

Musical Preference of College Students of Kolkata, their level of Musical Involvement and their Appreciation of Music as Career, in Relation to Gender

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Abstract

Music is of central importance in the daily life of peoples. It forms a part of the habit of people. Music may bring peace to mind, promote relaxation, and lower tension. It may be said that music considerably impacts human life. Although in India, music has made its journey from being an oral tradition in the form of guru-shishya parampara to institutional learning in modern classroom settings, students may not always choose to study music academically in an educational institute. Even individuals with keen interest, liking, and love for music are often seen opting to study non-musical subjects at the college level, though many of them study music non-academically, outside the college system of education. The present study was conducted among college students of Kolkata, who were studying non-musical subjects at the undergraduate level, to investigate the musical preferences, involvement level in music and appreciation towards music as a career, in relation to gender. A descriptive survey with the help of a structured questionnaire was carried out for the study. The obtained results were analyzed with suitable statistics. The findings were discussed, and conclusions were made regarding the outcome of the study.

Keywords: Music preference, Kolkata, College students, Career in music

Introduction:

People in their daily life listen to music, governed by desire and musical preference. Everyone in society listens to music either willingly/ unwillingly, and actively / passively. The devices used by people to listen to music in recent times include personal computers, CD and MP3 players, android phones equipped with music playing applications and other devices. Social media, digital technology, and the internet are nowadays a part of our everyday living. People are able to listen to music as per their desire and convenience from a pool of a wide variety of music genres using these mediums (Gürgen 2016; Velhal 2016). Thus, musical listening has become more personalized. Music has become an indispensable part of every culture. Music can influence minds, thoughts, and even may help in bringing out concealed ideas from within an individual.

The working of different cognitive functions of the brain is required in playing music, appreciating music, and creating music. The cognitive functions involved include emotions, visuo-spatial functions, working memory, and others.

A study showed that among the reasons for pop music preference, mood, melody, lyrics, and rhythm were given importance (Boyle et al., 1981). Earlier it has been seen that familiarity with music, melody, dynamics, tempo, timbre, rhythm, and style of music affects musical preference (Teo 2005). It has also been seen that music liked by females are soft, romantic, and dancing numbers and males, on the other hand, like hard styles like rock music (Christenson and Peterson, 1988; Lamont et al., 2003; Colley, 2008). Other studies have shown that metal music is preferred more by males, and Western music is preferred most by females (Mace 2011; Gürgen 2016). Another study found that college students tend to prefer rock music, and adolescent boys prefer metal music (Milton, 2008). The emotional state of an individual may be affected by the stimulating or relaxing nature of the music. The feeling of vigor and tension may occur when listening to stimulating music, whereas tension may get lowered on listening to sedative or calming music. Most interestingly, favorite music, irrespective of music type, may ease subjective tension. Additively, calming music may decrease blood pressure, heart rate, and respiratory rate (Gerra et al., 1998; Iwanaga et al., 2005). Music can effectively influence moods and relax the body and mind (Juslin and Laukka 2004; Saarikallio and Erkkilä 2007).

LeBlanc's model of music preference is the most comprehensive model put forward to understand the concept of musical preference or likeness towards a particular type of music. The model is given below:

LeBlanc's (1980, 1981) Model of Music Preference (Gürgen, 2016)

This model has an eight-level hierarchy. In the model, almost every level has several factors, and the complex interaction of these factors influences musical preference.

8th level (Bottom level)

Musical stimuli – It includes complexity, physical attributes, referential meaning, and performance and quality.

Environmental parameters – It includes family, peer group, educators / authority figures, and incidental conditioning.

Media- The 8th level also includes media as a factor.

7th level – It includes the biological health status of the listeners, like the presence of a well-functioning hearing pathway and others.

6th level – This level is concerned with listeners' basic attentiveness.

5th level – This level is concerned with listeners' present emotional condition, which can influence listeners' musical judgment.

4th level – It includes sensitiveness to a definite property of music, personality, sex, training, ethnicity, matureness, socioeconomic condition, memory, and musical ability.

3rd level – This level involves the active processing of the received information of musical or extra-musical nature.

2nd level – In this level, the listener reaches a decision. In case the listener desires greater information, there may be more exploration of the musical stimulus by means of repeatedly listening with greater attentiveness.

1st level – In this level, acceptance or rejection of the musical information by the listener takes place. In case of acceptance, repetition and repletion or completely satisfying oneself may occur.

It has been said that music education is one of the parameters which influences music preference by acting at many of the above levels.

Thus, it can be deduced that variations in listeners' musical background, social, cultural, and life experiences may lead to variations in musical preference. It is often thought that only persons with inborn talent or persons from the musical family should only choose music as a carrier. However, proper training, practice, and efforts are necessary to learn music as well as develop skills in music. The percentage of students enrolling in different music courses at the college and university level is less, in comparison to other courses from arts, humanities, and sciences. In view of these facts, studies were needed to evaluate the diversity in the musical preferences and youth's attitude towards career appreciation in the field of music, so that measures may be suggested to improve the scenario of music education.

Objectives:

- To study the diversity in music preference of college students.
- To study gender variation in the listening of the individual genres of music, in order to evaluate whether or not the preference for a particular genre of music is varying between males and females.
- To study the involvement level of college students in music, in relation to gender.
- To find out the inclination/ appreciation of the college students towards a career in music, in relation to gender.

Methodology:

Students enrolled at the undergraduate level in different arts, humanities, and science subjects in some of the colleges of Kolkata were included in the study. Students enrolled in a music course at the colleges were excluded from the study. The age of the subjects varied between 18-22 years. 50 male students and 50 female students participated in the study. The determination of musical preference was carried by interview method using a questionnaire, in which the respondents were told to indicate their favorite musical genres, in line with earlier studies (Ferrer, Eerola, and Vuoskovski, 2012; Vedabala and Bandopadhyay, 2018). Moreover, the respondents were asked about the sources which might have influenced their musical preference. Using the questionnaire, they were asked to answer in Yes / No to whether or not they listen to Indian Classical Music, Rabindra Sangeet, Western Music, Ghazal, Bollywood music, and other

type or form of music. The students' involvement level (Beginner / Intermediate, Advanced, and No Involvement) and appreciation towards a career in music were also enquired using the questionnaire method. The collected data were analyzed using the Chi-square test. A p-value of < 0.05 or lower was considered significant.

Findings and Discussion:

Music Preference: The findings related to this aspect is presented below:

From among the six options (**Figure 1**), given to the participants for identification of their favorite musical genres, irrespective of sex, highest preference was noted for Bollywood music (66 %), followed by western music (52 %), Ghazal (47 %), other forms (43 %) and Rabindra Sangeet or RS (38 %). Indian Classical music (ICM) was found to be the least preferred. This indicated that there was low interest towards traditional Indian music forms among the participants, which is a matter of concern and warrants measures towards increasing the likeness of the participants towards ICM by means of raising awareness about the heritage, glory, philosophical and aesthetic aspects of ICM. More exposure of the youths to Indian classical music via televisions, radios, social media may be helpful in initiating interest towards ICM.

In a similar study (Vedabala and Bandopadhyay 2018), conducted on youths of Sikkim studying non-musical subjects at the Undergraduate and Postgraduate level, it was noted that the preference for western music among the respondents was 70.0 %. This percentage is higher than that noted in the present study conducted on youths of Kolkata. The preference for Bollywood music and ICM among youths of Sikkim was recorded 67.3% and 36.4 %, respectively. Almost similar figures were recorded in the present study. However, the preference for Ghazal was more in the present study, in comparison to the study on youths of Sikkim, which recorded that 28.2 % of youths of Sikkim preferred Ghazal. The highest preferred genre of music among the youths of Sikkim was Western Music, whereas, in the present study, the highest preferred music genre among the youths of Kolkata was Bollywood music.

In response to the question “What sources influenced your musical preference?”, the highest number of participants, irrespective of sex selected internet (44 %). This was followed by television (T.V) channels (40 %), parents (28 %), magazines and newspapers (22 %), family members (19 %) and lastly friends (11 %) (**Figure 2**). This indicated that the internet, TV channels, and parents might be most useful in influencing or modulating youths' music listening preferences and habits.

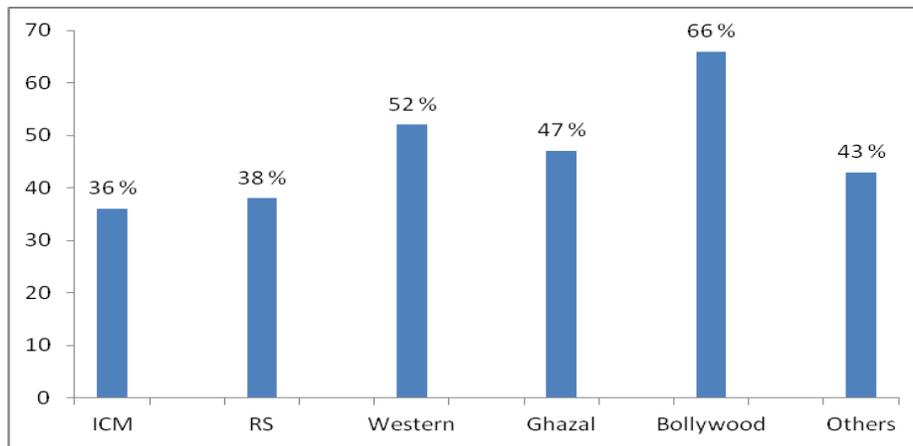


Figure 1: Musical preference of the respondents, irrespective of gender

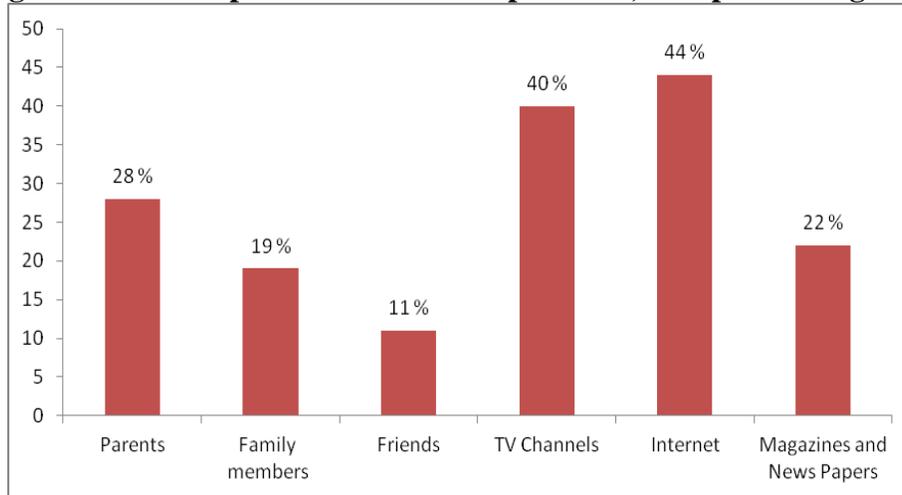


Figure 2: Sources which influenced the musical preference of the respondents, irrespective of gender

Table 1 Analysis of gender difference in listening to Indian Classical Music

Gender	Listening to Indian Classical Music (ICM)		χ^2 test p-value
	Yes	No	
Male (n= 50)	23 (46 %)	27 (54 %)	> 0.05 Not Significant
Female (n= 50)	20 (40 %)	30 (60 %)	

Table 1 shows that although a little bit higher number of male respondents, in comparison to female respondents, preferred to listen to ICM, the difference was statistically not significant (p

> 0.05) employing the Chi-square test. This indicated that the preference for ICM between males and females did not vary among the participants.

Table 2: Analysis of gender difference in listening Rabindra Sangeet

Gender	Listening Rabindra Sangeet		χ^2 test p-value
	Yes	No	
Male (n= 50)	20 (40 %)	30 (60 %)	> 0.05 Not Significant
Female (n= 50)	18 (36 %)	32 (64 %)	

Table 2 shows that although a little bit greater number of male respondents, in comparison to female respondents, preferred to listen to Rabindra Sangeet, the difference was statistically not significant ($p > 0.05$) employing the Chi-square test. This indicated that the preference for Rabindra Sangeet between males and females did not vary among the participants.

Table 3: Analysis of gender difference in listening Western Music

Gender	Listening Western Music		χ^2 test p-value
	Yes	No	
Male (n= 50)	19 (38 %)	31 (62 %)	< 0.01 Significant
Female (n= 50)	33 (66 %)	17 (34 %)	

Table 3 shows that the maximum number of female respondents, in comparison to male respondents, preferred to listen to Western Music. The difference was statistically significant ($p < 0.01$), employing the Chi-square test. This indicated that the preference for Western Music between males and females was indeed different among the participants.

Nowadays, the lifestyle of youths has changed under the influence of Western ideas and thoughts. They prefer going to disco and parties. They prefer faster beats in the music, and most of Western music has repetitive patterns of beats, which may be suitable for dancing with a partner. It may be that the rhythmic content of Western music, along with the emphasized harmony aspect of it, makes it more appealing to the females than males.

Table 4: Analysis of gender difference in listening to Ghazal

Gender	Ghazal		χ^2 test p-value
	Yes	Yes	
Male (n= 50)	17 (34 %)	17 (34 %)	< 0.01 Significant
Female (n= 50)	30 (60 %)	30 (60 %)	

Table 4 shows that the maximum number of female respondents, in comparison to male respondents preferred to listen to Ghazal. The difference was statistically significant ($p < 0.01$), employing the Chi-square test. This indicated that the preference for Ghazal between males and females was indeed different among the participants. It may be that the emotional and lyrical content of Ghazals makes a greater appeal to the females than males.

Table 5: Analysis of gender difference in listening to Bollywood Music

Gender	Listening Bollywood Music		χ^2 test p-value
	Yes	No	
Male (n= 50)	35 (70 %)	15 (30 %)	> 0.05 Not Significant
Female (n= 50)	31 (62 %)	19 (38 %)	

Table 5 shows that although a little bit higher number of male respondents, in comparison to female respondents, preferred to listen to Bollywood music, the difference was statistically not significant ($p > 0.05$) employing the Chi-square test. This indicated that the preference for Bollywood music between males and females did not vary among the participants.

Table 6 : Analysis of gender difference in listening to other types of Music

Gender	Listening to Other Types Music		χ^2 test p-value
	Yes	No	
Male (n= 50)	14 (28 %)	36 (72 %)	> 0.05 Not Significant
Female (n= 50)	22 (44 %)	28 (56 %)	

Table 6 shows that although it appeared that a higher number of female respondents listened to other types /forms of music, in comparison to male respondents, the difference was not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$) employing the Chi-square test. This indicated that the preference for other types of music between males and females did not vary.

Level of involvement in Music: The findings related to this aspect is presented below:

Table 7: Analysis of the involvement in Vocal Music

Level of Involvement	Gender		χ^2 test p-value
	Male (n= 50)	Female (n= 50)	
Beginner / Intermediate	14 (28 %)	24 (48 %)	< 0.05 Significant
Advanced	7 (14 %)	10 (20 %)	
No Involvement	29 (58 %)	16 (32 %)	

Table 7 shows that a greater number of females than males were in the beginner / intermediate level of involvement in Vocal music. The same trend was noted at the advanced level. However, a greater number of males had no involvement in Vocal music, in contrast to females. Distribution of the respondents across the three-level of involvement differed significantly (< 0.05) between males and females. This indicated that among male and female respondents, the level of involvement in vocal music was indeed different.

Table 8: Analysis of the involvement in Instrumental Music

Level of Involvement	Gender		χ^2 test p-value
	Male (n= 50)	Female (n= 50)	
Beginner / Intermediate	29 (58 %)	12 (24 %)	< 0.001 Significant
Advanced	5 (10 %)	3 (6 %)	
No Involvement	16 (32 %)	35 (70 %)	

Table 8 shows that a greater number of males than females were in the beginner / intermediate level of involvement in Instrumental music. The same trend was also observed in the advanced level. However, a greater number of females had no involvement in Instrumental music, in contrast to males. Distribution of the respondents across the three-level of involvement was highly significant (< 0.001) between males and females. This indicated that among male and female respondents, the level of involvement in Instrumental music was indeed different.

Table 9: Analysis of the involvement in Writing or Composing Music

Level of Involvement	Gender		χ^2 test p-value
	Male (n= 50)	Female (n= 50)	
Beginner / Intermediate	19 (38 %)	6 (12 %)	< 0.001 Significant
Advanced	4 (8 %)	1 (2 %)	
No Involvement	27 (54 %)	43 (86 %)	

Table 9 shows that a greater number of males than females were in the beginner / intermediate level of involvement in Writing or Composing Music. The same trend was also observed at an advanced level. Moreover, a greater number of females had no involvement in Writing or Composing music, in contrast to males. Distribution of the respondents across the three-level of involvement was highly significant (< 0.001) between males and females. This indicated that among male and female respondents, the level of involvement in Writing or Composing music was indeed different.

An earlier study (Vedabala and Bandopadhyay, 2018), conducted on youths of Sikkim found that nearly 70 % of the youths were learning music. It also showed that more than 55 % of students possessed musical instruments, and greater than 80 % of the students were involved in writing or composing music. However, this earlier study did not investigate the level of involvement in music, as done by the present study. The findings of the present study, as well as the earlier study, showed that many of the students were involved in music in one or the other way.

Appreciation for Career in Music: The findings related to this aspect is given below:

Table 10: Appreciation of Music as Career in relation to Gender among the Respondents

Gender	Appreciate Career in Music		χ^2 test p-value
	Yes	No	
Male (n= 50)	30 (60 %)	20 (40 %)	< 0.05 Significant
Female (n= 50)	41 (82 %)	9 (18 %)	

Table 10 shows that the maximum number of female respondents in comparison to male respondents appreciated a career in music. The difference was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), employing the Chi-square test. This indicated that inclination towards a career in music between males and females was indeed different in the present study.

An earlier study (Vedabala and Bandopadhyay, 2018), conducted on youths of Sikkim found that irrespective of gender, 87.5 % of the students liked music as a career, that is, they appreciated career in music. There were also hesitancy (8.3 %) and lack of appreciation for a career in music (4.1 %) among some of the students of Sikkim in opting music as a career.

Conclusion:

The present study among college students of Kolkata showed their musical preference, involvement level in music, and career appreciation in music. It was found that a greater number of females in comparison to males preferred to listen to Western Music, and Ghazal. This observation was statistically significant. It was also found that despite being involved in other non-musical subjects in the college education system, the student respondents had the passion and love for music, evidenced by the fact that many were learning music, and some were even composing music. In the present study, the majority of the college students of non-musical courses were of the view that music can offer a career. This became clear as a large number of students appreciated career in music. However, something was holding the students back from pursuing music education in college and opting for music as a career. It may be limited employment opportunities in music, or it may be that the present music courses are limited to only a few forms of music and exclude many of the other forms of music found, which may be liked by the students. The findings of the present study may be useful for educational institutions

and policymakers to develop programs / courses, and for framing strategies to attract more students to pursue music education. To make the strategies more effective, the government should give priority in increasing employment opportunities in the field of music.

Limitations of the study:

The present study was not able to evaluate the emotional, behavioral, psychological, and physical effects which are associated with the music preference of the respondents. Moreover, the sample size was not large. Hence, the findings may not be generalized.

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