

A STUDY OF THE EFFECT OF LEARNING MUSIC ON THE PERSONAL VALUES OF ADOLESCENT STUDENTS

Sonal Chabra and Mahima Misra

In the Indian culture, music has always been accorded an important place. However, when it comes to mainstream education in schools, music has generally been accorded a secondary status. A fair amount of recent research supports the value of music as part of a well-rounded education. But the studies are admittedly few. Music provides children with a means of self-expression, provides them with an internal glimpse of other cultures and equips them with other skills. Much remains to be learnt about the connection between music and learning. The effects of learning music are not limited to learning but these effect other psychological and personal aspects of learners. This study investigated the effect of learning music on personal values of a sample of 400 adolescents from different schools of Delhi. The results showed that learning music does leave a positive effect on personal values of adolescents.

KEYWORDS: Learning Music, Personal Values, Adolescents

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

“Music produces a kind of pleasure which human nature cannot do without”
(Confucius, 551 BC – 479 BC).

This universe is but a conglomeration of energies, sound energy being an important aspect of it. Albert Einstein recognised as one of the smartest men who have ever lived believed the same. In his words, “If I were not a physicist, I

Sonal Chabra ✉

Assistant Professor, Rawal College of Education, Faridabad, Haryana. Email:
sonal.chabra77@gmail.com

Mahima Misra

Teacher, The Shriram School, Faridabad, Haryana. Email:mahishailendra@gmail.com

would probably be a musician. I often think in music. I live my daydreams in music. I see my life in terms of music. ... I get most joy in life out of music". Music is important in most people's lives independent of their cultural origin. Music can foster bonds between people and communicate values and identity. All human cultures show evidence of musical behaviours (Wallin, Merker & Brown, 2001; Merriam, 1964). The role of music across societies is very similar, for instance, lullabies are sung, dance and festivals are celebrated, personal and group identities are communicated, it delivers pleasure around the world, and many religious practices cannot be imagined without music. Music has been part of Indian subcontinent since antiquity. It was seen as an excellent means for realization of god. Music was considered as a source of culture and civilization. According to Hindu mythology each god or goddess is associated with some kind of musical instrument. Goddess Sarasvati is seen with Veena in her hands, Lord Shiva is associated with damru, Lord Vishnu with conch; Lord Krishna is inseparable with flute and Narada with an ektara. There were many works on music written in later periods explaining various characteristics, types and techniques. But the theory of music as expounded in Gandharva Veda got lost. We know that in Ages past music was not considered merely an entertainment but rather was associated, in fact, interlocked with religious, philosophical and educational beliefs, thus possessed axiological connotations. Summing up, music is so important in so many cultures that it seems to be more than an evolutionary by-product or an "auditory cheesecake" (Pinker, 1997). In its varied forms, music is essential to humankind. A lot of research has evidenced the important functions of music listening in personal (cognition and emotion), social (relationships and personal values) and cultural (cultural values and transmission of culture) aspects.

Human values are of eminent importance for individuals and cultures. They are embodied as cognitive representations of individuals needs and societies demands. Personal values guide people's lives, behaviours and attitudes (Gouveia, 1998; Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961; Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987). Values of societies are among the most central features of cultures. Cultural values are shared beliefs among members of societies about what is desirable in life. Common features of values include the following six characteristics: (a) Values are beliefs that are associated with affect. (b) Values are desirable goals that motivate action. (c) Values transcend specific actions and situations. This distinguishes values from norms and attitudes, which refer to specific actions, objects, or situations. (d) Values serve as standards or criteria guiding selection or evaluation of actions, people, and events. (e) Values are ordered by importance forming a system of priorities. This hierarchy is another feature that distinguishes values from norms and attitudes. (f) The relative importance of values guides action. The competing character of values and their relevance guide attitudes and behaviours. Analogue to the characteristics above, Schwartz (1996) defines personal values

“as desirable, trans-situational goals, varying in importance that serves as guiding principles in people's lives”. Values underpin individuals' attitudes and behaviours, such as voting behaviour, political attitudes and readiness to out group contact, religiosity, environmental attitudes and behaviour and consumer choices. The values that can be considered as desirable and important differ from person to person and culture to culture. There are a variety of values and all are not equally important and desirable but there are a few which play an important role in defining a person's character and are more or less universally applicable as they are close to the expected behaviour from a socially desirable human being.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The aim of education is to inculcate moral, intellectual and physical well being in the citizens. The importance of learning, in enabling the individual to put his potentials to optimal use, is self-evident. Without education, the training of the human minds is incomplete. No individual is a human being in the working world until he has been educated in the proper sense. Music has always been a part of our education. This has been realized at several points like, especially in our National Curriculum Framework (NCF, 2005). As per this framework, “Art as a subject at all stages is recommended, covering all four major spheres, i.e. music, dance, visual arts and theatre.”

The benefits of music education are all pervasive and therefore it is apt to feel that music affects our morals, our personal beliefs and contributes to making us what we are and want to be. The authors believe that music has the power to transform us intrinsically; it is up to us to allow this to happen. One must know where the music is taking us and is it the same direction which we want to take. Music has the capacity to give us manifold benefits which include success in society, success in school, success in developing intelligence, success in life. Music makes an individual smarter, music enhances creativity, music reduces pain, and music reduces stress, so it's a powerful medium and one must use it judiciously. On the other hand, value is an important construct in nearly every branch of social science. It is also used in philosophy, theology, and education. Research has indicated that individuals with specific music style preference have a certain set of values. The authors through this study tried to explore whether learning music has an effect on the personal values of adolescents.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This Section presents a brief review of literature on the studies done in this area of research.

Olson (1996) in his study concluded that integrated music experiences provide excitement in learning for children and thereby improve students'

reading, writing, thinking, and analysing skills and strategies. Further, music, when involved in the classroom, can have great effects on the early stages of learning for the very young up through elementary age school children. The research showed that children enjoy music and indulge in music related activities with more ease and more passionately than the older people. The minds of older people become more rigid in choosing what will benefit them and will be more rewarding than those youngsters and children who will readily involve themselves in activities for the sole reason of enjoyment and entertainment. The effects of music although are good even on adults but it is not as great as it is on children.

Clair (2000) performed an experiment when the researcher wanted to see if studying or testing with music affected scores on a memory test. There were four groups in this study. One group had music while studying and testing, another had music while studying and no music while testing. The third group had no music while studying but music while testing, and the fourth group had no music during both. Each group consisted of approximately 30 freshman or sophomore level psychology students. The students were all given a memory test, which consisted of a list of 15 words and studied it for two minutes. After the two minutes were up, the word lists were collected. At the end of the class period, the test was administered. The group that tested with music listened to "Sad Eyes". A between subjects factorial ANOVA was calculated comparing the memory test scores for subjects who had music during recall or studying. No significant results were found. Several factors, such as the type of test given and the music type, may have contributed to these insignificant results. Preliminary research at the Centre for the Neurobiology of Learning and Memory at the University of California, Irvine, shows that music enhances higher-brain functions. Subjects who listened to 10 minutes of music (in this case, Mozart) prior to taking the abstract reasoning portion of the Stanford-Binet ability test did better than those using a relaxation tape or meditating before the test. It appears that complex music may promote more complex thinking (Viadero, 1993).

A number of studies have been done in the field of music with its impact on teaching-learning aspects. However, music as a variable affecting adolescent students' personal values has not been given much thought till now. It is still an unventured territory.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The specific objectives of the study were:

1. To study the personal values of adolescent students learning music.
2. To study the personal values of adolescent students not learning music.
3. To compare the personal values of students learning music and those not learning music.

The hypothesis set for the study was that there is no significant difference in the personal values of adolescent students learning music and those not learning music.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The study employed a descriptive survey method. As stated earlier, the main of the study was to study the personal values of adolescents learning music and not learning music. Within the school identified, background information was collected from adolescents to understand the makeup of the two groups of adolescents – those learning music and those not learning music. Here, learning music meant adolescents who were engaged in formal training of music for at least last three years outside the school curriculum. Once the groups were made, adolescents were identified from each group. Thereafter, standardised test was administered to study their personal values.

SAMPLE

The study was conducted on adolescents studying in schools of Delhi. There were two groups, one- learning music as a subject from at least the last three years and the other group that was not learning any form of music whatsoever. The sample was collected from forty different schools through stratified random sampling, taking ten students from each school from class (Classes 9-12) for each group. The total sample was of 400 adolescents, 200 learning music and 200 not learning music.

TOOL USED

A standardized tool was used for the purpose of the study. The tool used was Personal Values Questionnaire (PVQ) by Sherry and Verma, 2006. The tool is a questionnaire and measures values in ten areas – religious, social, democratic, aesthetic, knowledge, hedonistic, power, family, health and economic. The tool can be administered individually or in a group. There are 40 statements in the tool and on each statement there are three responses, and the respondent has to mark on either of the three. A score of 2, 1 and 0 is given on each statement depending on the response. PVQ is a fairly valid tool to determine the hierarchy of values of a group. Moreover, reliability coefficients ranging from 0.47 for social value to 0.70 for economic value were established which indicate that indices of reliability of different scales of values of PVQ are also satisfactory.

PROCEDURE FOR DATA COLLECTION

The students were given the standardized tool (personal values questionnaire) to fill in without consulting each other as the responses were not wrong or right but rather most preferred and least preferred.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data collected on personal values was analysed by using descriptive statistics such as mean etc. To compare the personal values of adolescents learning music and those not learning music, t-test was applied.

MAJOR FINDINGS

The researchers have clubbed the findings from the research in different points. The following table represent the comprehensive data which will be referred to in all the points discussed below.

Table 1

Values of Adolescent Students Learning Music and not Learning Music.

Value	Average Score	Interpretation	Average Score	Interpretation	t-value	Interpretation
Religious Value	49.33	Average	47.75	Average	0.25	No Significant Difference
Social Value	48.5	Average	43.58	Low	2.79**	Difference is Significant
Democratic Value	47.23	Average	42.45	Low	2.39*	Difference is Significant
Aesthetic Value	60.1	High	52.8	Average	2.88**	Difference is Significant
Economic Value	54.53	High	57.98	High	1.73	No Significant Difference
Knowledge Value	50.7	Average	44.88	Low	3.05**	Difference is Significant
Hedonistic Value	58.65	High	59.0	High	0.14	No Significant Difference
Power Value	52.58	Average	54.2	High	0.54	No Significant Difference
Family prestige Value	45.9	Average	49.48	Average	1.69	No Significant Difference
Health Value	53.65	Average	48.28	Average	3.14**	Difference is Significant

* Significant at 0.05 Level and ** Significant at 0.01 Level

1. Personal values of the group learning music are better than those not learning music. The adolescents learning music have scored average/ good or high scores on different values whereas adolescents not learning music have scored low score on social, knowledge and democratic values.
2. Adolescents consider Hedonistic and Economic values as important implying that materialistic possessions and frivolous lifestyles are more common among the adolescents of today. This is irrespective of the fact that whether they are learning music or not.
3. Learning music does have a significant effect on the personal values of the adolescent students. Adolescent students learning music exhibited better

democratic, knowledge, aesthetic, social and health values than the adolescent students' not learning music. All these values are desirable in our society and are a positive indicator towards the social health and general progress of the society for (i) Social values - good social values make a better citizen who enjoys living peacefully and gregariously making his/her presence more desirable in the society, (ii) Democratic values - people with democratic values know that every person in the society is equal and deserve equal opportunity to show their talent, (iii) Knowledge value - valuing knowledge is helpful for studying well and achieving better marks in school and getting better opportunities in life later on, (iv) Aesthetic values - people with aesthetic values have an inclination for the finer aspects of life like music, dance, literature, sculptor, painting etc. Being involved in such fine things keeps them away from the destructive activities which can harm the society and (v) Health values - a person who believes in keeping healthy lives a quality life and exudes positive vibrations in the society where he lives. A healthy person achieves more, lives more positively and has the capacity to take the society to a higher level. Such people are desirable in a society.

4. Adolescents learning music prioritizes the values in the following order: Aesthetic, Hedonistic and Economic whereas the non-music group considers the values in the following order: Hedonistic, Economic and Power. Adolescents learning music consider Aesthetic value as their top most priority which is obvious as they are involved in an aesthetic field, viz. music. This fact helps them from getting involved in destructive activities as they hardly have the inclination or time to spend in activities other than aesthetic ones. The next value preferred by them is Hedonistic, which again shows the lack of patience and indulgence in momentary pleasures. Therefore studying music does not seem to inculcate tolerance or patience and does not affect the pleasure-loving and pain-avoiding characteristic of our youngsters. Further, adolescents not learning music prefer the personal values in the following order: Hedonistic value as first, Economic value as second and Power value as third. This shows that they lack patience and want all material comfort and tend to avoid pain and enjoy momentary pleasures. They consider money and material things as more important. They have the tendency to rule and lead rather than follow and abide. They may be very good leaders and entrepreneurs but when it comes to abiding laws and rules of the society, they believe in breaking the rules and making their own rules.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

What each person as a teacher is looking forward to teach or propagate is different and somewhat subjective but essentially all teachers try to inculcate a sound moral character and a fine and balanced mind in their students. The

above study has tried to find out whether the personal values of our adolescents are leading towards these goals or not, and whether the independent variable, music has a role to play in taking us closer to our goal of being able to inculcate a sound character and a balanced mind in our students. The effect of music has been proved to be very powerful and if it is used in the right manner and the right amount it can surely give us wonderful results in the field of education.

Through the above study, we conclude that the personal values do get affected by learning music/interaction with classical music, in a positive manner. The effect of music on the personal values of students shows that music has the capacity to not only affect biologically as proved in so many studies where the growth of plants, growth of brain cells etc. get stimulated but also to affect the behaviour and character of a person which is not possible through ordinary ways. The learning of music involves rigorous practice and a lot of patience, therefore the person learning music also learns the qualities of working hard and keeping patience. This gives a kind of gravity to the character and makes him/her more efficient in other aspects of life as well.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PARENTS/TEACHERS

After interacting with adolescent students during the course of this study and analysing the results of this study, some important aspects get highlighted which need to be shared with parents and other personnel working with adolescents. These are:

1. Personal Values of the adolescents are very unsatisfactory, as they prefer materialistic possessions and frivolous pleasures rather than finer things of life. A lot of this depends on the fact that parents and teachers are least interested in the character building of their children. The teachers are busy completing the course and the parents are busy earning money and comfort for their children. They do not have time to see what their children are learning, from where they are gaining information and whether they are developing into responsible and desirable citizens of the world. The only thing that can help these morally and aesthetically bereft students is more quality time from their parents and teachers.
2. The creative arts can help soothe the storms and stress of adolescent life. Engaging students in classical music, classical dances and other aesthetic pursuits will help the child divert his /her energies in more positive fields that will calm him and also his surroundings.
3. Moreover, this engaging of the students in creative arts must not be treated as a hobby or as a competitive subject where sometimes parents/teachers either take it too casually or tend to pressurize the students to perform better. This robs the pursuit of its essential characteristic of soothing or calming or giving pleasure to the senses. It becomes more of a burden than pleasure.

CONCLUSION

Music, like language, is an accomplishment that distinguishes us as humans. The music of India is said to be one of the oldest unbroken musical traditions in the world. It is said that the origins of this system go back to the Vedas. Many different legends have grown up concerning the origins and development of Indian classical music. Such legends go a long way in showing the importance that music has in defining Indian culture. We often complain about our children's lack of gravity, lack of values, lack of sensitivity; but we must realize that these softer virtues need to be inculcated through an aesthetic environment and a proper exposure to the culture of our nation, which is possible through the medium of Music. Personal values in new generation also play an important role in building good citizens. The reasons for these falling standards must be found out and this can be done by studying the effect of various variables on the value system of our children. Adolescence is a stage of storm and stress and the students at this stage tend to fall prey to vices more often than not. To build their value system and to give them a more desirable behaviour socially it is imperative to not just analyse their emotional health through descriptive researches but also suggest ways through experimental researches to enhance their moral standards and ethics. The incorporation of music training from preschool to postsecondary education is common in most nations because involvement in music is considered a fundamental component of human culture and behaviour.

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