhinavabharati* which play an important role in the aesthetic experience of the highest kind; listed as follows: (a) inborn capacity to enjoy and appreciate works of art (Rasikta), (b) theoretical and practical knowledge of and insight and sensitivity toward the work of art being experienced (Sahrdaya), (c) extraordinary imaginative power to fill the gap and make sense of that aspect of the work of art which is not perceptible (Pratibha), (d) inner predisposition (inherent and acquired) to appreciate works of art (Vasana Samskara), (e) capacity for rumination, capacity for recollecting parts, and contemplating these as a whole (Bhavana-Charvana), (f) physically and mentally fit to enjoy works of art (Sharirika & Manasika Yogyata), and (g) capacity to lose one's limited self and identifying completely with the work of art (Tadatmya).

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Sample

Total 300 participants (150 Indian classical music learners and 150 non-learners) between 20 to 40 years of age were selected for the research from the population of India. A google form was circulated through email, hence data was collected through purposive sampling technique. 150 learners were divided into 50 each of the three categories – vocalists 50, instrumentalists 50, dancers 50. Each group of 50 vocalists, instrumentalists and dancers was divided into 25 male and 25 female. Among the non-learners, 75 male and 75 female subjects were considered.

Tools

Following tools were used to measure the levels of self-awareness and emotional intelligence.

- **Self-Reflection and Insight Scale (SRIS) – by Grant, Franklin and Langford, 2002:** Considering the content validity of the scale, Cronbach's alpha and the Interclass Correlation Coefficient value for SRIS is 0.87 and 0.79. Test-retest reliability .77 (SRIS-SR) and .78 (SRIS-IN). The questionnaire consists of 20 items with a 6-pointer scale ranging from 1 – strongly disagree to 6 – strongly agree. Insight (8 items) , self-reflection (6 items) , need for self-reflection (6 items) are the factors measured by this scale. Higher scores indicate more inspection and evaluation of oneself. The scale score is obtained from the sum of scores of items.
- **Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT) – by Nicola Schutte:** A reliability rating of 0.90 is reported for the emotional intelligence scale. It is reported that the EI score, overall, is fairly reliable for adults and adolescents. This scale covers four aspect of EI - emotion perception, utilizing emotions, managing self-relevant emotions, and managing others' emotions. This is a 33-item questionnaire with a 5-pointer scale ranging from 1 – strongly disagree to 5 – strongly agree. The scoring of this scale is ranged from 33 to 165, with higher scores indicating higher EI. The scores are obtained from the sum of scores of items with item nos. 5, 28 and 33 being reverse scored.

Procedure

The Self-Reflection and Insight Scale (SRIS) and Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT) scales were circulated via google forms. To compare the levels of self-awareness and emotional intelligence among learners and non- learners, and males and females, t test was used.

RESULTS

SPSS 18.00 was used for the analysis of the data. Using the t test function, the hypotheses 'Indian classical learners will be higher on Self-awareness than non-learners' and 'Indian classical learners will be higher on emotional intelligence than non-learners' were analysed.

Table 1 Shows the Mean, SD, t value among Indian classical music – instrumental, vocal & dance learners and non-learners on self-awareness and emotional intelligence (N= 300)

Variables	Category	Mean	SD	't'	Df
Self-Awareness	Learners	80.653	9.267	.410	298
	Non-Learners	80.200	9.885	(N.S.)	
Emotional Intelligence	Learners	131.240	14.496	1.257	298
	Non-Learners	129.166	14.067	(N.S.)	

N.S.-Non significant

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Table 1 shows the comparison between the levels of self-awareness and emotional intelligence between Indian classical music learners and non-learners. With respect to self-awareness, the mean score of learners was $M=80.653$, $SD= 9.26$ and of non-learners was $M = 80.200$, $SD = 9.885$. The t value obtained was $t = .410$ indicating that the difference is not significant. Thus, the hypothesis ‘Indian classical learners will be higher on Self-awareness than non-learners’ was *rejected*.

In case of emotional intelligence, the mean score of learners was $M = 131.240$, $SD = 14.496$ and of non-learners was $M=129.166$, $SD = 14.067$. The t value obtained was $t = 1.257$ indicating that there is no significant difference. Thus, the hypothesis ‘Indian classical learners will be higher on emotional intelligence than non-learners’ was *rejected*.

Using the t test function, the hypotheses ‘There will be a significant difference between male and female Indian classical music learners on self-awareness’ and ‘There will be a significant difference between male and female Indian classical music learners on emotional intelligence’ were analysed.

Table 2 Shows the Mean, SD, t value among Indian classical music – instrumental, vocal & dance male and female learners on self-awareness and emotional intelligence (N= 150)

Variables	Category	Mean	SD	‘t’	Df
Self-Awareness (learners)	Male	80.146	9.472	-.668	148
	Female	81.160	9.092	(N.S.)	
Emotional Intelligence (learners)	Male	133.666	13.795	2.073	148
	Female	128.813	14.863	(S)	

Table 2 shows the comparison on Self-awareness and Emotional intelligence between male and female participants. With respect to self-awareness, the mean score of males was $M = 80.146$, $SD = 9.472$ and of females was $M = 81.160$, $SD = 9.092$. The t value obtained was $t = -.668$. This indicates that there is no significant difference between the two means. Thus, the hypothesis ‘There will be a significant difference between male and female Indian classical music learners on self-awareness’ was *rejected*.

In case of emotional intelligence, the mean score of males was $M = 133.666$, $SD = 13.795$ and of females was $M = 128.813$, $SD = 14.863$. The t value obtained was $t = 2.073$. This indicates that there is a significant difference between males and females on emotional intelligence. Thus, the hypothesis ‘There will be a significant difference between male and female Indian classical music learners on emotional intelligence’ was *accepted*.

DISCUSSION

It was hypothesized that Indian classical music learners will score higher in the domains of self-awareness and emotional intelligence than non-learners. This hypothesis has been rejected. The reason behind this could be: The criteria for participating in the study for the non-learners was that they’ve never learnt classical music. However, it might be the case that although they’ve not learnt classical music, they’ve been exposed to it. Culturally, learning Indian classical music has been given a lot of importance. Thus, having a family background in classical music, or being exposed to it also can make a huge difference.

Secondly, the literature review mentioned in chapter two supports the fact that music in general too has an impact on an individual’s feelings and emotions. Thus, although the non-

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learners were not exposed specifically to Indian classical music, they are exposed to some or the other forms of music which might have impacted their emotional intelligence and awareness. Also, a lot of internal as well as external factors such as emotion regulation, motivation, social skills, relationships with adults and peers, expression of emotion, etc., play a role in enhancing emotional intelligence. Similarly, self-awareness is also affected by one's personality traits, personal values, emotions, identity of self in relation to others, etc. Thus, these factors cannot be controlled when selecting a population.

Also, among the learners, pursuing music as a hobby and as a passion/ career too can affect the intensity music has on an individual. Although there were criteria regarding age and years of learning, the dedication with which one invests and learns classical music also matters. Individuals who pursue it as a career are exposed to various stage performances, competitions which also play a role in understanding the depth of Indian classical music.

In the latter part of the research, it was hypothesized that among the learners, males and female will have a significant difference in the levels of self-awareness and emotional intelligence. Although there were no differences found in the levels of self-awareness; interestingly, males were found to be significantly higher than females on the levels of emotional intelligence. As infants, the process of emotional expression is initiated in both the genders. But as the age progresses, according to the societal norms and standards, emotional expression in men is discouraged. Men, since their childhood have often been told to be self-reliant, to be successful and provide for their family. As these characteristics are considered to be heroic, they have been reinforced with the stereotype 'being a man' and discouraged emotional expression. As Indian classical music is known to emphasize on emotional expression, it might be the case that males when exposed to it, get an opportunity to express through their art form. They might perceive their art as a medium to express. As a result, the emotions which have been suppressed over the years, could get a path to be expressed and conveyed. Hence, this finding could also provide basis for specifically studying the differences between how males and females perceive and represent their art form and also highlighting emotional expression in men.

CONCLUSION

Findings suggested that there was no significant difference in self-awareness and emotional intelligence levels among Indian classical music learners and non-learners. Among the Indian classical music learners, there was no significant difference found between males and females in their self-awareness levels. However, among the learners, it was found that males were significantly higher than females in emotional intelligence. This finding gives a basis to do further studies for differences between males' and females' emotional expression in their own specific art forms and emotional expression in men.

Suggestions and Limitations

As the questionnaire was circulated online, the truth value of the answer given by the participants cannot be guaranteed. Although there were criteria mentioned for Indian classical music learners, as the purposive sampling technique was used, some criteria, like currently learning music could have been hampered as there might have been some cases where they've been learning classical music yet are not in regular practice. Further research can be done to explore the empirical evidence for the findings of this research. More research on Indian classical music is needed with respect to self-awareness and emotional intelligence.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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