

Relationship between Emotional Regulation and Music Genre Preference in Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

This paper studies the relationship between Emotional Regulation and Music Preferences. For this study, a sample of 150 young adults aged between 18-25 years participated (83 Females and 67 Males). Emotional Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) by Gross, J.J., & John, O.P. (2003) and Short Test Of Music Preferences (STOMP) by Rentflow, P.J., & Gosling, S. D. (2003) are used to measure the variables. The Pearson correlation coefficient was used for the statistical analysis of the data. The results show a correlation between the emotional regulation strategy and music genre. The use of Cognitive Reappraisal showed a weak positive correlation with the Upbeat and Conventional, Reflective and complex, and Intense and rebellious Music genres and a weak negative correlation with Energetic and rhythmic genres whereas the use of Expressive Suppression showed a weak positive correlation with the Intense and Rebellious, Energetic and Rhythmic music genre and a weak negative correlation with Reflective and Complex and Upbeat and Conventional genres. The implications are discussed.

Keywords: *Emotional Regulation, Young Adults, Music Preference*

Picture coming back home after an eventful workday feeling overwhelmed and exhausted and you slip on your headphones and blast on the music of your choice and feel a rush of ease and delight. Such can be the impact of music on our emotions and vice-versa.

Music is a universal and omnipresent aspect of human culture that often transcends language barriers with its soothing symphonies and lyrical compositions that make it a uniting thread between various social constructs of class and even generations. (Juslin & Sloboda 2010)

It has a curious capability to evoke a range of emotions from the euphoria of joy to the echoes of melancholy. (Vuoskosti et al., 2009)

Research suggests that music is not only crucial in eliciting emotions but also impacts our emotional state. While slower and melancholic beats promote relaxation, upbeat tempos can help us feel energized. (Thompson et al., 2001). It is believed that music selection is a tool that young adults use to manage their emotions and regulate them, especially during the period

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of young adulthood that is marked by significant identity exploration and emotional upheaval. (American Psychological Association, 2019). Emotions act as a key instrument in framing our thoughts, behaviors, and experiences. (Frijda, N. H. 2018).

Understanding how to navigate through our emotions becomes a pivotal part of young adulthood that is marked by significant identity development and emotional upheaval. (American Psychological Association 2019).

There are a range of emotional regulation strategies with two prominent strategies being-

Cognitive Reappraisal: This involves actively reframing a situation to change our emotional response. For instance, instead of viewing a job interview as nerve-wracking, we might frame it as an opportunity for growth and learning. (Gross, 2007)

Cognitive reappraisal includes altering our thoughts about any event to change the emotional effect. (Gross,2009). This involves the reinterpretation of a scenario in a bright light encouraging a tranquil state (Gross & John, 2003).

It aims to positively evaluate a situation itself rather than its outward exhibition. (Gross, 2015). Researches show that reappraisal is a means to regulate our emotions and it supports mental and emotional well-being. It has been associated with low levels of anxiety, and depression and promotes enhancement in interpersonal relationships. (Aldao et al., 2010; Gross & John, 2003; Hu et al.,2014)

Expressive Suppression: This involves consciously pushing down or inhibiting our emotions. While this may seem straightforward, this technique has negative impacts if relied upon excessively. (Gross, 2007)

Expressive Suppression is the intentional attempt to inhibit the expression of the emotion one is feeling. Through our vocal cues, body language, and facial expressions (Gross,2001). Imagine you are upset about a colleague's behavior at work but instead of showing anger you put on a fake smile and talk in a calming tone. It is seen in brain imaging studies that the activity in the prefrontal cortex increases during suppression (Wager et al.,2008). Highlighting the amount of effort that is required during suppression.

Suppression can promote social harmony as it prevents emotional blowups (Cole et al.,2014) and thus can be situationally accommodative. It aids in maintaining professional behavior. It can encourage rapid recovery after the occurrence of gloomy events and help to emotionally detach from unfavorable situations (Richard & Gross, 2015). For example, it can help to operate initially after suppressing grief post-loss.

It has some potential drawbacks as well. During inhibition of the display of emotions the various physiological changes in the body like increase in blood pressure and heart rate might persist (Gross & Levenson, 1993; Klauer et al., 2015). This can negatively impact the health eventually.

It can also negatively impact attention and memory (Thiruchselvam et al., 2016). Researches highlight how suppression can affect our ability to process and deal with emotions efficiently. (Goldin & McRae,2002; Webb & Tracy, 2017)

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It can hamper our ability to manage own emotions in the future. Suppression can also be impacted by cultural norms. Like the individualistic cultures potentially focus on free emotional expression whereas collectivistic cultures could center on suppression to promote Cooperation (Matsumoto et al., 2010). Situational variables also have a major role to play like it seems suitable to suppress in a professional setting but not in intimate bonds. (Butler et al., 2003). Expressive Suppression might help in a few situations but its extended application may have undesirable impacts.

Music is believed to have been linked with emotional regulation for a long time. (Gross, 1998). The Emotional Regulation Strategy states that individuals use a variety of strategies to regulate their emotions, including music selection. (Gross, 1998).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Cook et al. (2019) aimed at understanding the association between the utilization of music to regulate emotions amidst university students. The study found that rap/funk /dance music were positively associated with elevating emotional stimulation and soul/fun music were associated with enhancing positive emotionality and minimizing negative emotionality.

Gustavson et al. (2021) aimed to study the association between music involvement and mental wellness. Results showed a positive association between music involvement and life satisfaction and reduced the symptoms of anxiety and depression and less use of substances.

Sachs et al. (2015) aimed to study the emotional responses to music. The results show that music listening aroused the regions in the brain involved in the processing of emotions. It also provides evidence of music being an effective emotional regulation tool.

Carlson et al. (2015) studied the association between emotional regulation strategies and emotional reactions to music. Specific patterns were seen in people who used music as a tool for emotional regulation.

Thoma et al. (2015) aimed to see the effects of music use on stress-induced bodily responses. The results showed that pre-stressor music engagement can cause reduction in physiological reaction to stress. Music engagement is a simple way for stress reduction.

METHODOLOGY

Aim:

To explore the relationship between emotional regulation and music preferences.

Variables:

- **Independent variable** - Emotional Regulation
- **Dependent Variable**- Music Preference

Objectives

1. To assess the relationship between emotional regulation strategies and music genres.
2. To analyze the reasons for the correlations.
3. To focus on cultural context and individual differences. Highlighting the complexity of the connection.

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Hypothesis:

- There is no significant relationship between emotional regulation and music preference in young adults (Null Hypothesis).
- There is a significant relationship between emotional regulation and music preference in young adults. (Alternative Hypothesis)

Sample:

A purposive Sampling Technique was used on a sample of 150 young adults out of which 67 were males and 83 were female respondents.

Inclusion Criteria:

Individuals aged between 18 - 25.

Instruments:

This study used two instruments being-

A questionnaire (ERQ) by Gross, J.J., & John, O.P. (2003) Used to measure the emotional regulation strategies used by individuals. It consists of total 10 item measured on a 7 point likert scale where 1 indicates strongly disagree, 2 indicates disagree, 3 indicates somewhat disagree, 4 indicates neutral, 5 indicates somewhat agree, 6 indicates agree and 7 indicates strongly agree.

A Short Test Of Music Preferences (STOMP) by Rentflow, P.J., & Gosling, S. D. (2003) are used to measure the various music genre preferences. It consists of 14 items measured on a 7 point likert scale where 1 indicates strongly dislike, 2 indicate dislike , 3 indicates somewhat dislike, 4 indicates neutral , 5 indicates somewhat like , 6 indicates like and 7 indicates strongly like.

Tools	Variables	Dimensions	Reliability
ERQ	Emotion Regulation Strategies	Cognitive Reappraisal	0.73
		Expressive Suppression	0.82
STOMP	Music Preference Genre	Reflective & Complex	0.81
		Energetic & Rhythmic	0.71
		Upbeat &	0.70
		Conventional	0.74
		Intense & Rebellious	

Procedure:

Respondents were informed that their responses would only be used for academic purposes. After obtaining informed consent, the respondents completed the questionnaire and the music preference survey. There was no set time restriction. This data was used to analyze the relationship between Emotional Regulation Strategies and Music Preferences; measured by STOMP and ERQ. The data was analyzed using SPSS.

RESULTS

The study aimed to understand the connection between the use of emotional regulation strategies which are expressive suppression and cognitive reappraisal with music genres like energetic and rhythmic, reflective and complex, upbeat and conventional, and intense and rebellious. The sample size of this study consisted of 150 young adults, aged between 18-25 years. Out of which 83 were females and 67 were males.

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Table 1 Shows the descriptives

Variables	n	M	SD
Cognitive Reappraisal	150	28.40	5.309
Expressive Suppression	150	17.86	4.844
Energetic & Rhythmic	150	14.44	3.306
Intense & Rebellious	150	8.65	2.584
Upbeat & Conventional	150	20.35	3.535
Reflective & Complex	150	19.80	3.915

The mean score of upbeat and conventional music is 20.35 with a SD value of 3.535. The mean score of intense and rebellious music is 8.65 with a SD value of 2.584. The mean score of reflective and complex music is 19.00 with a SD value of 3.915. The mean score of energetic and rhythmic music is 14.44 with an SD value of 3.306. These findings can be understood as that the sample population of our study might prefer listening to Upbeat and Conventional music more than other genres.

Table 2 shows the correlation value

		Reflective Complex	Intense Rebellious	Upbeat Conventional	Energetic Rhythmic
Cognitive Reappraisal	Pearson Correlation	.092	.114	.149	-.030
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.256	.162	.066	.714
	N	150	150	150	150
Emotional Suppression	Pearson Correlation	-.083	.132	-.011	.047
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.310	.104	.893	.561

The Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to study the relationship between Emotional Regulation Strategies and Music Genre Preferences. The correlation values between cognitive reappraisal and upbeat and conventional music is ($r=.149$ with a corresponding p-value of .066), with reflective and complex music ($r=.092$ with a corresponding p-value of .256, with intense and rebellious ($r=.114$ with a corresponding p-value of .162) and with energetic and rhythmic ($r=-.30$ with a corresponding p-value of .714). The correlation values between expressive suppression and upbeat and conventional music is ($r=-.011$ with a p-value of .893), with reflective and complex music ($r=-.83$ with a p-value of .310), with intense and rebellious music ($r=.132$ with a p-value of .104) and with energetic and rhythmic music. While none exhibit the statistical significance the presence of weak correlations are observed and so we fail to reject the null hypothesis.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study helped establish a connection between Emotional Regulation Strategies and Music Preferences in young adults.

Both the emotional regulation strategies that are cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression show a weak positive correlation with Reflective and Complex Music. This music genre usually instilled with sophistication and depth can motivate listeners to indulge in self-reflection and thoughtfulness which are seen as an essential for reappraisal. Its sophisticated design and delicate composition can assist in inner reflection which is essential for expressive suppression, helping listeners to regulate their display of emotions tactfully. Congruent with

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the results of Cook et al. (2017) who noted that a few genres can support enhancement of positive emotions and reduction of negative ones.

Cognitive reappraisal shows a weak positive correlation with upbeat and conventional music and expressive suppression has a weak negative correlation with upbeat and conventional music. The optimistic and structured quality of this music genre may facilitate a space for cognitive reframing of the emotional events. The weak negative correlation with expressive suppression might suggest that the uplifting attributes of this genre may minimize the necessity for covering up the display of emotions that one is feeling, as listeners are prone to feel and portray positive feelings.

A weak negative correlation is seen between cognitive reappraisal and energetic and rhythmic music whereas we can see a weak positive correlation between expressive suppression and energetic and rhythmic music genre. The enhanced arousal and active tempo and rhythm can slow down the introspective reflection which is essential for cognitive reappraisal. Though the similar attributes offer a suitable vent for expressive suppression which facilitates the listeners to redirect their energy by being absorbed in the music rather than their expression of emotions. Supported by the research conducted by Hereld's (2019) that reveals that music is a valuable aid for coping and regulation of mood, particularly amidst challenges like COVID-19 and lockdown.

Both the strategies cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression has a weak positive correlation with intense and rebellious music. The genre's impactful and frequently rebellious tones might strike a chord with the listeners wish to alter negative emotions into uplifting encounters. The assertive disposition of this genre may facilitate individuals to showcase control over the portrayal of their emotions compatible with the expressive suppression strategy.

The broader significance of these observations are backed by the findings of Timmers and Loui (2019), who explored the emotional effects of music on brain functions like attention and memory. Rosanbalm and Murray's (2017) provides summary of co-regulation practices right from birth till young adulthood gives a framework for how music is fused into the development of emotional regulation in children, which can expand to adult selection and approaches.

Implications

- The study proposes that music can function as a viable tool for emotional regulation with various genres potentially addressing to different emotional regulation strategies this could influence therapeutic approaches where music is actively used to support individuals in effectively managing their emotions.
- It is indicated by the weak correlations that music is not the solitary determinant that influences emotional regulation. Other factors like individual differences, personality, context also have a role to play.
- The need for personalized approach is also highlighted for extracting the maximum benefits of music in mental and emotional well being.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion our study explores the complex interconnection between emotional regulation strategies that are expressive suppression and cognitive reappraisal and the preference among

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diverse music genres. The results reveal that emotional regulation strategies are correlated with the music preferences, albeit weakly. These correlations indicate that music can have an impact on how individuals regulate their emotions with each genre providing a unique route for emotional regulation. The study adds to a deeper comprehension of the various psychological impacts of music and its capability as a tool for emotional regulation.

Limitations

1. The weak correlations indicate that there are other factors apart from the emotional regulation strategy that have a role to play in the music genre preference.
2. The dependence on self-reported data, which can be influenced by biases.
3. A large sample size can add increased significance as here the generalizability of the finds are limited.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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