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Nuranis Suraya Zorkeply@Zulkifli, Tengku Elena Tengku Mahamad

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Pop Music and its Role as a Communicative Medium to Express Emotions among Youth

Nuranis Suraya Zorkeply@Zulkifli¹, Tengku Elena Tengku Mahamad²

¹Proton EON Glenmarie, Shah Alam, Selangor, ²School of Communication and Media, College of Computing, Informatics and Media, Universiti Teknologi MARA
Corresponding Author's Email: tengku.elena@uitm.edu.my

Abstract

The social nature of music can influence human emotions. Music allows listeners to express their emotions, whether positive or negative at intrapersonal and interpersonal levels. Pop music in particular has been known as a useful tool to facilitate students' learning and help them become creative, relieve their boredom, and help them get through difficult times. However, what is less known to date is *how* Pop music influences the emotions of youth and *why* they rely on the music to communicate their feelings. Available studies have mostly used surveys to collect data among pre-school and middle school children. Samples have also been mostly from Western countries. Utilising a qualitative research method, we recruited 12 undergraduate students from public and private university in Selangor, Malaysia. The participants were selected using the purposive sampling method and data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted both online and face-to-face. Thematic analysis revealed that students experience joy, relaxation, happiness, and sadness when they listen to their favourite Pop songs. Pop music enables youth to release powerful emotional responses such as thrills and chills. The relatable and meaningful lyrics often mirror their inner thoughts and feelings and helps them express and explore their emotions when communicating with other people.

Keywords: Communication, Emotions, Music, Pop Music, Youth

Introduction

Over the years, many studies have been conducted on music. Most of these research focuses on why people listen to music and what type of music they prefer (e.g., North et al., 2000; Roe, 1985; Tekin Gurgun, 2016). Studies have claimed that music generate listeners' emotional states, express, activate and manage their emotions, and assist them in communicating their feelings (Tekin Gurgun, 2016). In music, communication occurs when a performer intends to express a specific emotion and a listener recognises that emotion (Jusllin & Timmers, 2010a). The performer's emotion will then be experienced or felt by the listener (Jusllin & Timmers, 2010b). But in some cases, the felt emotion may not always correspond with the perceived emotion (Kawakami et al., 2014). For example, while sad music was perceived as more tragic, listeners may not experience the corresponding tragic

emotions (Kawakami et al., 2014). Music has also been frequently associated with its role as a therapy for persons who have been diagnosed with a variety of conditions such as autism, depression, and Alzheimer's disease (e.g., Simmons-Stern et al., 2010). Music is also seen as an effective tool to enhance learning activities and help with students' academic achievement (Umuzdas, 2015).

Despite a growing interest in the study of music and emotions, relatively little attention has been devoted to understanding *how* Pop music influences the emotions of youth and *why* they rely on the music to communicate their feelings despite evidence suggesting that Pop music is more beneficial when it comes to helping youth communicate positive emotions compared to classical music (Stone, 2016). Music has the power to help youth feel better during challenging times (McFerran & Saarikallio, 2014). Stone (2016) claims that Pop music can help convey meanings, including emotional meanings and Pop music is more intimately connected with our emotional lives. It is significant to explore this issue to provide a better context for ways in which youth can improve their emotions through music. Also, it will allow others such as parents, friends, and academics to understand how they can help the youth to manage their emotions when facing challenges in emotional regulation and expression.

Literature Review

The function of music on emotions

Music has a universal appeal that is often attributed to its ability to make us feel a certain way, and to change how we are currently feeling (Corrigall & Schellenberg, 2013). Music can be considered a language of feeling as it can move a person's emotions when they listen to it (Corrigall & Schellenberg, 2013). Music can evoke at least 13 emotions such as amusement, relaxation, sadness, triumph, anxiety, and feeling pumped up (Cowen et al., 2020). In a study conducted by Miranda (2013) she discussed how musical performance has been related to the development of emotional capacity and the construction of psycho-social conceptions of self and social identity as part of a shared language, religious system, family, and social institutions. Music can also be seen as a therapeutic tool cross-culturally that could reduce negative emotions and promote positive emotions (Boer & Fischer, 2012).

Due to its impact, studies have suggested that music can be used as a therapeutic therapy to improve a person's physical, mental, and emotional health and well-being especially among those diagnosed with a variety of conditions such as autism, depression, and Alzheimer's disease (Simmons-Stern et al., 2010; Ticker, 2017). Other than that, music can shape a person's language and the way they communicate with others every day (Helwig, 2018). This is due to its ability to convey profound emotions that would be difficult to describe in common words (Musacchia & Khalil, 2020). National anthems, for example, provide organisations with a unifying message that evokes a shared history, pride, and a sense of belonging (Chirinos-espin, 2021).

Music can distract its listeners and the performers in a variety of ways. It is said that it can be done through an immersive state of flow, resulting in various of health advantages (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). Music allows listeners to divert their attention from unpleasant feelings and strengthen positive feelings (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; Saarikallio & Erkkila, 2007). Past studies suggest that anxiety and depression can be reduced by listening to one's favourite music (Ahmad, 2015; Kühlmann et al., 2018; Situmorang, Mulawarman & Wibowo, 2018). One strand of research on music and emotions has emphasised strong experience of music. Pelowski (2015) explained crying in response to music are one of the emotional responses of listeners. The experience of feeling like crying is both complex and intense. but

it has attracted much less attention than similar markers of intense aesthetic experience (Nusbaum et al., 2014), such as getting goosebumps (Silvia & Nusbaum, 2011) and feeling touched and moved (Menninghaus et al., 2015).

Evans and Schubert (2008) discovered that emotions express external locus since listener generally perceive and describe it as a component of the music itself. The causes of emotional experiences in music are considered to be a function of the song's structure, performer characteristics, listener characteristics, and contextual circumstances (Scherer & Zentner, 2001). On the other hand, musical features that are connected with specific expressed emotions have also been discovered in studies by (Juslin & Laukka, 2004; Schubert, 2004). Khan and Ajmal (2017) also indicated that music has the ability to make listener to feels more relax, calm and help in stimulating listener's mood when they listen to music. Pop music generates more excitement for its listener (Bruner li, 1990). Positive energy can be inducing from listening to upbeat rhythm and melody in a song. Aside from that, a study by Storr (2015) agrees that both artist and music lover believe that great music can provide the listener more sensual pleasure nonetheless the musical knowledge of the listeners.

It is also discovered that those of different gender (men versus women) (Wells & Hakanen, 1991) and culture (e.g., Australian and Cuban) (Susino & Schubert, 2010) would emotionally respond to music differently. Susino and Schubert (2010) had found that those with high levels of fandom for a genre would report a wider range of emotions in response to the lyrics labelled as being a song from the same genre compared to lower levels of fandom. In a study conducted by Negut and Sârbescu, (2014) they found that both Heavy Metal and Hip Hop music expressed more negative emotions than Pop music, although the excerpts had identical lyrics, and even though the emotional content of the lyrics was positive or neutral.

Pop music and its influence on youth

For many years, music has the power to influence mood in youth either positively, or negatively (Ganser & Huda, 2010). In a study conducted by Wells and Hakanen in 1991, they discovered that music serves as a powerful communication medium among high school teenagers. The emotions that were often expressed include excitement, happiness, and love (Wells & Hakanen, 1991). According to Ganser and Huda (2010) sad lyrics and violent music can cause negative effects on mood whereas upbeat music and pro-social lyrics can induce positive effects in their mood.

Pop music in particular is popular among youth and they often spend approximately 30 to 60 minutes listening to it while studying (Maynes-Blanco & Nartea, 2020). Music is able to help young listeners attain their desired objectives and goals in a variety of situation (Papinczak et al., 2015). Furthermore, music helps them create, improve, and sustain social relationships with their friends and family (Papinczak et al., 2015).

Pop music has produced a powerful effect on the young people of many generations over the world. It has urged the youth to self-expression through song and music writing. Starting by the close relationship between Pop music and teenagers, it is stated by early researchers that when a teenager is going through emotional distress or low stability, it is music that consoles them and help to regulate moods and emotions (Taruffi & Koelsch, 2014). A study by Gorkaltseva and Gozhin (2017) indicated Pop music has made such a big progress and become so diverse that the development of Pop music in Great Britain has influence British youth taste of music back in 20th century.

Pop music has been used to create a positive change in the attitude and motivation of students (Sever, 2016). Dingle et al (2019) discovered that teenagers regularly sought to listen to music that matched their moods and became absorbed in the feelings and impulses provided by music in their studies. Previous research by Blaise and Diekstra (2021) recommended that music can be encouraged among youth to enhance their psychological and emotional development where the music helps students learn to memorize and process patterns. For example, music preferences may play an important role in early adolescent interaction with peers, as music is listened to and shared with friends and peer crowds often center around certain musical preferences (Arnett, 1991; Bennet, 2001; Urberg et al., 2000). Earlier research moreover indicated music creates a wide of emotions, and there's music for every feeling a teen really feels, from anger and grief to enjoy and joy (Sloboda & O'Neill, 2019). In this case, music urged to focus on one job each time and just listen to a song that acts much more as background noise than anything else where it prove music have a very strong influence on the way teenagers live (Robillard, 2012). For example, in research published by Vuoskoski et al (2012) participants felt sad while listening to sad music, but people valued it nearly as much as upbeat music, notably if they performed better on the trait "openness to experience," which is associated with aesthetic appreciation.

Music as a communicative medium for emotions

For several generations, music has been intended to allow its audiences to express and regulate their emotions, as well as elicit pleasure (Zatorrea & Salimpoor, 2013). Although music and words are two distinct symbolic modes, they share several characteristics in terms of communication and expression. Early literature has also asserted that musical performance is viewed as a one-way communication system that runs from composer to individual listener through the medium of the performer, providing a vehicle for individuals to exchange feelings, intentions, and meanings (Miell et al., 2005).

According to Pannese et al (2016), it was widely held in ancient Greece that exposure to various types of music could enhance a person's well-being and personality, as well as encourage the growth of positive attributes such as peace and tranquillity, balance, harmony, and order. For example, beyond the rationale of the art for the sake of art theory, traditional Greek music includes performing and perceiving sound by singing, reciting, crooning, dancing, swinging, hearing, clapping, and others (Loutzaki & Poulakis, 2019).

Despite contrary scientific data in the fields of medicine, physiology, and psychology on the music's effects on the human functional state (its ability to cause psychological and physiological changes in the sensory, autonomic, motor, and intellectual spheres of man), it has emerged proven that music has a variety of benefits over other didactic means because it creates a comfortable background, raises emotional responses, and activates the neuro-mental activation system (Canli & Canli, 2013; Rathert, 2012). Thus, music has the ability to convey emotions through activating cognitive processes indirectly, through emotional state. It is believed that emotions and other cognitive processes has been established (Akhmadullina et al., 2016).

Previous studies have discovered a few expressive qualities shared by both vocal expression and music that have been found to accurately communicate basic emotions. According to Juslin and Laukka (2003), the classic resemblance among vocal and musical expressions of emotion appears to apply only to particular acoustic elements of music, particularly those that the artist could indeed control during performance, such as tempo,

loudness, and timbre. Thus, Hunter et al (2010) determined that music can arouse emotional reactions from audiences in their studies.

De Lacy Kidwell (2014) explained that when speaking is ineffective, music broadens emotional responses, empathy, and sympathy, and it can also be used as an efficient approach for people who seek sense, hope, and recognition. For example, the results of a study show that music can improve the mental status of people with depression disorder (Maratos et al., 2011). Furthermore, Nikolsky (2016) revealed that intense reaction from musical sources is one of the causes why music became a communication format and language dedicated to emotion.

Methodology

This research was conducted using the qualitative research method. A total of 12 undergraduate students aged between 18 to 25 studying at a public and private university in Shah Alam were recruited (see Table 1 for participant background). The participants were selected using the purposive sampling method. Only students who listens to English pop music were chosen.

Table 1

Background of participants

Participants	Gender / Age	Level of Education	University/College	Year of study
Participant 1	Female / 19	Diploma	Private university	First year
Participant 2	Female / 21	Degree	Public university	Second year
Participant 3	Female / 21	Degree	Public university	Second year
Participant 4	Female / 21	Degree	Public university	Second year
Participant 5	Female / 19	Diploma	Private university	First year
Participant 6	Female / 19	Diploma	Private university	First year
Participants 7	Female / 24	Degree	Public university	Final year
Participant 8	Male / 23	Degree	Public university	Final year
Participant 9	Female / 21	Degree	Public university	Second year
Participant 10	Female / 21	Degree	Public university	Second year
Participant 11	Female / 21	Degree	Public university	Second year
Participant 12	Male / 24	Degree	Public university	Final year

The one-to-one semi-structured interviews were conducted throughout June 2022. The first researcher contacted participants by telephone and email to confirm their role and to

provide the option of being interviewed either online or face-to-face. A few participants chose to be interviewed physically. The interviews lasted between 30 to 50 minutes and included open-ended questions that could answer the study's research questions. Each interview started with general questions such as, "Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?" Other questions that were asked include, "How often do you listen to music?", "Why do you like listening to pop music?", "Can you describe your feelings or emotions when you listen to your favourite music?" Probes were also used to uncover deeper levels of meaning or an emotional response were posed, such as "Can you provide examples?" "How did you feel?" The interview method was used to allow the researchers gain access to the ideas and feelings of the selected participants (i.e., youth).

Thematic analysis (TA) was used to analyse the data for this study. TA is a method for identifying, analysing, organising, describing, and reporting themes found within a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). An inductive approach was selected to help the researchers establish themes based on the data set obtained from the participants. Before the interviews were conducted, the participants were explained on their right to confidentiality, and their option to withdraw at any given point during the study without having to give any reason. To maintain the participants' privacy and ensure full confidentiality, the participants were assured that their names will not be disclosed. Their identities were replaced with pseudonyms such as Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 3, and so forth. All interviews were audio-recorded, and the filed notes were written up. The audio-recorded data were then transcribed verbatim.

Result and Discussion

Thematic analysis revealed that some students experience joy, relaxation, happiness, and sadness when they listen to their favourite pop songs. Pop music has the ability to release powerful emotional responses such as thrills and chills among the participants thus evoking feelings of joy and happiness. As presented in Table 2, several themes and sub-themes were identified pertaining to the role of pop music as communicative medium for students to express their emotions. The themes identified in the data set were "pop-music formula", "felt emotions", and "musical impact".

Table 2

Themes and sub-themes

Main Theme	Sub-themes	Description
1. Pop-music formula	Rhythm Melody Lyrics	This code is used when participants talked about the features within music that triggers them to listen to Pop music. Example : <i>"Catchy melody in pop song makes it easier for me to listen to pop music. They usually have chorus that's repeated several times and are easy to remember and sing along to"</i> .
2. Felt emotions	Joy Calm	This code is used when participants touched on how Pop music induce either positive or negative emotions

		Example : <i>"I feel happy when I listen to Pop song. It really improves my mood a lot when I feel stress. I feel happy and heard when I engage myself with my favourite song".</i>
3. Musical impact	Improve well-being Improve social skills	This code is used when participants talked about the impact of pop music in their lives. Pop music improves their mind, and the ability to express their concealed emotions. Example : <i>"Yes, because through music, good messages and awareness are being delivered. Sometimes we did not realize we want to hear such things that are comforting until we actually listen to them through music. It important for mental health to hear comforting messages"</i>

Theme 1: Pop-music Formula

Upon analysing the data, findings revealed that Pop music gets more attention and are more likeable than other genre among youth because of its catchy tunes and easy to understand lyrics. Pop music also combine elements of uncertainty and surprise which makes the genre appeal more towards young listeners. For instance, Participant 8 said:

"Catchy melody in pop song makes it easier for me to listen to pop music. They usually have chorus that's repeated several times and are easy to remember and sing along to".

Depending on the type of rhythm, lyrics, and melody in the Pop music, it allows them to communicate certain types of emotions when needed. Participant 2 had specifically indicated that she prefers Pop music due to the fast rhythm and tempo which can make her feel calm thus helping reduce her anxiety. She added that fast music can make her feel "more optimistic and more positive". The same goes to Participant 3 who reported that the fast rhythm of a song makes her feel more relaxed most of the time. Similarly, Participant 5 had expressed:

"I personally like to listen to Pop song because of its rhythm as it the most important aspect of music. Great songs are a collection of attractive patterns and shapes".

This is in line with what Kühlmann and colleagues (2018) found in their study. Findings suggest that music has the ability to reduce anxiety among its listeners (Kühlmann et al., 2018). Participant 6 who indicated that she only listens to motivational music. In her own words:

"I did find that upbeat rhythm plays a bigger role for my music selection. I only listen to music that make me motivate." (Participant 6)

Meanwhile Participant 1 also indicated that she prefers Pop music due to the fast rhythm and tempo. She explained in her interview:

"I love to dance. so that's why I listen to a lot of Pop song because of its fast rhythm and tempo of the song make it easier to me to enjoy the song and dance at the same time".

According to research, music is linked to people's fundamental modes of interaction with their surroundings, which can morph intense emotions into feelings of joy, or vice versa (Kokkidou & Tsakaridou, 2009). This is supported by the findings, in which participants 10 shared their experiences with how music influences their emotions. Participant 10 explained:

"Personally, since I listen to various genre of music, I kind of explore and learn about difference rhythm and tempo effect on me, depends on my emotions. But I still prefer fast pace music most of the time because it can help me release my emotion".

When listening to Pop songs, the participants usually focus on the rhythm and melody rather than the lyrics. It is probably that certain songs, as well as the emotions, feelings, and moods evoked by Pop music, assisted participants in managing their energy levels for daily living. This study is consistent with the findings of Rentfrow and Gosling (2003) who investigated the relationship between music preferences and music structure in improving quality of life.

Theme 2: Felt Emotions

Data also shows that all participants are aware that Pop music has a strong influence on their own, and others' emotions. Some of the participants (e.g., Participant 1, Participant 6, and Participant 9) had highlighted that Pop music can help improve their emotions especially during stressful times. The music allows them to express what they truly feel within as at times, the music they listen to matches with what they are experiencing at the time. For instance, Participant 1 had indicated that she listens to music to improve her emotions caused by stress from studying. Pop music could help her forget about her problem. In her own words:

"When I listen to music, my mood gets better. I always find myself stressing out because of studying, so I prefer to listen to pop music to help me forget about my problem".

Participant 6 and 7 also described music as a powerful therapeutic tool that could help them feel better. They said:

"I find that listening to music can make me feel better and it lifts my spirits. One of the most powerful types of therapy in my opinion is music." (Participant 6)

"I feel happy when I listen to Pop song. It really improves my mood a lot when I feel stress. I feel happy and heard when I engage myself with my favourite song." (Participant 7)

Participant 9 also highlighted during the interview that music has always played a major role in her life and acts as a "self-therapy" tool when she is in need of therapy. She added:

"I listen to sad songs whenever I feel sad, but I tend to listen to more pop music to make my emotions better. Surprisingly, it does heal my emotions."

Three other participants (Participant 4, 6 and 11) had also claimed that Pop song could help them feel calm, and more focus. Participant 4 indicated that whenever she is alone outdoors, she would listen to her favourite Pop music. The music helps her calm her nerves and she describe the feeling like "falling in love." Meanwhile Participant 6 had said:

"I remember I used to listen to One Direction's songs during exam week. Some people might say that calm music helps them while studying, but I listen to upbeat songs to help me focus on studying and doing assignment. I even got Dean's List for one semester that year."

Participant 11 on the other hand replied:

"I feel at peace. It [Pop music] does help to improve my mood on a daily basis. I even share my playlist with my friends because I appreciate good music and want to share it with them."

These findings are aligned with past research. For instance, Boer and Fischer (2012) had described music as a therapeutic approach cross-culturally that could reduce negative emotions and promote happy feelings. Also, Siles and colleagues (2019) discovered that people would select music based on what they want to feel or how they feel at the present moment.

The majority of the participants had also indicated that the reason they prefer listening to Pop music is because the songs are often catchy and easily understood to the listeners. Pop music also combine elements of uncertainty and surprise which makes the genre appeal more towards youth listener. For instance, Participant 8 said:

"Catchy melody in pop song makes it easier for me to listen to pop music. They usually have chorus that's repeated several times and are easy to remember and sing along to"

For instance, as mentioned by Participant 5

"I personally like to listen to Pop song because of its rhythm as it the most important aspect of music. Great songs are a collection of attractive patterns and shapes"

Same goes to Participant 6:

"I did find that upbeat rhythm plays a bigger role for my music selection. I only listen to music that make me motivate"

Meanwhile Participant 1 also explained in her interview

"I love to dance. so that's why I listen to a lot of Pop song because of its fast rhythm and tempo of the song make it easier to me to enjoy the song and dance at the same time"

One of the participants (Participant 2) claims that Pop music matches her personality. She explained

"Pop music matches my personality quite well. People said that I have an outgoing personality and I always listen to pop music to brighten up my mood. Maybe that's the reason why people tell me I am a very positive person."

During the interviews, the researchers also found that some of the participants (Participant 4, 8, 11, and 12) were introduced to Pop music through their friends and family. Participant 4 and 8 explained that their friends often listen to English Pop music on the radio and their Spotify App. Participant 4 further indicated that her friends introduced her to Taylor Swift who is a well-known American pop and country music singer-songwriter. Ever since, Taylor's music has become a big part of her life because her songs are catchy, incorporates relatable themes, and the lyrics are often based on her own personal experiences. Meanwhile Participant 12 indicated

"I listen to Spotify on my phone. This apps helped me to select hundreds and hundreds of songs from different genre. Before this, I rarely interested in pop music, but I discovered a lot of popular and underrated Pop songs and I started to search for more Pop songs on that apps."

Theme 3: Musical Impact

Other than that, the participants had also described how Pop music has had a large impact on their lives. Music can help them attain their desired goals and objectives. For instance, Participant 1 and 10 in their interviews had mentioned that music is important for building a social skills and good communication skills. Listening to English Pop song helped both of them to improve their English communication skills. Learning a language through music does make lesson more interesting. Participant 1 explained:

"I get to improve my English by listening to English songs. As a result, it makes me feel confident to communicate in English now."

Meanwhile, Participant 10 said

"Music is important. Some people might have poor social skills and it hard for them to communicate their feelings, so they use music instead to communicate their feelings that they are facing. And music has been part of my life. Like I have tons of cool playlist to fill in my days, so yes, it is very important for me and hopefully for other too."

Others had also mentioned how music can improve their social interactions with others. This is similar to what Papinczak and colleagues (2015) had found that is, music can help people create, improve, and sustain social relationships. Participant 5 mentioned during the interview session how Pop music has helped her to create a better energy for herself and her surroundings. Participant 5 mentioned:

"Pop genre match with my energetic personality. It helps a lot as motivation to start a day as it creates a good mood for me".

As demonstrate by Trimble and Hesdorffer (2017), music can be used to access and stimulate specific intellectual circuits, making it a potential therapy method. Music has been shown to profoundly influence listeners' mental states, whereas we require music for energy and motivation. The majority of participants acknowledge that music is an important part of life because it helps them optimise not only their emotions, but also their social skills and helps them discover their true feelings and personalities. Participant 3 reported

“Yes, I agree music is very important to accompany us in daily life and it can bring both feelings of joy, happiness and sadness and also become medium to express ourselves”.

Similarly, Participants 2 and 4 shared their individual stories with the musical influence of music in their lives. Participant 2 and 4 said

“Absolutely! I can't imagine how my life would be if I didn't immerse myself in the world of music.”

“Well, isn't it obvious that music plays huge part in life especially among teenagers. I absolutely agree that music is so important for emotions and as entertainment as well”.
(Participant 4)

According to the Batt-Rawden and Denora (2015), the ubiquity of music in daily life creates an informal learning environment in which people learn and improve their musical interests. Participant 6 indicated that music is important as it has helped with her emotions and well-being. In her own words:

“Yes. I realise I need the existence of music more than I thought until I decide to discuss this topic with someone like you (the researcher)”.

Participant 11 also indicated that music has a large impact in her life. She said
“Yes, because through music, good messages and awareness are being delivered. Sometimes we did not realize we want to hear such things that are comforting until we actually listen to them through music. It important for mental health to hear comforting messages”.

Listening to music can have a very relaxing effect on people's minds and bodies. Music has become for an important medium to release hidden emotions among the participants. While discussing the outcome of participation, Participant 9 highlighted the impact of music in her life as a means to bring positivity and calmness in her life. She said

“I consider music as a tool to release my inner pain that I cannot describe very well through spoken words. The music itself bring different meaning towards different people, but I believe the importance of music are somehow similar among people”.

Music's influence was frequently defined as music that pierces their mind and soul, bringing calm and motivation. The next participant, on the other hand, does not agree with the notion that music promotes positive traits in life. Participant 7 stated that music has no evidence of bringing positivity into her life other than being an entertainment tool for her to use in her spare time. She mentioned the following:

“For me I think that music not really important. It does not necessarily help to improve my emotions sometimes. Maybe if music does not exist, human might create other form of entertainment to help us to improve our emotions.”

Based on the findings, music plays an important role in our lives, especially the younger generations. Music allows the youth to express and explore their feelings and emotions. They

frequently use music to express important developmental themes to them, such as love and friendship. Furthermore, music allows them to explore ideas and emotions in a safe environment and express themselves without using words.

Conclusion

The current study discovered that rhythm and melody play an important role in eliciting positive and negative emotions in younger audiences. The upbeat rhythm and melody of pop music appeal to younger listeners and have helped them express happy and sad emotions. Youth may use music as an outlet for expression and creativity, which contributes to the growth of Pop music and culture among young people.

In terms of study limitations, this study included 12 participants, which represents a small sample size, and only comprised two universities in the state of Selangor; thus, the findings from this study cannot be generalised, and they only reflect the experiences of this group of participants. In addition, this study only considered the perception of those who listens to pop music. We suggest that future research include more participants from various universities across Malaysia.

This study brings to light how music industry such as producers and music creators to create more music that has an impact on listeners, particularly in terms of improving their emotional wellness. Understanding how music affects listeners can lead to the creation of more music with motivational messages. Finally, the study's findings will assist future researchers in using this study as a reference when conducting similar research on this topic.

Other than that, future research must address the challenges of discovering music preferences in a way that reflects these challenges, as well as uncovering these less intentional ways of engaging with music, in order to truly comprehend why people like the music they do.

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