

Lyricism and Engagement in Music among Young Adults

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Abstract: *In a world which is constantly evolving and changing at a rapid pace, music also has seen various changes as compared to the music that was produced before. In a time when young adults, in particular, have to adapt to the changing times, understanding the role that music plays in their lives becomes important as well. Especially during a time, when digital media is on the rise, and music has become one of the tools to engage individuals, not to mention its ability to influence mood shows its importance. How they engage as well as perceive music, how they perceive lyrical content that they feel is meaningful and relatable to them and if the listening habits and music choices of these individuals are influenced by the lyrical content is looked into in this study. The significance of these lyrics in their lives is also looked upon. Qualitative research design was used in order to get deeper insights into the individuals' experiences as well as preferences towards music. Through means of convenient sampling method, responses of seven participants who were 18 to 25 years of age, were considered for the study, ensuring that they did not have any neurological or other medical conditions. Semi-structured interviews were conducted where both open-ended as well as close-ended questions were asked. This helped in obtaining more detailed responses from the participants. Further, thematic analysis was done and themes and codes were identified. Findings revealed most participants leaning towards lyrical content that was relatable as well as meaningful to them, while few mentioned listening to certain songs for their rhythm or "feel" alone.*

Keywords: Music, relatable music, music choices, listening habits, lyrical content

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I. INTRODUCTION

All The importance of music has been widely acknowledged throughout the world. The influence of music can be seen in the everyday lives of individuals. From weddings to malls or supermarkets to restaurants, music is everywhere. Music has the ability to permeate through cultural barriers and unite individuals from different parts of the world, despite the different languages that they may speak, the various traditions they follow and the many other individual differences that may set them apart from one another.

Taking into consideration that India is a diverse country, there exists a wide variety of languages, cultures, traditions, as well as music. Differences in music styles can also be seen in such a country. There are different types of music such as classical music which includes Hindustani classical music, folk music such as Bhangra, regional music such as songs from the Tamil industry, and many more. Despite many of these showing a clear distinction from one another in regards to the language as well as style of music, Indian music, however, continues to be popular among people. People have started to become more accepting of music that hails from other regions or industries and have begun to collectively enjoy them despite the languages and other barriers that they may be faced with. A celebration of tradition, culture, and music can be seen. In such a place, it was not uncommon to see parties or events which played a different variety of songs. It allowed for a greater appreciation of music allowing people to unite together as an entity.

During COVID-19, when individuals were forced to go to the confines of their homes and had to face instances where they were not allowed to meet with others, i.e. when they were quarantined, music has helped become a coping mechanism for many, helping them throughout times of stress. The sudden separation from society and people, and the feelings of loneliness and helplessness that people faced during such instances, became obstacles that people were able to overcome with the presence of music, which served as a safe place and comfort for the many that felt they were alone and had none to confide in. In a way, it can be said that music was one among several factors which worked as a coping mechanism for such people. It has also helped them connect with others of similar musical preferences when social interaction seemed challenging.

While music may not be everyone's cup of tea, one cannot ignore the impact that music has on people. For some, music may just be another interest or hobby that they partake in to while away the time they have, while for others, it may be a very integral part of their lives that they cannot do away with. This can be especially seen with a few individuals such as musicians, artists, and dancers, among others.

There also exist several factors that play a role in how much one engages with music and their preferences towards certain music. A few of these factors include personality [4], mood, interest, etc. Hence, different individuals engage with music differently for example, few may listen to sad music when they are feeling low while few others may avoid listening to such songs during such times. In a study, it was also found that sad lyrics plus music lead to increased depression and decreased positive affects [10]. The

time given towards listening to music may also vary. According to a study, individuals can structure their leisure time and get engaged in musical activities which allows them to become happier and increases their well-being [6]. By engaging in musical activities such as listening to music, singing or rapping, or even playing musical instruments, individuals may be able to avoid or cope with stressful situations and it can help bring a sense of control over their lives. However, one also cannot ignore the various other aspects of music that help listeners to engage with it on a deeper level. Music can be of various genres or types. While some of them may be upbeat, others may be calmer or slower. Rock and pop genres can be considered upbeat while ballads may be considered to be more melodic and calmer. With individual differences, people's preferences towards music may also change. Some may prefer ballads, while others may prefer genres such as pop, rock, jazz, etc. There may also be a few who like to listen to and explore all kinds of music and genres, without having any specific music genre that they lean towards. Such individuals may also be open to listening to songs which may be different from their mother tongue, which highlight different concepts, themes or traditions that they are unfamiliar with, and many more.

While aspects such as tone, rhythm, and musical preferences have a say on the level of engagement of music to the listeners, lyrics too can influence them to a certain extent. The lyrical content they are exposed to, how much they are able to relate or connect to the lyrics, etc can all cause individuals to either like or dislike a song. The themes explored in music lyrics can significantly impact the expression of thoughts and emotions of such individuals, among various other aspects. These lyrics can challenge their thoughts and show individuals different perspectives about different topics or themes. It may even help them connect with the artist on a deeper level and allow them to appreciate the music more. One of the reasons music is found to be comforting and enjoyable is because of its ability to intensify feelings and contribute to the development of personal identity [5].

While lyrics may be considered as one aspect of music that doesn't come to the immediate attention of the listener, its importance in creating the song itself and making it more real and original to the listeners cannot be ignored. As individuals begin to get more engaged with the music they are listening to, and as their liking towards a particular song grows, there also develops a certain curiosity towards the song itself that leads them to know what the song is all about. More often than not, the lyrics do make a difference in how they interpret as well as see the song later on. However, there may also exist a few individuals who like certain songs due to the lyrical content that they contain. This can be especially seen during the era of the 90s when the meaning of the

songs was considered to be very important. Appreciation towards such music and the way lyrics were portrayed in a metaphorical manner were very much appreciated. Now, however, a significant change can be seen as the interests of people have also changed over time. People wanted to hear something new along with changing times. Hence, a change was seen from the rhythm and style of the music to the topics or themes that the songs expressed. A change was observed from the period of 1950s where lyrics were least angry, to a gradual increase in the anger expressed in lyrics gradually over the years until 2015 [9]. Due to this, it becomes important to understand how much music and lyrics may have an impact on individuals now.

The influence of music can be seen in people of different ages, from children to older adults. Young adults however, go through a transition to adulthood and many a time, it can be quite stressful as they now have additional demands that have to be met both in terms of their personal lives as well as their careers. Establishing an identity of their own, maintaining as well as establishing good relationships with others, finding a suitable job and learning or acquiring skills based on the same all the while ensuring that it fits into their career goals, are just a few of the tasks that they may have to take up. Due to having to meet and succeed in these tasks, at times, such individuals may be pushed to their limits and they may even fail. Being able to become resilient and persevere despite all the obstacles that they may face becomes very important during such instances. They make use of several strategies to cope with these struggles and to ensure their well-being. These young adults have reported music to be one of the activities that they most enjoy. The preferences that they have towards music can reflect their developmental issues, the values they uphold, as well as conflicts that they deal with [11]. Also, as young adults work on their transition to adulthood, many a time, they may be faced with situations where they would have to depend entirely on themselves and make decisions on certain things. Having only entered the phase of being an adult from an adolescent phase, trying to make oneself independent and do tasks by oneself may also prove to be challenging. This is especially true considering India, where people follow a more collectivistic culture and have been brought up mainly relying on one another for their basic needs. In such instances, music among others, can offer a safe space and may also prove to be motivational to such individuals who may be on the brink of wanting to give up. It may make them feel as though they are not alone in their journey.

To a certain extent, music can also help them along their journey to self-discovery, self-awareness, as well as formation of a personal identity. As previously mentioned, it can help them come to a self-realization of what they value and believe in and can help them become more aware of who they are as

individuals and their role in society. It makes them more aware of what their likes and dislikes are and where their interests lie. Music lyrics, in particular, can offer comfort to these individuals as it allows them to attribute personal meaning to the song lyrics [2]. More often than not, individuals are drawn to songs which they are able to personally connect or relate with. The lyrics themselves may contain content that is rooted in their beliefs and experiences, making attribution of personal meaning possible. Such individuals begin to feel that they are understood and are comforted by the words offered by such songs. Hence, music has the capacity to alter attitudes and foster respect for the world around us. If meaningful lyrics are effectively utilized, a widely embraced art form like music can help yield positive results. [5]. Good music, in addition with good lyrics, may prove to be a healing factor to many and increase their well-being. That is, habitual engagement in music may lead to an improvement in the subjective well-being of an individual [12].

Nowadays, with the rise of technology and social media as a whole, engaging with music as well as lyrics can be seen even more. There now exists a multitude of content creators, artists, musicians, etc who all express themselves through their art form i.e. music to the outside world with the help of social media such as YouTube, Instagram, etc. Sharing music and engaging in it has become much easier now than it was earlier when most had to depend on MP3 players or other gadgets. People have also steadily started to express themselves more, not afraid to put out their opinions. Individuals have begun to open their own pages in social media where they put out quotes or lyrics from certain songs that they were personally able to relate to. Few also bring back music from the olden era to evoke a sense of nostalgia in the listeners. A more recent trend shows how individuals have begun to take lyrics from certain music to create a video which has visuals that go in sync with the lyrics mentioned. Hence, in a time, where music can be said to have changed a lot as compared to the previous era, the importance it holds still exists to this day. It continues to be a means of expression for many.

While India holds a variety of music genres and styles, the significance of music in the Western industry can't be ignored. The influence that songs from the Western industry has had on the world is immense and to this day, it continues to hold as much impact as it did before. For example, Michael Jackson and his music to this day, has an impact on people all over the world. The world of social media has made it possible to extend music beyond a particular region or country and has made it possible for different people around the world to access songs from different countries within the confines of their own homes. Now, there is an increased awareness about the different kinds of songs that different countries produce. For example, Indian music is slowly getting

more and more popular worldwide. Indian cinema is also getting more recognition. In addition, the K-pop genre is also on the rise. Various concerts have also been held worldwide with various artists from different countries promoting as well as showcasing their songs to others around the world. For example, Western artists have held concerts in India and Indian artists too have had the opportunity to perform worldwide. Hence, social media has led to individuals being aware as well as exposed to different music as well. As people begin to hear different songs from different regions, lyrics become a vital part of understanding the song itself. One such example can be seen from an upcoming artist, BTS, also known as Bangtan Sonyeondan, hailing from South Korea, whose lyrics are considered an important aspect of their music. Despite there being a language barrier, people find their music to be appealing both in terms of music as well as the lyrics they have to offer. They are considered to have one of the largest fanbases which include individuals from different countries, and of different ages as well as gender. This highlights the importance that lyrics may hold to certain individuals as well as the universal property of music that has the ability to unite people despite their differences.

Hence, lyrics can to a large extent, be a major factor in influencing the engagement of these young adults to music. How they engage with music on an emotional and cognitive level with the help of lyrics and how it helps them can be further understood from this study. The listening habits of individuals, the different kinds of music they listen to, the effect it has on them, the different aspects of the lyrics that these individuals find most interesting or relatable, the impact of personal relevance of the lyrics they are exposed to on their daily lives, etc can be further looked into. Thus, the study tries to get a deeper understanding of how individuals engage with music and how important lyrics are to such individuals.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A study was conducted to investigate the correlation between individuals' music preferences, listening styles, the functions of music, the perceived emotional experience (rasa) derived from music, and their personality traits (based on the Big Five Factors). It involved a sample of 77 young adults. The study findings showed strong preferences for genres such as soft songs, romantic songs, and filmy (sad) songs. It also revealed gender differences in music preferences, perceived emotions and listening styles [11]. A study was conducted in order to better understand the relation between music preference, listening behaviour, and personality. A sample of 395 participants were included. These individuals stated that their music preferences were linked to their listening habits. The findings revealed strong positive associations between Neuroticism and a preference for Classical music, as well as between Openness to

Experience and a preference for Jazz music [4]. Another study explored habitual music engagement as well as subjective well-being. 1000 participants were interviewed via telephone and the findings showed higher subjective well-being when engaging with music. Engaging with music in the company of others was also emphasized here [12]. A study was also done on a population of 230 adults, all of whom were part of musical groups, churches or both. The intensity of their emotional feelings towards church and musical activities was assessed using certain scales. Results showed that the transcendental religious factor had a small negative correlation with happiness and that it was the social aspect of the activities that lead to well-being. [6]. Another study which was conducted explored how music helps in coping with stress. 56 college students were included in the study out of which 15 were males and 41 were females. After experiencing a stressful event, they were exposed to several music genres. The findings revealed that listening to self-selected or classical music leads to a reduction in negative emotional states and physiological arousal, as opposed to listening to heavy metal music or simply sitting in silence [8]. A study even constructed a typology of music listeners which was based on the importance individuals attributed to music as well as their musical use. 997 Dutch respondents aged 19-29 were identified. 19.7% of these individuals were highly involved listeners who use music to enhance their mood, cope with their distress, and construct both their personal as well as social identity. 74.2% of them were medium-involved listeners while 6.1% of them were low-involved listeners. These individuals attributed less importance as well as use of music [3]. While these studies focused more on music preferences as well as engagement, few other researchers emphasized the lyrical aspect as well. One such study measures the impact that song lyrics have on an individual's perceptions, through emotions, and identity patterns. 280 university students were included in the study and the findings revealed that music lyrics had a high influence on an individual's sense of identity as well as perception [5]. Another study explored whether the lyrics of people's favourite songs concerning relationships were indicative of their attachment styles and associated Big Five personality traits. The data collected revealed that increased levels of attachment avoidance manifest in the choice of lyrics within relationship-themed songs, both on an individual as well as societal scale [1]. A study was also done to understand if adolescents as well as young adults used music as consolation during times of stress or sorrow. Aspects of music listening that were experienced as comforting as well as if the consolation they received was in any way related to psychological problems or musical use were also studied. The study included 1,040 respondents who fell under the age group of 13-30 years. Over 69% of the participants reported that

they used music as a means of seeking comfort. In specific, female participants and individuals with increased levels of anxiety or depression, along with lower levels of aggression tended to turn towards music as a source of comfort more frequently. The consoling impact that music had on these individuals seemed to primarily stem from the music's sound and texture, the personal meaning attributed to its lyrics, and to a lesser extent, the sense of closeness with artists and fellow listeners [2]. In order to understand the impact of music vs lyrics on mood, a study was done. College students were included as part of the experiments that were conducted. The findings of these experiments showed that lyrics have a stronger influence on altering one's mood compared to music by itself, and they can infuse a specific melody with emotional attributes [10]. Another research done tried to understand the effect of music on the personal relevance of lyrics. 17 male and 17 female college students were considered as the sample. The males rated written lyrics more favourably than lyrics that were paired with music while the females showed a reverse trend. The findings indicated that songs did not impact the conduct of older male adolescents by making them susceptible to messages conveyed through lyrics [7]. Few studies also explored how lyrics changed over time. One such research focused on how popular music lyrics became angrier and sadder over time. Quantitative analytics was done in order to study the change in lyrics, specifically from 1950s to 2016. The findings revealed a gradual rise in the portrayal of anger and sadness in popular music over time, whereas the depiction of joy had decreased [9].

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Problem Statement

To investigate the influence of lyricism and the level of engagement in music among young adults.

3.2 Research Questions

1. How do young adults perceive and engage with music that contains relatable lyrics?

1.1. To what extent does the presence of lyrical content influence the music choices and listening habits of young adults?

3.3 Objectives

1. To understand how young adults perceive and engage with music that contains meaningful lyrics.

1.1. To understand the extent to which the presence of lyrical content influences the music choices and listening habits of young adults.

3.4 Variables

- **Lyricism:** It is defined as the expression of personal thoughts and feelings in writing or music.

- Engagement in music: It refers to the degree and manner in which individuals interact with and respond to music.
- Relatable lyrics: It refers to the lyrics individuals feel they are able to relate to or connect with.

3.5 Research Design

A qualitative research design was used for the purpose of collecting detailed responses from the participants and for a deeper understanding on their preferences and experiences towards music, making it possible to take into account individual differences that may come into play.

3.6 Data Collection Method

Data was collected using semi-structured interviews, making use of both open as well as close-ended questions in order to understand the personal opinions, experiences, etc of the individual.

3.7 Sample and Techniques

Young adults of 18-25 years of age were considered as the population out of which 7 individuals were selected as sample. A convenient sampling method was used.

3.8 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Young adults in the age range of 18-25 years and who show regular interest in listening to music were included. Those with cognitive and psychological conditions were excluded.

3.9 Data Analysis

Thematic Analysis was used. Codes and themes were identified. This allowed for a detailed analysis of the participants' responses.

3.10 Tools used for the study

An interview guide, audio recording equipment and a notebook or journal was used to collect responses from the participants. The interview guide helped move the semi-structured interview forward, audio recording equipment was used to record the interview and finally, the journal was used as means of noting important information that had to be taken into consideration.

3.11 Procedure

Initially, consent was taken from the participants verbally and it was recorded. After having received consent, a one-on-one semi-structured interview was conducted. This data was then collected and analysed using thematic analysis. Data was coded and themes were identified.

3.12 Ethical Considerations

Participants were given adequate information about the study and its purpose. Participation was voluntary and it was ensured that they were not coerced or pressured to take part in the study. They were also informed about their right to back out from the study

if they wished to do so. Informed consent was taken and confidentiality regarding their identity and other personal information was maintained. Cultural sensitivity was ensured. The participants were also treated with dignity and respect, without any bias

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the codes and resulting themes gleaned from the data.

S N o	Codes	Themes	Organizational Themes
1	i. Travelling. ii. Sadness. iii. Diversion. iv. Good mood. v. Work. vi. Gym. vii. Creating content. viii. Coping means.	Context of Music Listening	Listening Habits
2	i. Pleasant music. ii. Melodies. iii. Rock. iv. Energetic music. v. Pop. vi. Gospel. vii. Jazz. viii. Indie. ix. Nostalgic music. x. Motivational music. xi. Friendship-based music. xii. Romantic songs. xiii. Meaningful songs.	Personal Choice of Music	Genre Preferences
3	i. Background music. ii. Lyrics. iii. Rhythm.	Musical Aspects	Music Elements
4	i. Calming. ii. Energizing. iii. Comforting.	Musical Experience	Emotional Affect of Music
5	i. Loneliness. ii. Foreign language. iii. Disturbed iv. Curiosity v. Rap music.	Lyrical Consumption	Lyrical Engagement
6	i. Drive/Motivation. ii. Perseverance. iii. Healing. iv. Validation. v. Stability. vi. Emotional. vii. Safe space. viii. Personal Connection.	Lyrical Experience	Lyrical Affect of Music
7	i. Revolutionary. ii. Inspiring. iii. Subjective to individual. iv. Timeless v. Means of Expression	Perceived Lyrical Impact	Significance of Lyrics

Listening Habits

To understand the different contexts when individuals would listen to music, responses were taken from the participants. This led to the emergence of the theme of listening habits. According to the participants, they would listen to music when travelling back and forth

from college, when working i.e during their breaks at work, when at the gym and doing workouts, when they felt sad, when they wanted to distract or divert their thoughts, when creating content and also as a coping means when they are feeling low. Participants also reported listening to music when they were in a good mood.

".....usually when I get three hours, when I am travelling, when I feel lonely or when I feel sad, when I want to, like, to overcome all this or when I want to divert my thoughts and all, I will be listening to music".

"On a daily basis, I often listen to music when I'm on work, most of the time. Like off duty, when I'm having breaks and all, so that way I can listen to music anytime as well."

"I would love to listen to music. I listen to music all the time. Even when I'm going to college or if I'm in the gym, I rely on music for relaxing..... When I'm happy, then I listen to any music, which I get....I listen to music for making videos. I am a person who really loves to make content".

"At times when I'm not feeling very well, I listen more than for three hours because that's how I cope up for some reason... You can start distracting yourself".

"I listen to music when get bored or when I'm not in a good mood".

"I travel four hours a day, coming and going back. So, all the four hours there's music in my ears."

Genre Preferences

The type of music that the participants liked to listen to on a normal basis was understood. From the responses, it was understood that the participants had a certain affinity towards pleasant music, melodies, rock, energetic music, pop, gospel, jazz, indie, nostalgic music, motivational music, friendship-based music, romantic as well as meaningful songs. Few also listened to regional music such as Hindi, Telugu or Malayalam songs. Few participants also reported not having any specific genre they listen to and that they enjoyed a wide variety of music. Energetic songs were preferred at times when they were in a good mood and wanted to 'vibe' along with the songs. However, melodies were preferred during instances when they wanted to calm down. Few participants also showed an affinity towards nostalgic songs i.e songs from the 90's and 2000's. According to them, songs then had much more depth than songs now and had a lot of meaning. Romantic songs were preferred as participant revealed their desire of wanting to say or hear words from someone they liked just as the song portrayed. Friendship-based songs were also preferred due to the significance friendship played in the participant's life. As for the preference towards gospel songs, the participant mentioned listening to such songs when he was happy and wanted to appreciate his lord for all the "good things that he has done". Here too, a preference towards more happier

and energetic songs was mentioned when the participant felt happy. According to most of the participants, their mood had a role to play in the kind of music they listened to, with a preference towards energetic songs when they were happy and hearing melodic ones when sad. Few also reported listening to energetic songs when they were sad in order to help them divert their thoughts or feel better about themselves.

"I like pleasant music and I like most of the, some sort of a rock is also fine and melody".

".....Mostly I prefer hyped songs. But sometimes I like the melody ones...."

"....I'm listening to more on rock theme music and pop theme music as well.... But most of the time, I'm listening to nostalgia songs. Actually, I'm into 2012 music".

"When I'm in the gym, I specifically listen to motivational music".

".....Mainly I love friendship songs.... I would prefer like what romantic songs also...."

".....then I love to listen to calm music sometimes, like with beautiful meaning or deep meaning. Then music with blasting, like I just want to dance on it. So, I listen to that kind of music also. Then some kind of, what we say, romantic songs also...."

"....I would say gospel, pop, then jazz, then a bit of Indie also works...."

Music Elements

The music elements or aspects of music that the participants liked specifically were understood. These included the background music, lyrics, as well as the rhythm of the songs. While very few participants focused on the background music, few gave a preference towards the rhythm and lyrics of the songs. According to few, lyrics were that aspect of music they felt helped them connect with songs more, more than the beat or the melody itself. Two artists whose lyrics were mentioned quite often by the participants and who had an impact on them included BTS as well as Anuv Jain. Two songs by Anuv Jain that were mentioned in terms of their lyrical content include 'Alag Asman' as well as 'Husn'. Other artists include Justin Bieber, Maroon 5, among others. Few participants also mentioned the rhythm being important as they felt they were able to "feel" the song as well as the passion more.

"Like the background music, the background music and the lyrics will be there.... I feel like sometimes when I'm, like, in a bad mood, when I listen to, like, some sad songs, I'll feel the lyrics. I'll just think about those lyrics and I'll feel it, yeah."

".....It's because of the rhythm. The rhythm of the flow of the music. It gives us the deep, how you want the music to be. That's how you want it to be, right? Yeah. That's how it is. That's the music. It shows us the characterism. It shows us how personally you feel into it, into music. How passionate you are in the end. That's what it feels like."

Emotional Affect of Music

After understanding the elements of songs that the participants liked, next, the emotional affect the songs themselves had on them was understood. Melodic songs such as “sad music” and other melodies helped them to feel more calm. Few participants mentioned liking songs as they provided them with relief and comfort when they felt they had no one to confide or talk to and wanted to be understood. Few also mentioned listening to energetic songs to help them feel more energized and to help overcome or distract their thoughts.

“.....Like, when I feel sad, like, when I feel lonely, I mostly like to listen to sad music which gives me, like, some sort of, like, a calmness and some sort of a thing.....”

“I like music because it gives us relief and gives us comfort at the same time.....”

“.....if I'm sad, I would like to listen to something that is energetic or basically which gives me energy, which will energize my thing, which will divert the situation, like, what is running in my mind.....”

Lyrical Engagement

The context of engagement towards lyrics by the participants was understood. Few participants mentioned checking lyrics to songs when they were feeling sad or in a “rough” mood when they didn't understand the language of the song they were listening to and were curious as well as eager to know what the song was about when they felt lonely and felt no one understood them and that they had no one to confide in, and finally when they would hear rap music and had difficulty understanding what was being said in the song. Participants also spoke about their lyrical preference leaning towards social messages and romantic messages. Few participants mentioned liking the lyrics of the artists BTS and Anuv Jain. A few other artists that the participants spoke of with regard to lyrical content include Anurag Kulkarni, James Arthur, Justin Bieber, Maroon 5, Eminem, etc. One among the participants gave lyrics 70% importance when listening to songs in general, while few others mentioned looking up lyrics often times such as 3 to 4 times in a week, as well as hearing songs mainly for understanding the lyrics. To few, lyrics were also that aspect of songs that helped them to like songs in general and which played an important part in engaging them to certain music. Few participants also listened to and engaged in lyrics often when editing and creating content. However, one among the participants also mentioned not looking into the lyrical aspect as much and preferred listening to the songs just for the “feel” of it. However, he would look up the meaning behind certain songs and their lyrics when he really liked the said song and wanted to know what it was about. This particular participant mentioned that he only started understanding the lyrics as he got older and never

knew of it until he got older. Few also mentioned not seeing the need to engage themselves in trying to understand the lyrics as they already understood what the song was trying to portray unless they were faced with circumstances where they didn't understand what the song was trying to convey.

“.....when I'm in sad mood, I'll see the lyrics for every song..... If I don't know the language and if I can't understand the words they are using properly, I'll go back and I'll see the lyrics.”

“For me, lyrics play a major role in song selection I would say..... lyrics are something that would drag me towards listening to that, and music lyrics, all of it, helped me heal I would say. Lot of songs by BTS, there are Indian songs also but yeah when I had rough times, it was BTS lyrics, not just music but lyrics that played a really important role.”

“Sometimes I listen to the lyrics and sometimes I don't....”

“....I listen to music which was released like in the early 90s or early 2000s where the lyrics played an important role and compared to the music released right now. So I am a person who gives importance to lyrics as well.....I am a person who really loves to make content....lyrics is a part, you know, is a crucial part for connecting to a particular idea which I'm really going to. For example, if I'm making a sad or nostalgic video, I would prefer a music with a nostalgic lyric on it.... There are these old Tamil songs where it was mostly romantic lyrics as well. It was really, really soothing to hear it. But I couldn't understand a word. But I was really, you know, into it and I went out and I checked the lyrics, checked the meaning. It was really amazing. It was just like a small love letter from the poet..... this kind of curiosity happens very, very rarely. And even when it happens, I feel so curious and very eager to find out what it actually means.... So for me, if I need to, if I get like 24 hours to make a video, the 20 hours of it would go to find the perfect audio and the four hours will be going for placing the visuals and editing it. So audio plays an crucial role in making a content.”

“Mainly, I focus on the lyrics that play in the music....If I didn't understand, if I didn't understand the lyrics by listening means I will check the meaning also. I also listen to Tamil music and other language music also. So, if I didn't understand means I will go and check the lyrics.....if I am listening a particular song for the first time means I listen to that. Then at first time maybe I won't like it, but after few days I will start again like listening to the same song. Then I will go for the meaning, what this song is actually about and all. Like if I like the music of it.”

“....mostly when I'm sad or when I'm very happy, I mostly listen to the, concentrate on the lyrics, what's going on, the words, what the song has. So, that is what takes me on. So, I keep on listening to the music with the meaning, what is happening in the song. That gives you the feels more than anything. Mostly, I understand what their trying to sing.... It's very rare

that I go and look up lyrics because it will be mostly for raps I feel. Because I really can't understand how they are rapping."

Lyrical Affect of Music

Having understood the contexts when participants would look up or engage themselves in trying to understand the lyrics, the affect these lyrics had on them was understood. Few of the participants mentioned listening or engaging in lyrics when they were sad or lonely as mentioned above. The participants mentioned being able to connect with the lyrics personally, feeling the need to overcome their problems, be motivated and persevere through any obstacles that they might face and work even harder. Few also found healing and a safe space within these lyrics. When they felt they had no one to connect with or confide in, when they felt they could relate with no one and wanted someone just like themselves who understood them, lyrics proved to be healing as well as a safe space. According to three of the participants, BTS was one of the main artists that they listened to. They mentioned how their lyrics were able to help them heal from their personal struggles and "healed" them, brought a good change in them and changed how they saw themselves. According to the participants, they felt like what they were feeling and going through was understood and it gave them a sense of "validation". It gave importance to their feelings. Few also mentioned feeling more relaxed after hearing certain lyrics which would give them the motivation to overcome whatever they were going through, hence helping them to bring a sense of stability in their lives as well. Participants also mentioned feeling emotional after having understood certain lyrics. Few other songs and artists that were mentioned for their lyrical content include 'Never Say Never' by Justin Bieber, 'Asha Pasham' by Anurag Kulkarni, 'Sugar' by Maroon 5, 'Kanmani Anbodu Kathalan', 'Barish' by Mohammed Irfan, 'Not Afraid' by Eminem, 'Off My Face' by Justin Bieber, 'Husn' and 'Alag Asman' by Anuv Jain.

"Yeah, sometimes I felt it, like, there will be some words in the songs which will connect to me, like, to the particular situation which I felt sad about or it will connect to me, like, what to do next if I feel sad and to overcome all those things. Yeah, how, like, those words and those sentences will help me to build up my thing, what to do next or how to get out of those things, it helps me a lot....So, after listening to that, I feel like, okay, I can do this, I can, okay, it's like a good thing, I can go on with it. I need to forget this and I need to concentrate on this."

"....lyrics are something that would drag me towards listening to that, and music lyrics, all of it, helped me heal I would say. Lot of songs by BTS, there are Indian songs also but yeah when I had rough times, it was BTS lyrics, not just music but lyrics that played a really important role. It was as if they were giving

validation to my feelings and its okay to feel what I'm feeling that time."

".....But now when I hear the lyrics back again, it makes me realize, oh, this was the lyrics. Okay, fine. It's so relatable.....Now I feel like the lyrics have shown me that I should never give up in my life. I should keep on going, striving more, hard work, hustle more, gain more, everything."

"....many times when I was depressed or when I could just, when I was lonely or anything. Many songs, when I was listening to songs and all, I prefer to listen to the lyrics also because sometimes I feel like that song is open for me.... I felt like I felt emotional and I actually was impressed the way it made me emotional..."

"So, I can say, personally I can say like after listening to their (BTS) music, it got really helpful for me also. Not only there is like many artists are there in their group. Their solo music also says about some kind of things. So, that I can relate. So, even through this music they are saying to go beyond that. Like come over it. So, like that and all makes me so relaxed. Then I also moved on."

".....sometimes you don't feel relatable to anything. Anything in the sense people, your parents, your friends, people around you, you don't feel connected to anyone sometimes. It's just that you know they are around you, you know you have them but they don't get you the right way. You get yourself. But you need to, you know, you feel safe when you have someone like I will tell you. You fail and you feel all bad. Your friend fails with you and you are so happy around it. So, you need someone same like you, right? So, yeah, you need that safe space around you."

Significance of Lyrics

Finally, the significance that the lyrics held for each of the participants as well as for the society in general was also understood. According to a few, lyrics had an impact on themselves and helped them to overcome certain obstacles. But they felt that society at large couldn't be taken into account due to each person having different perspectives as well as thoughts i.e it was subjective to the individual. However, some also felt it had an impact both on themselves as well as society. Participants themselves felt a sense of connection, validation, healing and a sense of being understood. Few participants spoke about the significance music and lyrics played on the society and felt it could bring the revolutionary aspect of individuals alive. Examples given included a song from the movie 'RRR' where the protagonist was able to successfully drive the people into taking action and protest against the British. According to the participant, if a song with good meaning was made, it would eventually influence the people. The participant also mentioned a revolutionary song from the movie 'Tagore' to further prove her statement. According to her, while many of these revolutionary songs were made during the time of Indian

independence, to this day, it continues to hold importance, further showing the influence that lyrics have and how they can be timeless. A few others also mentioned how songs can prove to be inspiring others to the point of creating a movie called 'Nanpagal Nerathu Mayakkam'. Few also mentioned recent trends where the music and the hype for certain music keep changing. However, the timelessness of few music and lyrics and the impact that it has now was also mentioned. Finally, a few participants also described how music and lyrics were used as a means of self-expression where certain individuals would pick out certain lyrics of songs which they are able to relate or connect with, and further express themselves in social media.

"....If I, in any situation, if I want to overcome, like, as I said, like, in a bad mood at all, if I listen to those songs, I can overcome myself. So, it has an impact on me. I can say that but I can't say it's had an impact on society because everyone will have a different perspective. I don't know what you think is different and what I think is also different."

"I mean, it's very subjective. People do like music but they are not, I feel like not many people are so much into music, music becoming their world or whatever. If we take it as a society, then there are individual differences right?.... during our Indian independence, freedom fight, there were a lot of you know, writers, musicians, who came up with revolutionary songs. Even in the movie 'RRR', when NTR, he sings the song, that's when the crowd you know, feels that thing inside them, the revolutionary sort of thing, the rebel like 'this is what we need'."

"....Some people might but some people might not actually. Some people like doing stuff other than music actually. You never know.... It depends on the person. It depends on the person's reality."

"....This particular ad with that particular music was inspired by L.J.P., Lijo Jose Pellissery. He's a famous director in Malayalam and he made a movie out of it. He made a movie where Mammooty starred and its name was 'Nanpagal Nerathu Mayakkam'.... So if he could spend that much money and make a movie out of it, then I definitely feel like a good music could really influence anyone."

".....some songs when you listen to, it brings back the love that you had for people.....Which brings back so many memories. And when you actually lost hope on love, some songs, the lyrics make you feel okay. There can be hope again for you.... Songs which are older than me are still alive because of the lyrics is what I feel. Music, obviously. Without the music, there is no catch for the lyrics. But yeah, I feel it's 70-30."

Discussion

In a world where technology is rapidly evolving, people have now turned to technology for a vast majority of their needs whether it be work or even just interacting with others. As compared to before,

people have begun to socialize more with the help of social media and other platforms. As information has become easily accessible, music too has become easier to access as compared to the previous times where mp3 players or even CD's were needed to play them. In such an era where we see a vast majority of change can be seen, young adults are driven to adapt to this changing environment. In such an instance, while there may be various other factors that come into play, this study focuses on music, the role that music plays in their lives and how these young adults perceive and engage with music that contains meaningful lyrics. The study's objective also includes understanding the extent to which the presence of lyrical content influences the music choices and listening habits of these young adults. As such, the study tried to look into the importance that music and lyrics holds to such individuals.

The perception and experience of 7 individuals aged 18-25 years of age were taken into account. Thematic analysis was used. Their experiences with music as well as lyrics and the impact it had on them, if any, were noted. Out of the seven participants, there included few casual listeners, few who were deeply engaged with and liked music, few who were content creators and a participant who played music as well. Results obtained thus far show that individuals mostly engaged in music to make themselves feel better, to help them overcome their problems, and to just feel the music and appreciate it as it was. To most, the music and the lyrics they engaged in were very relatable and it made them feel relaxed. While few participants revealed not feeling the need to look into the lyrics, few others spoke of lyrics as that aspect of music which they couldn't do without. To them, music lyrics helped them to have a different perspective about themselves and helped overcome their problems, and also posed as a companion that they felt was on their side when they felt lonely or felt as though no one understood them. Songs from the 90's to the 2000's were talked about. According to few, songs now had lost the meaning that the songs during this time held. The participants showed their appreciation towards lyrics and music of these times and how they held much more depth and meaning than songs did now.

Participants also showed a great interest in talking about few songs and the lyrics behind them. Few also shared their personal struggles and experiences and how music lyrics of certain artists had helped them to overcome these struggles. To few, music and lyrics also served as an indispensable tool to create content and to engage and attract the viewers to the video that they had created. To the participant who liked playing music, music and lyrics helped him to understand the song more. This allowed more engagement as well as passion towards playing music (such as playing drums, etc).

The significance that lyrics held among the participants were also understood. Few mentioned the

subjectivity factor where every individual may have different perspectives and may not even engage in music. The individual differences that people held were mentioned and so the influence lyrics had on them, according to the participants, would also differ. The timelessness of certain music was also expressed and how music and lyrics would help evoke a love for humanity. Few others mentioned the power that music and lyrics held in empowering people on a whole, where if the song had proper depth and meaning, it would be able to touch people and even inspire them to take certain actions such as directing a movie. However, at the end, it could be seen that personally, the songs and lyrics had an impact on most of the participants.

Motivational music, romantic songs, songs which held good lyrical content and ones which they could personally relate with were mostly talked about by the participants. While each of them had their own preferences and likes towards certain music, it could be understood that music and lyrics on a whole was able to fulfil their needs at the set point in time, whether it be to relax or just for the sake of enjoying the song in itself. The influence of songs and lyrics was mostly expressed as being positive by many. To them, it was a source of comfort. It also provided a space for them to express what they felt through means of the lyrics.

Many of these individuals had gone through difficult circumstances where they felt they were ignored by peers and had none to confide in. Problems with family as well as friends were expressed and the feeling of not being understood also gradually grew. As such, they wished to hear words of comfort from someone and also desired to be able to portray certain feeling and emotions to others. However, few felt as though they would only be burdening others by expressing their problems and believed it was best to keep problems to themselves. In such instances where they began to feel lonely, and had the urge to confide in someone, music lyrics played a vital role. To them, it felt like someone understood them and there was someone in this world exactly like them. They were filled with a sense of being understood. To few, lyrics also helped them to overcome the struggle they had been facing and also vastly changed the view they had on themselves. Few also expressed how their perspective towards certain songs changed after having heard the lyrics while before, they had been ignorant of the message that the song portrayed. Overall, it can be understood that music and lyrics together helped individuals on a personal level.

"Yeah, sometimes you don't feel relatable to anything. Anything in the sense people, your parents, your friends, people around you, you don't feel connected to anyone sometimes. It's just that you know they are around you, you know you have them but they don't get you the right way.... all those times, music, that's why lyrics has been very relatable to me. So, that gives a closure that yeah, someone is

there who actually feels the same way. You are not weirded out. Maybe that person who wrote the song may be very famous or not but doesn't matter. At least you have someone who is actually doing it."

V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The objective of the study included understanding how young adults perceive and engage with music that contains meaningful lyrics as well as understanding the extent to which the presence of lyrical content influences music choices and listening habits of young adults. Responses of 7 participants were taken for the study and by means of thematic analysis, the results obtained showed that most participants showed an affinity towards music. While a few expressed their opinions on not seeing the need to look into lyrics, most expressed the importance they felt lyrics held to them especially when listening to songs. The lyrics, to them, held personal value to which they could relate. While to a few, it helped them to cope with their issues and helped serve as a comfort space, to a few, it also served as a tool to creating content with which lyrics served to be important so as to engage the viewers. Hence, it can be seen that varying perceptions and opinions were taken into account, with the vast majority of the participants revealing the importance that lyrics had in their lives and that the lyrics played a vital role in the kind of music they listened to.

Hence, from the responses of the participants, it can be concluded that young adults do engage and perceive music that contains lyrics that are meaningful to them and to which they are able to relate to. Also, the listening habits of most of the participants largely depended on the lyrics and the meaning that the songs themselves portrayed rather than the tunes or beats.

Implications

- The study can contribute to the field of music therapy by highlighting the therapeutic potential of lyrics in addressing emotional and psychological issues among young adults and how it can help them cope with challenges.
- Music can be used as a complementary tool for promoting emotional well-being among young adults.
- It can help improve therapeutic interventions.
- It can help further research on the emotional and cognitive effects of music and lyrics, thus contributing to the field of music psychology.
- For those involved in music creation, it can help them to create more impactful songs that resonate with their audience as they may gain a deeper understanding on the type of music and lyrical content that caters to their audiences' needs.

Limitations

- The responses of 7 participants were considered for the study and their personal experiences and insights were taken into consideration. However, as the sample size is only 7, the findings cannot be

generalized to draw conclusions about the majority of the young adult population.

- Individuals of different age groups such as the older population, and from different cultural and socioeconomic status were not considered, and the study focused only on young adults aged 18 to 25 years of age.
- Responses given by participants are based on subjective experiences and hence the objectivity of the findings can be questioned.

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