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Favorite Musical Styles, Emotional Intelligence and Adolescent' Personality

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Abstract

This study aims to highlight the relationship between adolescents' favourite musical styles, their level of emotional intelligence development and their personality traits. There were 97 teenagers involved, who individually note information on their favourite musical genres and the frequency of listening to their favourite music. Subjects were administered two tests as follows: the High School Personality Questionnaire - HSPQ (Cattel) and the Emotional Intelligence Scale - EIS (Schutte et al., 1998). The results indicate that, according to adolescents' preference for certain music styles, there are associations between their emotional intelligence and certain personality traits.

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1. Introduction

Music is important in adolescents' personal and social life and, as a result, there are numerous studies which prove that affective experiences influence them in choosing favourite musical genres (Roe, 1985; Wells & Hakanen, 1991; Zillmann & Gan, 1997; DeNora, 1999; North, Hargreaves & O'Neill, 2000; Sloboda & O'Neill, 2001; Laiho, 2004). According to Radocy & Boyle (2003), psychologists may use musical preferences to identify personality types correlated with each adolescent's musical choices because musical behaviours, cognitions and attitudes about music are based on the authors' idea that "personal preferences for certain dishes, paintings, decorations, clothing, and music are embedded in individual biological needs, culture, training and experience" (p. 362).

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Dumitru (2006) considers music as both a “mirror to personality” as it faithfully reflects its features and a hologram because “music is a projection of personality which sometimes is more real than personality itself” (p. 30).

Teenagers prefer to listen to music that reflects specific personality characteristics and / or issues they face in the maturing process (Schwartz & Fouts, 2003). In this respect, the authors conducted a study involving 164 adolescents divided into three groups according to their preferred musical genre. Results showed that adolescents who prefer heavy music (e.g., rock) are more direct, stubborn, less preoccupied, or even indifferent about others’ feelings, more pessimistic and much too sensitive. They act more on impulse without regard to the rights of the others. In addition, they feel uncomfortable in family relationships, because of which face many problems in the family. They do not follow the rules and do not have self confidence in terms of achieving academic success. The music they listen to validates their feelings through its messages. Teens who listen to light music (e.g., ballads, upbeat dance songs) proved to be too responsible, conformist and adaptable in dealing with others. They feel uncomfortable in sexual relationships with partners of the opposite sex and they seek the others’ acceptance. The music listened to expresses fears associated with the feeling of not being alone, emotionally speaking. Young people who listen to heterogeneous music have fewer problems associated with their personality. They are easier to support emotionally, they are more flexible in using music and in the way they solve problems.

Mayer & Salovey (1997) described emotional intelligence as “the ability to perceive, evaluate and express emotions, to access and generate feelings when they facilitate thought, to understand emotion and emotional information and to adjust feelings for emotional and intellectual development” (cit. in Caruso, Mayer and Salovey, 2002, p 306). This definition supports four components (different features or skills) which the authors have named branches, namely: perception of emotions or identification of emotions, emotional facilitation of thinking or using emotions, understanding emotions and handling emotions or emotion management.

2. Objectives and Hypotheses

2.1. Objectives

This study aims to highlight the relationship between adolescents’ favourite musical styles, their level of emotional intelligence development and their personality traits. In this respect the following hypotheses were formulated:

2.2. Hypotheses

In this respect the following hypotheses were formulated:

1. There are differences in terms of emotional intelligence according to adolescents’ preference for a particular kind of music.
2. There are associations between adolescents’ emotional intelligence and certain personality traits depending on the preferred musical genre.

3. Method

3.1. Instruments

The adolescents were individually administered two psychological tests, as follows:

- *High School Personality Questionnaire – HSPQ*, which was constructed by Cattell in order to allow simultaneous measurement of multiple personality dimensions in subjects aged 12-18. HSPQ starts from the 16 PF source traits, set by the author in 1950, through factor analysis and measures a set of 14 personality traits, designated by letters of the alphabet. For the tool to be a complex one, Cattell sought to address the behavioural dimensions that appear significant to the teenagers in question, to determine the extent to which these dimensions exist through their specificity, to determine the manner in which youngsters makes them operate in various life situations, to

investigate circumstances and conditions in which they appear to be adaptive, to give an interactionist view on the interrelations of these behavioural dimensions. Numerous studies have been done for assessing the validity of the questionnaire and its usefulness in two types of research was highlighted: a research technique that measures the correlation between quantitative assessments and a research technique based on intersectional data, which is preferable because generalizations about the structure of personality in adolescence are considered to be more realistic and scientifically accurate (Minulescu, 2004).

- *Emotional Intelligence Scale – EIS* was developed by Schutte, Malouff, Hall, Haggerty, Cooper, Golden & Dornheim (1998). Its purpose is to evaluate emotional intelligence from the perspective of its skills, based on the original model proposed by Salovey & Mayer (1990), using a self-administered questionnaire. The scale includes 33 items selected from an original 62-item scale and the response to each item is given based on a Lickert scale, where 1 represents total disagreement and 5, total agreement. Regarding the psychometric indicators of the scale, Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient is .87, and the estimate coefficient of the test - retest reliability is .78. The predictive validity was tested in the American school population, the scores obtained by completing the scale at the beginning of the school year correlate with the final average grade point with $r(63) = .32, p = .01$. EIS showed a good discriminative validity, having proved to be different from the cognitive abilities, as measured by SAT tests, $r(41) = -.06$ (Schutte et al., 1998). For this research we obtained a high Cronbach alpha index of internal consistency ($\alpha = .81$), very close to that presented by its authors.

4. Results

The first hypothesis, concerning the differences in terms of emotional intelligence according to the adolescents' preference for a particular musical genre was not confirmed in the target group. From the results obtained, it appears that variances are homogeneous, the compared groups are approximately equal and the Levene test for homogeneity of variance returns a not statistically significant result ($p = .312$). In this case the groups have equal variance, aspect proven through the Bonferroni test, with statistically insignificant thresholds ($p = 1.000$). The simple individual writing of information on preferred musical genres and the frequency of listening to their favourite music may not represent the most appropriate way of investigating adolescents' preferences for certain musical genres.

To verify the second hypothesis, namely that there are associations between adolescents' emotional intelligence and certain personality traits depending on preferred musical genre, we performed correlational analysis and its results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Correlations between emotional intelligence and personality traits according to the preferred musical genre

Personality Traits – HSPQ	IE – EIS	IE – EIS	IE – EIS	IE – EIS
	teenagers who prefer pop	teenagers who prefer rock	teenagers who prefer rap / hip-hop	teenagers who prefer electronic music
Introversiion - Extraversion	r .128	.405**	.270	.513**
Anxiety	r .208	.209	.378*	.412*
Social behaviour	r .433**	.351*	.307	.622**
Personal potential	r .029	-.152	.112	.363*

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

The results support that fact that the level of emotional intelligence development measured with the Emotional Intelligence Scale - EIS (Schutte et al., 1998) significantly correlates with:

- social behaviour ($r = .433, p < .01$) of teenagers who say they prefer pop music;
- introversion - extraversion ($r = .405, p < .01$) and social behaviour ($r = .351, p < .05$) for young people who like rock music;
- anxiety ($r = .378, p < .05$) for the adolescents who say they prefer to listen rap or hip-hop;

- introversion - extraversion ($r = .513$, $p < .01$), anxiety ($r = .412$, $p < .05$), social behaviour ($r = .622$, $p < .01$) and personal potential ($r = .363$, $p < .05$) for young people who like listening to electronic music (house, techno, dubstep).

As a result, it is shown that, depending on the preferred musical genre of the investigated adolescents, the level of emotional intelligence development is associated with introversion - extraversion (for young people who like rock music and those who prefer the electronic one), with anxiety (for those who prefer rap and electronic music), with social behaviour (for those who prefer to listen to pop and electronic music) and with personal potential only for the young people who prefer electronic music.

5. Conclusions

The statistical analysis did not confirm the first hypothesis, but led to the confirmation of the one which presumed that there were associations between adolescents' emotional intelligence and certain personality traits according to the preferred musical genre. Young people who listen to pop music, able to perceive their emotions, to manage them successfully and to use them in solving various personal problems are conscientious, diligent, serious, responsible, with a sense of duty, need for social approval, with interest and concern for the feelings of those around them, but sometimes can be stubborn, combative and inflexible.

Results in adolescents who prefer rock music indicate a medium statistically significant association between emotional intelligence and social behaviour, as well as between emotional intelligence and extraversion. Results of research conducted by Dumitru (2006), respectively North, Desborough & Skarstein (2005), according to which young listeners of rock music exhibit behaviours specific to introverted people, are slightly tinted by the target group. Among adolescents who prefer rock music, those who have a high degree of emotional intelligence appear to be communicative (directly and naturally express their emotions and thoughts), spontaneous, cooperative, adaptable, confident, jaunty, courageous, daring, willing, sometimes impulsive, insensitive, not perceiving risks.

Rap / hip-hop music lovers have a high degree of anxiety but, at the same time, they are receptive to their own experiences or to the others' and they are able to model them in order to support understanding and personal development. In Dumitru's study (2006), rap music listeners have reduced social presence, have a high self-control and aim at achieving a good impression, features possibly relevant for a certain level of anxiety. Their ability to successfully manage emotions entails awareness, acceptance and use of emotions in problem solving (Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2011), as teenagers who prefer rap express their emotions, both positive emotions and especially negative ones, through lyrics and rhythm.

For young people who like electronic music (house, techno and dubstep), the results emphasize the existence of a medium to strong statistically significant association between emotional intelligence and extraversion, anxiety, personal potential and social behaviour. Out of these adolescents, those involving emotions in their own thought process and allowing reason to include emotions (i.e., they do not repress, rationalize, minimize or completely eliminate them) are conscientious, tenacious, with a strong self despite anxiety, calm, realistic, not involved in difficult situations, they pay attention to people and things, have a socially desirable behaviour and a sense of duty. Also, they are able to improve their personal performance, to seize opportunities, to empathize with others, to cooperate and to reduce tensions arising within social interactions. As found in the study done by North, Desborough & Skarstein (2005), as well as that of Dumitru (2006), in which there were included only techno music listeners, the subjects of this research also reveal an extravert temperament.

The results of this research, on studying the relationship between musical genres preferred by teenagers, the level of emotional intelligence development and their personality traits can be a challenge for specialists in the field of music therapy. Even if the melotherapist has sufficient knowledge and smart ideas, unless he knows and manages his emotions, he may have difficulty in trying to build relationships with teenagers or a successful career. Melotherapists with a high degree of self-awareness realize how their feelings affect both themselves and the others. These considerations were the starting point for a study which aimed to promote a training focused on personal and professional development of future melotherapists in order to develop certain complementary skills in their training for a future career (Năstasă, 2013). However, future research may consider expanding the group of participants,

including a balanced number of male and female subjects, as well as developing a tool for the investigation of adolescents' preferences for certain musical genres.

Supporting the above, we nuance that music has a special meaning and it is of peculiar interest in adolescents, being their preferred leisure activity, thus making experts study the impact of listening to certain musical genres on future adults' development. This need comes along with guiding the adolescent on the selection of songs and with the need for knowing the adolescent through the lens of the preferred music in order to be able to assist them in their emotional maturation process as a psychological specialist. In addition, the teenager emotionally supported by his melo-therapist has the opportunity to know himself better, to discover his own resources and vulnerabilities, to accept and appreciate himself as he really is, as well as to select a musical genre to help him develop as a unique and special personality, with different needs and emotions. The listened music can also be a way to feel valued, to discover new musical skills and interests.

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