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Music Preferences, Functions of Music, and Adolescents' Personality Traits²

Extended summary

Music plays a significant developmental role in the life of adolescents and has different functions in the life of an individual. Listening to music is one of the most important activities of adolescents, while their music preferences reflect their values, conflicts, and developmental problems they are faced with in everyday life. Music plays an important role in the life of adolescents because it contributes to their cognitive development, self-concept, peer socialization and social perception, and helps them regulate their mood. It is important to understand how adolescents use and experience music on a daily basis and what factors impact their use of music. The power of preference for a specific kind of music depends on the degree to which that type of music fulfills certain functions because the level of functionality and the power of music preference are correlated. There is an increasingly extensive literature of recent research that supports the developmental importance of music in adolescence, given that adolescents, on average, listen to music up to three hours a day and accumulate more than 10,000 hours of active music listening during adolescence (Roberts et al., 2009; Tarrant et al., 2000; Zillmann and Gan, 1997). While identity formation, peer socialization, and social perception remain important functions of music throughout one's life, they are especially important in the period of

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adolescence. Each function of music has its own dimension that can reveal the underlying motives for the listener's use of music. Music serves to satisfy those functions that are important to an individual, therefore our individual choice and the way in which we choose what to listen to and when are related to our own problems, needs, beliefs, and personality. The social function of music is mostly manifested in adolescence when young people use music preferences when meeting others, to manage social impressions or check mutual similarity and to subtly acquire social perception of the personality and values of the person they meet (Rentfrow and Gosling, 2006). Therefore, it is important to implement all knowledge about the functions of music in music lessons so that young people can be helped in their maturation through music.

To understand better the strong links between music preferences and the functions of music in an individual's life, it is important to include the personality factor that provides practical and relevant information about what makes us who we are. As it is commonly believed that an individual's personality can be evaluated on the basis of his/her musical taste, many studies focus on the connection between an individual's musical preferences and his/her personality traits. The dynamics between personality traits and musical preferences is constantly changing, because it is shaped by the individual's social interactions, peer actions, the mass media and contemporary cultural trends, depending on the social status and the area from which the individual comes (Rentfrow and Gosling, 2003). Through systematic and permanent aesthetic education, it is possible to influence the musical preferences of young people by teaching music, because listening to music is their important leisure activity. The task of the school is to develop students' critical attitude towards the information that is presented to them at school and in their free time, so that after finishing school, as adults, they can critically access the abundance of information that surrounds them every day (Šulentić Begić, 2010). Classical music, with its beauty and artistic value, can interest students and contribute to building their musical taste, but this process is gradual, slow, and long-lasting (Vidulin and Martinović, 2015). It is by no means good to omit popular music in our classes because by listening to quality examples of popular music, we teach students to recognize valuable musical achievements within that musical genre and thus influence the formation of their musical taste (Šulentić Begić, 2009). Music education can influence the music preferences of young people because listening to music is an important activity in their leisure time. The paper presents theoretical models of music preferences, characteristics of music, contexts of listening to music, correlation between music preferences and personality traits, as well as the functions of music that are most relevant in the life of adolescents.

Keywords: music art, adolescence, music preferences, functions of music, personality traits

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