

Heavy Metal Music, Sufi Music and Its Relation with Aggression

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Abstract: Music is an extensive part of everyday life. Its prevalence is in daily activities like at the gym, buying groceries, during everyday commotion, at parties, etc. Given the continuous exposure to music, directly or indirectly, it influences the behavior and the emotions of an individual. Each song, tune, note or rhythm evokes a feeling, has intrinsic meaning to it. The impact of culture is one of the reasons for the changes in the music industry. There are different kinds of music, fast paced, aggressive, soft, classical, intense, energetic, and many more. Preference to listen to the songs/music often changes with occasion, context, and mood. Many enjoy heavy metal music and others enjoy Sufi music. Some happen to enjoy both genres. The present study is aimed at understanding the inclination towards Heavy Metal Music, Sufi Music and its relation with aggression. In the study, links to a heavy metal song Pure Hatred by Chimaira and Sufi song Jaan Na JaanJaan by Riaz Ali QadriBhawain was attached with a questionnaire that was sent to participants through WhatsApp and Instagram. The questionnaire contained questions that were guided by the Buss and Perry aggression Questionnaire (1992). From the study it has been found that aggression is not the causal factor of Heavy metal music and Sufi Music.

Keywords: Aggression, Genres, Heavy Metal, Music, Sufi.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Aggression is a term often used to describe the behaviour of someone or oneself. This term is extensively studied by various experts and it is, therefore, defined as an intentional action to hurt someone. This act of harming someone can be physical, verbal, psychological and even social. This behaviour becomes subjective through an understanding of intent and context. We say that people who smash their cars into someone intentionally is an act of aggression, whereas, attacking the opponent's army in times of war is not often considered aggressive. The latter is ruled out of the definition of aggression. In understanding aggressive behaviour we look at aggression as intentional and unintentional behaviour. When a doctor injects the patient with anesthesia, it hurts the patient, but the intent is to help with the surgery. On the other hand, bullying someone to feel superior is an intentional form of aggression. From the aforementioned examples, we observe that one falls within the concept of aggression while the other does not.

Aggression has other reference points to be understood. They are emotional or impulsive aggression and instrumental or cognitive aggression. Impulsive or emotional aggression, as the name suggests refers to aggression that occurs out of impulsivity and less forethought. It results in negative emotions. Instrumental or cognitive aggression is planned and thought. The aggressing act is conducted to gain something, like attention, monetary gain, etc. As stated earlier, the intention to harm someone can be physical, verbal, social or psychological. This behaviour violates social boundaries and affects interpersonal and intra-personal relationships.

1.1 Sources of Aggression:

- *Frustration*-This occurs when an individual is prevented from reaching a desired goal. Berkowitz in 1969 revised the Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis which previously stated that frustration leads to aggression. In his revised version, he stated that only in the presence of certain cues, does frustration lead to aggression.
- *Human Instinct* -According to Freud, aggression is a basic human instinct. He believed that aggression is a part of the death instinct that drives people to destroy themselves and others. He also propagated that lack of expression of aggression can lead to illness.

- *Biological and Chemical*- Certain areas of the brain control aggressive response. Amygdala and other areas of the limbic system have been shown to trigger aggressive response when stimulated. There are chemical reasons leading to aggression as well. Testosterone, a sexual hormone in male, is linked to higher levels of aggression. Low serotonin levels among humans are also found during aggressive behaviour.
- *Social cognitive Factor* -According to this view, it is believed that aggression is learned and acquired from social settings. Behaviours are shaped from an external model or through imitation. Bandura's early study on an aggressive model over a screen and its influence on children was the first attempt to understand aggression as a learned behaviour. This gave rise to various supporting studies. Researches have examined the impact of violence shown on television and media and its effect on the viewer's behaviour.

1.2 Impact of Music on Daily life

"Music is a language that doesn't speak in particular words. It speaks in emotions, and if it's in the bones, it's in the bones." - Keith Richards.

Music, a form of media, is enjoyed by all age groups. It is a source of entertainment that transcends languages, boundaries, awakening emotions and sensations. While listening to songs in different languages, we tend to understand the message, though not in its entirety - the language barrier no longer effective. But the belief that music helps in conveying messages, emotion, feeling, ideas; stands true with the music that has been and is continually produced. Songs/music convey messages about social causes, psychological causes; it can be about sharing personal experiences, celebrating joy, derogate someone, etc. It's prevalent in daily activities; people listen to music while doing chores, exercising at the gym, studying, at parties, daily commotion etc. It is not a mere distraction, each song or genre of music serves a different purpose, befitting the context. For example, energetic music is played at parties, some prefer energetic music at the gym, while others' prefer soft music and some prefer listening to it before going to bed or while studying. These preferences are subjective and contextual. For instance, the lyrics of the song Bodies by Drowning pool states "Let the bodies hit the floor now! Push me again. This is the end", comes across in an aggressive tone and is performed so. However, some enjoy such songs while others may not. The preferences to listen to and enjoy a type of music or song vary with situational environment, dispositional inclination, mood, etc. To understand the preference of song type or music genre and its relation with aggressive or violent thought and behaviour is of utmost important. These actions affect the individuals and society at large.

Media, including video games, television, OTT, has a significant impact on the viewers; it can be both positive and negative. Many studies have made noted strides in such areas. Overwhelming amount of studies has been conducted that state the negative impact of violent media and its correlation with increased negative thoughts and violent behaviours (Bushman & Huesmann, 2014). Access to such medium, in the present day has become easy. In the age of smartphone and tablets, almost everyone has access to music. This includes music dating from the 18th century to present day. Many studies have been conducted to investigate the negative impacts of music such as sexual violence, bullying, and other deviant acts like drinking and smoking (Gentile, 2014; Warbuton and Braunstein, 2012). Contrary to this, there have been studies that investigated positive effect of music like reduced stress, increased concentration, empathy (Sittler, 2019), etc. Taking forward the psychological and empirical pursuit to analyse the inclination to music choices and aggression level, guides us to methods which reduce such behaviours. As discussed, music has a profound connotation on lives and it will happen so with the rise in its demand and supply.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The decline of free love and optimistic culture of 1960s, gave rise to the culture of extreme music genres in the early 1970s. (Stack et al. 1994). The extreme genre of music have within it various subsets like rock, punk, heavy metal. Today, these genres have been further categorised on distinct themes, lyrical content, and instrumental tune. The drug experimentation of the 1960s and decline of peaceful protests, especially in the United Kingdom and USA, gave rise to pessimistic and angry theme within the music industry (Reddick and Bersin, 2002). To this day extreme music has been held responsible for social and psychological issues like depression, suicide and deviant acts like substance abuse. (Shafron and Karno, 2013). In 2013, Shafron and Karno conducted an experiment to examine the music preference of 551 university students. The participants were divided into two sample groups. 57% preferred heavy metal and hard rock music and the rest (43%) were in another group. The participants who preferred heavy metal and hard rock showed a significant increase in symptoms of depression and anxiety. However, there was no difference noticed between the two groups on the trait of anger.

Violent lyrics in songs have also shown considerable rise in hostility among males, relative to non-violent songs (Mast, J.F and McAndrew, F.T.). Supporting the above statement, in another study it was noted that lyrical content, among other variables like individual variable, contextual variable musical variable, is one of the mechanisms linking music with emotional response (Juslin and Mustfjall, 2008; Juslin et al. 2009). When

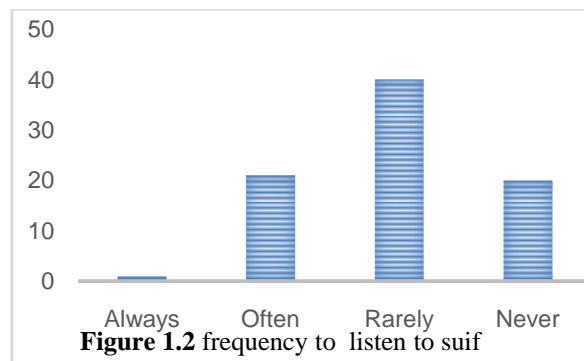
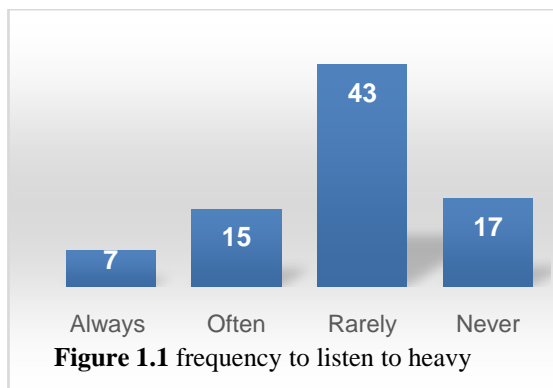
understanding the latent reasons that arouse anger, it was found that negative themes like lyrics and videos elicit anger, arousing aggressive behaviour.(Gownesmith and Bloom,1997).Under the literature review, one of the categories that was divided included the choice of music that was preferred at times of anger or negative mood. It was found that extreme music was listened to when angry.Through studies that were conducted on fans and those disinterested in heavy metal, it was noted that there was no increase in anger after listening to heavy metal music. Self-reported anger saw no difference in fans of heavy metal music. Whereas, greater self -reported anger was noticed among non-fans of heavy metal. (Gownesmith and Bloom, 1997).Saarikallio, (2011), Thompson et al. (2012); Papinc Zak et al., (2015), in their study noted that individuals are drawn to music that corroborates their emotional state.

III. METHODOLOGY

The research method of questionnaire was used to gather primary data. Eighty-two participants of the age group 18-26 participated in the study, irrespective of gender and nationality. A Google form link of the questionnaire was shared through WhatsApp and Instagram. To ensure the ethics of research were maintained, the consent of the participants was asked before answering the questions. This form outlined the procedure. Demographic details of the participants were asked which included Name, Gender (male, female, other), Age range (18-20, 21-23, 24-26), Nationality and email id. Before filling the answers to the questions, the participants were requested to watch and listen to the links provided. These were YouTube links to the songs; Pure Hatred by Chimaira and Jaan Na Jaan by Riaz Ali QadriBhawain. Both songs were approximately three minutes long. The questions provided were guided by the Buss and Perry Aggression Questionnaire (1992). The respondents were to choose from the options provided under each question. The respondents were made aware of the confidentiality of their results and were asked to provide their first and honest opinion.

IV. DATA INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

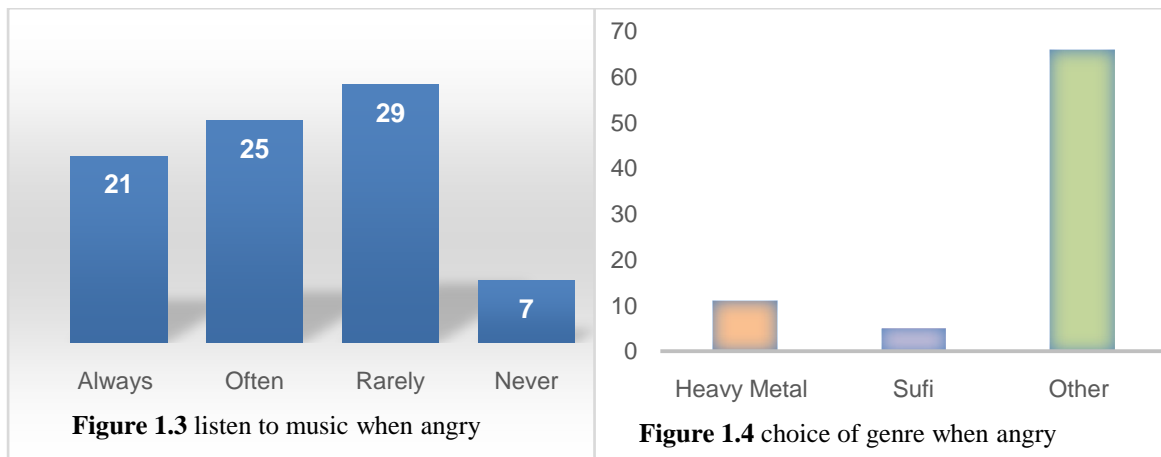
From the data collected, the demographic divide was such that more than half the population was female (63.4%) and the rest were male (35.4%) and other gender (1.2%). Since the study was aimed at focusing on the age group from 18-26, samples were divided into 3 i.e. 18-20, they comprised of the highest respondents (80.5%) and the other age ranges 21-23 and 24-26 comprised of 15.9% and 3.7% respectively. The study was open to all nationalities. To set the premise of the questionnaire, respondents were asked about how frequently they to listen to music. The outcomes show that the majority of the sample listens to music. Considering the factors mentioned in the introduction, music is a medium of entertainment and expression, more than 70% of the population listen to music always. When analyzing the difference in the frequency to listen to Heavy Metal and Sufi music, the results show a close similarity.



The above figures, 1.1 and 1.2 show that approximately 40% of individuals rarely listen to either of the genres. However, there is a considerable difference seen between listens to always listen to Heavy metal music and Sufi music.As the questionnaire provided two links to a heavy metal song and Sufi song, the likeness of the respondents was noted. A considerable difference among the responses was noted. As can be seen from the graphs below Table 1.3 and 1.4, with a difference of almost 20%, the respondents enjoyed the song Pure hatred were 38 and that of Jaan Na Jaan was 51. It can be noticed that though the frequency to rarely listen to Sufi music, majority respondents enjoyed the song provided.

More than half the population prefers listening to Sufi music (63.41%). From the study, it can be found that almost 35% of the respondents rarely listen to songs when angry whereas, almost 60% of the respondents feel calm when they listen to music. Among the respondents who listen to songs when angry prefer listening genres other than heavy metal and Sufi. The same is true when feeling calm after listening to music. The reasons for such is that many respondents may either do not have much likeness towards the two genres and

some also particularly find Heavy metal music too harsh. The other reason being that though they may find Sufi music pleasant, they prefer other genres over them.



The study also tried to understand the anger levels among respondents in various situations and it was found that a very less percent of the population never project their anger. But around 50% rarely do show their anger. Such projections are seen in overt behaviors of clenched jaws, tightening of jaws, etc. Due to a low percentage of the population that never project anger, the rarity of trouble in controlling temper is around 45%, the highest. This could mean that respondents who do not show their anger can rarely control temper; this is in consideration that temper is a state of anger. When the asked if heavy metal music causes aggression, more than half (62.20%), denied the question whereas a considerable rest (37.8%) agreed with the question. The opinions on heavy metal music of the respondents were noted and the major finding was that though many do not personally listen to the genre, they are integrative of it as a genre that others may like. Few respondents also believe that though few heavy metal songs may sound aggressive, they do not project that aggression onto the listeners. The rest that agreed with heavy metal music causing aggression believes that such music makes them uncomfortable and that is noise. A huge difference was noted when respondents were asked if Sufi music causes aggression and around 91.46% denied so. The reasons for such are that almost all the respondents find this genre of music to be soothing and pleasant. Many participants also prefer listening to it before sleeping and find it relaxing.

V. FINDINGS

Out of 82 respondents, 52 deny that aggression is caused by heavy metal music and 75 denied that Sufi music causes aggression. It can be understood that the respondents look at the bigger picture, where music is a source of entertainment and its effect on behaviour and emotions is not a direct cause of aggression.

VI. CONCLUSION

It can be stated that neither of the two genres, Heavy Metal, and Sufi music relates to aggression. Factors like lack of secondary data on Sufi music and its relation to emotions, method of data collection, etc., were a few limitations to the study. The results may differ if a similar questionnaire was provided after listening to the songs in an experimental setup. For many years, it has been assumed that aggressive or extreme music is related to aggressive behaviour, and that has been proven by few researches. However, contradictory opinions still do exist. Understanding the changing context of the producers and consumers of music with regards to factors like culture, time frame, trend, etc. is important.

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