Influence of personality on music preference and coping strategy among young adults.

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Abstract

In the contemporary lives of young adult music listening is one of the most enigmatic behaviors for which they have diverse preferences and coping strategies are conscious and direct approach to problems solving which are a reflection of their personality. The aim of this research is to investigate the influence of personality traits on individual music preference and coping strategy among young adults. A stratified random sample of 300 participants with age group 18-26 years was assessed using standardized tools. The results revealed that agreeableness and emotional stability/neuroticism predict emotional & melodious music preference, openness to experience & neuroticism predict by contemporary & rhythmic music preference. Additionally, neuroticism and openness to experience predict avoidant coping. The study unravels insights into the psychological mechanisms that can be fundamental to individual differences. Further practical implications can be useful in various fields.

Keywords: Personality, Music Preference, Music Listening, Coping Strategy.

Introduction

Personality is a fascinating psychological phenomenon which reveals patterns of thoughts, feelings, and human behaviors [1]. Upon observing people around what strikes us is individual differences that determines characteristically people are different from one another [2]. There has been long standing interest in psychologist to provide comprehensive insights in relation to human behavior [3]. Like Raymond Cattell was one of the first psychologist to assert that music and personality are associated and it can provide insights into one's personality. In order to understand individual differences, it is significant to comprehend personality traits that reflect the basis on which people differ [4]. Gosling et al. inferred that personality traits make an individual to prefer and create their environmental stimuli that reflect and reinforce their traits, for instance music [5, 6] and coping strategies. There is a general consensus in recent studies that music psychology and its association with personality is gaining momentum [6]. But limited research is available on what specific music genres people prefer. Music has been a part of human culture ever since the dawn of human civilization and people of all age groups identify music as ubiquitous activity and universal tool to express. In addition, it is studied by Rentfrow & Gosling that music listening enables young adults to interact at cognitive, emotional, socio-cultural and physiological level [7]. Young adulthood is a life transitioning phase of our life where numerous changes have an influence on our personality and overall well-being [8] correspondingly shaping our mindset, defining our responses to stressors in order to keep our temperament sane over time across different situations [9] and underscoring the significance of understanding personality one of the primary means to predict individual's coping strategies. Coping is a behavioral disposition [10] equated with defense mechanism as a persistent trait determining adaptive or maladaptive reactions [11]. However, effectiveness of a particular coping strategy will vary by individual and circumstance [12] as perceiving a given situation can be motivation or opportunity for one and stressor or challenge for other individual.

The findings of one of the earliest studies conducted by Cattell & Anderson suggested that music and personality are associated and music preferences reveal unconscious needs of an individual. While in contrast other researches [6, 13] have suggested that music preferences of an individual are indicative of explicit traits of personality that are the consciously recognized attributes of personality. The personality dimension extraversion is indicative of strong rhythms that are energetic have fast tempo and are high arousing music [14] like rock or hip-hop music says McCown, et al., [15] Likewise, Vuoskoski & Eerola [16] assert that agreeableness is positively correlated with music sounding tender and negative with music sounding scare. Previous findings have suggested that personality traits make an individual incline towards environmental stimuli that align with their trait dispositions [5]. It is asserted by Bouchard et al., [17] that situational and dispositional coping

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can be predicted by personality difference in potential and current psychological distress. It is important to lay emphasis on the personality characteristics having significant interplay with music and coping strategies. Over the past years research was conducted on western population because of which it is not appropriate to generalize the findings on other culture and age groups. The aim of the current study is to address and broaden our understanding by examining personality traits that are predictive of music preferences and coping strategies in a sample of young adults with Indian population.

Personality

APA states that personality refers to the enduring characteristics and behavior that comprise a person's unique adjustment to life, including major traits, interests, drives, values, self-concept, abilities and emotional patters. The big five factor model resulting from decades of study is widely used to define personality based on five dimensions described as:

1. **Extraversion**- This trait is attributed as gregarious(social), assertive, energetic, excitement seeking and out-going. In social situations they prefer interacting with others and are quite dominant
2. **Agreeableness**- This trait is attributed as straight forward, altruism, modest, tender and cooperative. These individuals are considerate towards social harmony.
3. **Conscientiousness**- This trait is attributed as competence, self- disciplined, sincere, prefer orderliness. These individuals strive for success through determination, being decisive and focused on one goal at a time
4. **Neuroticism**- This trait is attributed with anxiety, hostility, impulsive, moody/ vulnerable, not satisfied easily, self-conscious (shy).
5. **Openness to experience-** This trait is attributed by being imaginative, curious, aesthetic or artistic, excitable to explore, unconventional, liking for sensation seeking. These individuals like to engage themselves in different activities that are creative and brain stimulating.

In a study conducted by David & Suls [18] on Coping efforts in daily life: Role of big five traits and problem appraisal investigates for consecutive eight days on community men residing who were asked to complete diaries addressing coping and stressful situations found that neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience and conscientiousness predicted use of coping strategy in daily life and moderated between appraisals and coping strategy use. Furthermore, low control over events was correlated with resilience on distraction, catharsis, acceptance, and seeking emotional social support and lack of direct action. A study was undertaken by Brown

R.A. [19]on Music Preferences and personality among Japanese university students on 268 participants. The results assessed on six dimensions and 24 facets of personality and 12 music genres indicated that openness to experience and aesthetic appreciation was associated with reflective music preference, extraversion was associated with pop music preference and other personality dimensions were less associated with music preferences.

Music Preference

Music preference describes the kind of genres of music that people are drawn to listen. Rentfrow & Gosling [6] laid the structure underlying music preferences that explains beliefs about music, link with personality and importance of music in lives of people across different across different geographic location. Further subsequent study of Rentfrow [6] suggested five dimensions for music genre that indicate music preferences. However, these dimensions are more suitable for west population. Consequently, music genre dimensions outlined by Upadhya et al., [20] are more aligned for Indian population that are explained as follows:

1. **Intense and Electronic:** consists of hip hop, remix, pop, rock and English music. The intense and electronic factor attribute to music genre that are full of energy and in which electronic instruments are used.
2. **Devotional and Cultural:** consist of ghazal, folk, bhajan, patriotic, classical, Islamic and instrumental. The devotional and cultural factor attribute to genres that emphasize themes of devotion and love and belong to different cultures and religions.
3. **Emotional and Melodious:** consists of romantic (love) songs, melodious film songs, soft songs, Bollywood sad songs. The emotional and melodious factor attribute to genre that emphasize various emotions and are melodious.
4. **Spiritual and Reflective:** consists of new age, trance, jazz and blues music. The spiritual and melodious factor attribute to genres that seem to facilitate introspection, imagination etc. and which contain spiritual elements.
5. **Contemporary and Rhythmic:** consists of Punjabi and rap music. The contemporary and rhythmic factor attribute to genres that are loaded with rhythms and which are contemporary.

Ramakrishnan & Sharma [21] conducted a study to investigate music preference of people in different situations and college going students, as a result they found that pop music was most preferred in all situations, soft and new age music was preferred for high attention situations and upbeat and popular music was preferred for low attention situation. Likewise, research conducted by Raevska & Tadinacon Intelligence, Music Preferences, and Uses of Music from the Perspective of Evolutionary Psychology on 467 high school students, it was found that preference for instrumental music is significantly predicted by intelligence, but not for voice- instrumental music. A factor analysis of five factors - reflective, popular, conservative, intense and sophisticated analyzed that cognitive use of music is significantly correlated with music of reflective, intense and sophisticated factors.

Coping Strategy

According to APA coping strategy is an action, a series of actions, or a thought process used in meeting a stressful or

unpleasant situations or in modifying one's reaction to such a situation. Coping responses are categorized on the basis of their function and focus [12] as described in the multidimensional coping inventory constructed by Carver et al. There are three types of coping strategies:

1. **Problem focused Coping**- aimed at changing the stressful situation, having good psychological strength, predictive of positive outcome and a practical approach to problem solving. This coping strategy has three sub-dimensions active coping, use of informational support and positive reframing. Problem focused approach is adopted by an individual when they believe that perceived stressor of challenging circumstance can be altered with their capabilities [22].
2. **Emotion focused Coping-** is aimed at regulating emotions associated with the stressful situation. This coping strategy has five sub-dimensions: venting, use of emotional support, acceptance, humour, self-blame and religion. This strategy is adopted by an individual to decrease negative emotion that are associated with perceived stressor.
3. **Avoidant Coping-** is aimed to make cognitive efforts to disengage from the stressor, this strategy is also indicative of adaptive coping. Avoidant coping has four sub-dimensions: self-distraction, denial, substance use and behavioural disengagement. This strategy is adopted by an individual to distract or escape perceived stressor.

A study conducted by Khan [23] on Role of Positive Psychological Strengths and Big five Personality Traits in Coping Mechanism of University Students on 200 students investigated that relationship of coping strategies with positive psychological strengths and big five- personality factors among undergraduate students found that positive psychological strengths and big five personality are significantly associated with coping strategies except neuroticism. Students with high extraversion, openness and conscientiousness were engaged in problem focused coping whereas high neuroticism were less engaged in coping mechanism.

Purpose

The aim of this research is to investigate the influence of personality traits on individual music preference and coping strategy among young adults. By understanding how differences in personality can influence the kind of music genres individuals prefer, and adopt coping strategy, the study seeks to provide valuable insights into the psychological mechanisms underlying the intersection of personality, music, and coping mechanisms.

Hypothesis

1. Personality traits will significantly predict intense and electronic music preference among young adults.
2. Personality traits will significantly predict devotional and cultural music preference among young adults.
3. Personality traits will significantly predict emotional and melodious music preference among young adults.
4. Personality traits will significantly predict spiritual and reflective music preference among young adults.
5. Personality traits will significantly predict contemporary and rhythmic music preference among young adults.
6. Personality traits will significantly predict problem focused coping strategy among young adults.
7. Personality traits will significantly predict emotion focused coping strategy among young adults.
8. Personality traits will significantly predict avoidant coping strategy among young adults.

Method

Sample

The sample for this study consisted of 300 individuals. Age range was from 18 to 26 years, with a mean of 22 years old. The sample consisted of both males and females. Stratified random sampling method was used in selecting respondents to participate in this study. The survey was entirely voluntary and participants were ensured anonymity in their responses.

Measures

Ten-Item Personality Inventory-(TIPI) (Gosling et al., 2003). A ten-item measure of the Big Five personality dimensions – 2 items for each of the 5 dimensions. Each item is rated on a 7-point scale that ranges from 1 (disagree strongly) to 7 (agree strongly) [5].

1. **Music Preference Scale (MPS):** It is developed by Upadhyay et al. and it was used to figure out the music preferences of the respondents [20]. The scale included 23 music genres: Bollywood (sad), Melodious Film, Romantic (love), Soft, Folk, Rock, Ghazal, Bhajan, Punjabi, Patriotic, Sufi, Classic, Hip Hop, English, Remix, Rap, Pop, Blues, Islamic Songs, New Age, Jazz, Trance, and Instrumental. Each genre is to be rated on a seven-point Likert rating scale {with endpoints at 1 (Not at all) and 7 (Very much)} by the respondents to indicate their preference for listening to a particular music genre. Each music genre was accompanied by one open ended item asking them to respond to 'when (time, place, mood, etc.) do you prefer listening to this music genre?' The Cronbach's alpha of the scale is 0.85.
2. **The Brief-COPE:** The Brief-Cope was developed as a short version of the original 60-item COPE scale [10], it is a 28 item self-report questionnaire designed to measure effective and ineffective ways to cope with a stressful life event. The scale can determine someone's primary coping styles with scores on the following three subscale: Problem-Focused Coping, Emotion-Focused Coping and Avoidant Coping.

Procedure

The method of enquiry employed in this study was survey method, which involved the use of four standardized questionnaires for data collection. The participants of the research study were informed about the purpose of the research and they actively engaged by filling out the questionnaires via Google Forms and researcher sending a *physical data collection questionnaire* request to a respondent that can be filled in and sent back.

Results

(Table 1 & 2) Overall model significantly predicts variable at $p<0.05$ with 1.7% of the variance caused. Independent predictor variables to regression equation Intense & Electronic music preference are not found to be significant.

(Table 3) Overall model significantly predicts variable at $p<0.05$ with 1.0% of the variance caused. Independent predictor variables to regression equation Devotional & Cultural music preference are not found to be significant.

(Table 4) Overall model significantly predicts variable at $p<0.05$ with 4.5% of the variance caused. Independent predictor variables Agreeableness and Emotional stability(N) to regression equation Emotional & Melodious music preference are found to be significant.

(Table 5) Overall model significantly predicts variable at $p<0.05$ with 4.0% of the variance caused. Independent predictor variables to regression equation Spiritual & Reflective music preference are not found to be significant.

(Table 6) Overall model significantly predicts variable at $p<0.05$ with 4.9% of the variance caused. Independent predictor variables Emotional stability(N) and Openness to experience to regression equation Contemporary & Rhythmic music preference are found to be significant.

(Table 7) Overall model significantly predicts variable at $p<0.05$ with 2.0% of the variance caused. Independent predictor variables to regression equation Problem focused Coping are not found to be significant.

(Table 8) Overall model significantly predicts variable at $p<0.05$ with 2.8% of the variance caused. Independent predictor variables to regression equation Emotion focused Coping are not found to be significant.

(Table 9) Overall model significantly predicts variable at $p<0.05$ with 10.2% of the variance caused. Independent predictor variables Emotional stability(N) and Openness to experience to regression equation Avoidant Coping are found to be significant

Table 1: *Descriptives E- extraversion, A- agreeableness, C-conscientiousness, N-emotional stability/neuroticism, O-openness to experience, I&E- intense and electronic, D&C -devotional &cultural, E&M- emotional &melodious, S&R-spiritual &reflective, C&R- contemporary &rhythmic, PFC- problem focused coping, EFC-emotion focused coping, AC- avoidant coping*

E	A	C	N	O		I &E	D &C	E& M	S & R	C & R	PFC	EFC	AC
N	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	8	9	9	8	10	20	28	19	13	8	20	28	16
	10	89	70	9	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.7	0.1	17	0.7	0.7	0.7
SD	2	2	2	2	2	7	10	4	5	3	3	5	4
	89	43	72	77	52	9	0.3	98	86	14	86	63	43

Table 2 *Multiple Regression analysis of Personality traits and Intense & Electronic preference.*

Predictors	SEB	β	p
Extraversion	0.146	0.006	0.922
Agreeableness	0.173	-0.004	0.941
Conscientiousness	0.154	-0.074	0.214
Emotional Stability (N)	0.151	-0.022	0.71
Openness to experience	0.172	0.119	0.053
R2	0.017		
F	1.001		

Table 3: *Multiple Regression analysis of Personality traits and Devotional &Cultural preference.*

Predictor	B	SEB	β	p
Extraversion	0.043	0.214	0.012	0.842
Agreeableness	0.113	0.253	0.027	0.655
Conscientiousness	0.241	0.226	0.063	0.288
Emotional Stability (N)	0.017	0.221	0.005	0.938
Openness to experience	0.215	0.251	0.052	0.393
R2	0.01			
F	0.595			

Table 4: *Multiple Regression analysis of Personality traits and Emotional & Melodious preference.*

Predictor	B	SEB	β	p
Extraversion	-0.139	0.101	-0.08	0.172
Agreeableness	0.248	0.12	0.121	0.039
Conscientiousness	0.123	0.107	0.067	0.251
Emotional Stability (N)	-0.233	0.104	-0.13	0.026
Openness to experience	0.116	0.119	0.059	0.331
R2	0.045			
F	2.795			

Table 5: *Multiple Regression analysis of Personality traits and Spiritual & Reflective preference.*

Predictor	B	SEB	β	p
Extraversion	-0.007	0.122	-0.003	0.955
Agreeableness	0.057	0.144	0.024	0.692
Conscientiousness	-0.141	0.128	-0.065	0.273
Emotional Stability (N)	0.024	0.125	0.011	0.848
Openness to experience	0.015	0.143	0.007	0.915
R2	0.004			
F	0.266			

Table 6: *Multiple Regression analysis of Personality traits and Contemporary & Rhythmic preference.*

Predictor	B	SEB	β	p
Extraversion	0.122	0.064	0.112	0.058
Agreeableness	-0.017	0.075	-0.013	0.819
Conscientiousness	-0.001	0.067	-0.001	0.991
Emotional Stability (N)	-0.137	0.066	-0.12	0.039
Openness to experience	0.184	0.075	0.148	0.015
R2	0.049			
F	3.004			

Table 7: *Multiple Regression analysis of Personality traits and Problem focused Coping.*

Predictor	B	SEB	β	p
Extraversion	-0.064	0.08	-0.048	0.425
Agreeableness	0.107	0.094	0.067	0.256
Conscientiousness	0.083	0.084	0.058	0.326
Emotional Stability (N)	-0.021	0.082	-0.015	0.797
Openness to experience	0.126	0.093	0.082	0.18
R2	0.02			
F	1.17			

Table 8: *Multiple Regression analysis of Personality traits and Emotion focused Coping.*

Predictor	B	SEB	β	p
Extraversion	-0.085	0.116	-0.043	0.464
Agreeableness	-0.253	0.136	-0.109	0.065
Conscientiousness	-0.028	0.122	-0.013	0.821
Emotional Stability (N)	-0.188	0.119	-0.093	0.115
Openness to experience	-0.073	0.136	-0.033	0.593
R2	0.028			
F	1.716			

Table 9: *Multiple Regression analysis of Personality traits and Avoidant Coping.*

Predictor	B	SEB	β	p
Extraversion	-0.003	0.088	-0.002	0.972
Agreeableness	-0.155	0.103	-0.085	0.136
Conscientiousness	-0.148	0.092	-0.091	0.11
Emotional Stability (N)	-0.287	0.09	-0.179	0.002
Openness to experience	-0.297	0.103	-0.169	0.004
R2	0.102			
F	6.714			

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Discussion

The study aim ed to investigate the influence of personality traits on individual music preference and coping strategy among young adults. The results that specific personality traits significantly predict and individual preference for music and coping strategy. The Bive traits agreeableness and emotional stability(neuroticism) predict emotional & melodious music preference (β=.120, p<0.05), (β=.059, p<0.05) respectively, this indicates that such individuals like to listen to romantic songs, melodious film songs, soft songs and Bollywood sad songs that give them a sense of emotional connection and is soothing. The result is consistent with study conducted by Rawlings [24] found that openness to experience traits have eclectic music preference. Emotional stability (neuroticism) and openness to experience traits predict contemporary & rhythmic music preference (β= -.120, p<0.05) (β=.148, p<0.05) respectively, this indicates preference for Punjabi and rap music which shows liking for complex and engaging music that can be cathartic for people with neuroticism traits and exploration of new emotions and genre for open individuals. These findings are similar with results obtained in study conducted by (Naz et al., 2021) where they found extraversion, openness to experience and agreeableness associated with intense and rebellious music, upbeat and conventional and reflective and complex music. Additionally, openness to experience was negatively associated with energetic and rhythmic music, neuroticism was associated with reflective and complex music. In contrast research conducted by Upadhyay et al.,[20] found that contemporary and rhythmic music is unrelated with any personality dimension. The personality dimension emotional stability(neuroticism) and openness to experience significantly predicts avoidant coping strategy (β= -.179, p<0.05), (β=-.169, p<0.05) respectively, this indicates that individuals may adopt this coping mechanism in order to self-distract, deny the problem and emotionally distance themselves in response to stressor. A study was conducted by Gomez [25] found that females with neuroticism trait were predictive of avoidant coping strategy. Thus, our findings show intricate association of personality, music preference and coping strategies. These findings can be beneficial for various interventions in psychotherapy. Likewise Minnie conducted a study to understand the relationship Big Five Traits and music preferences in 145 university students ages between 19-26 years [26]. The findings indicated the most prevalent personality traits among respondents were agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience, while in music preferences, energetic-rhythmic was the most common. Further, the study also indicated that openness and energetic-rhythmic music had a significant correlation. While no such correlations were seen in other conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism traits of personality and subdimensions of music preferences (intense-rebellious and energetic rhythmic).

Conclusion

The results obtained in the current study demonstrate that music preferences and coping strategies reflect personality of young adults. Since personality traits are characteristics that reflect in various facets of a person's life just like music listening is a daily habit and coping strategies are response to daily challenges. It can be concluded that understanding personality traits significant impact upon our music preferences and coping strategies is crucial. The study investigating music engagement style of individual would prove to be beneficial. Given the limitation the future research can focus on music engagement style of an individual in association with their personality, music preference and coping strategies.

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