

Music Therapy for the Uninitiated

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ABSTRACT:

Background of the Study: Throughout the ages, forms of arts have been a platform for humans to express themselves across India and the rest of the world. The visual arts such as paintings, scripts, and even poetry have been preserved on paper leaves or stone. However, one of the most expressive forms of art, music, due to its auditory form, could not be preserved, despite that, the mellifluousness of Indian music has been retained. The Indian classical music tradition consisted of Hindustani classical music which originated around the 13th and 14th centuries in northern India, diverging from another significant Indian classical music tradition of South India, Carnatic music. The basis of both the styles is spiritual in nature, both emphasize the musical structure and possibility to improvise each raga. Natya Shastra by Bharata and Datillam presented the development of the principles of Indian classical music. The extensive range and intricate content of the Indian music were not limited merely to India, countries like Persia and Afghanistan also contributed to the Hindustani music, which, apart from elements from the Vedic philosophy, was also influenced by Persian elements. During the medieval period, Hindustani music was influenced by 'Sufi', fused with elements from Persian music, by Sufi composers like Amir Khusru and Tansen, in particular.

KEYWORDS: Music Therapy; Applied Psychology; Indian Music; Music Appreciation; World Music; Indian Raga.

Introduction

This research delves into the fascinating realm of cross-cultural musical preferences, specifically focusing on non-Indian individuals' inclinations towards various facets of Indian music. The globalized world has brought diverse musical traditions closer together, and understanding how individuals from different cultural backgrounds engage with Indian music is a pertinent area of inquiry. We aim to unravel the nuances of these preferences and their implications.

A central feature of Hindustani music is the raga, which is a melodic framework consisting of notes from seven scale degrees or swara - Sa, Re, Ga, Ma Pa, Dha, and Ni. The melodic foundations of 'ragas' can be classified into 'thaats', on the basis of the notes included in each raga, it attains a different character. Around 1900, Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande classified the ragas into the 10 thaats. Hindustani classical music is primarily based on vocals which are Dhrupad, Khayal, Thumri, Ghazal, Dhaar, and Tarana. The roots of Hindustani music can be traced to the emergence of the styles of Dhrupad and Dhamar. Despite its focus on vocals, Hindustani music has also been associated with instrumental forms from ancient times. The musical instruments used are veena, sitar, sarod, sarangi, bansuri, tabla, santoor, and sursingar among others. A raga includes a set of notes organized in melodies with musical motifs on a scale. A raga is said to evoke emotions in the mind of the listener, it is based on the nine emotions or the Nava rasa - Love (Shringara), humor (Hasya), pathos (Karuna), anger (Raudra), heroism (Veera), terror (Bhayanaka), disgust (Vibhatsa), wonder (Adbhuta) and serenity (Shanta), with each raga being dominated by one of the nine Rasas.

The literature and stories pertaining to Indian classical music addressed the effect of music on the body, mind, and spirit of the listener. It is historically known that the ragas of North Indian Classical Music elicit emotions, induce a sense of well-being and the mind is raised to a new level of consciousness. Mathur et al. (2015) substantiated these assumptions by analysing the responses of 122 participants to the different ragas, the findings of the study provided new insights into the Indian ragas and the impact of rhythm, tone, and tempo on emotions. Wieczorkowska et al. (2010) also substantiate that various ragas evoke various emotions. Listening to music and participating in creating music has been linked to a wide range of positive effects on health and well-being (Juslin & Västfjäll, 2008). Music is processed in a complex way, the brain uses different modes- emotional, cognitive, perceptual, motor, and autonomic. The areas responsible for the emotional response to music are cingulate gyrus and amygdala. Pleasure inducing music activates the frontal cortex, and the pleasurable feeling is produced by the release of endorphins, dopamine, and nitrous oxide in the brain. Music also has an effect on the physiological aspects such as a drop in blood pressure. Due to its effect on the physiology, emotional state, and mind, music is used as a systematic form of intervention to promote mental and physical health and well-being, which is known as music therapy. Koelsch (2015) noted that the calming, relaxing, and stress-reducing effects of music are widely studied. The history of music therapy can be traced back to the ancient Orphic school of Greece, the prophylactic and therapeutic powers of music were also known by philosophers like Aristotle, Plato, and Pythagoras. Music listening, music activities such as singing or creating, and live music therapy have been used for years by laymen and therapists as an intervention to manage stress and anxiety (Gold et al., 2011). The use of Hindustani music in therapy is raga-based, which induces sleep, helps relieve anxiety and brings about relaxation, it is also known to increase the attention span and gently stimulate the listener (Thomas, 2018). The dependence on *swara* allows the singer to adjust the music according to the preferences and needs of the client. A definite soothing effect on both, the mind and body are induced by the symphonies of raga (Zhi-yong & Jie-zhen, 2002). Thus, music in general, and Hindustani music in specific, have a calming effect on the mind and body, making it an efficient tool to reduce stress and create a sense of peace and calm among students, parents, layman, and professionals.

Need for the Study

The increasing awareness about mental health has also brought to the fore unconventional methods of treatments, apart from conventional medications or counselling. Music therapy, and Hindustani classical music in specific, has been known to improve mood and have a positive effect on the mental well-being of people, however, it is not a part of the mainstream methods to ensure mental well-being. It has been a question of contention on the impact Hindustani classical music had on individuals who have no prior background to this type of music. While working on the designing the structure for Music Therapy for one's client, the researcher was faced with a question on whether this design is universal in nature. Would Hindustani Classical music have the same impact on people from different countries and cultures who have not been exposed to this form of classical music. The extant literature addresses the efficiency of Indian classical music as a form of therapy but has limited studies on its impact on people from different cultures who do not have a background / training in this form of music. The lack of research pertaining to the effects of different aspects of Hindustani classical music on people from different countries and cultures creates a need to carry out this study. Therefore, current research is undertaken to address the research gap.

Aims and Objective

3.1 Aims: The major aim of this research is to study the First Impressions (likes and dislikes) of people with no background to Hindustani Classical Music towards five different integral parts of the art form. These 5 pieces are:

- 1) Alap
- 2) Taan
- 3) Ghazal (light form)
- 4) Group Devotional Singing (Bhajan)
- 5) Instrumental – raag based

3.2 Objectives: Our study seeks to achieve two primary objectives: first, to discern the preferences of participants from Australia, New Zealand, the UAE, and the United States regarding distinct elements of Indian music, including Alaap, Taan, ghazals, group devotional singing (bhajans), and raga-based instrumental music. Second, we aim to gain insight into the underlying factors driving these preferences, contributing to a deeper understanding of cross-cultural musical affinities.

i. To understand the “first impressions” of individuals with no background of Hindustani Classical Music towards its different dimensions.

ii. To understand what appeals to the unconditioned ear in order to encourage research for more universally applicable use of Hindustani Classical Music in the field of Music Therapy.

Hypothesis

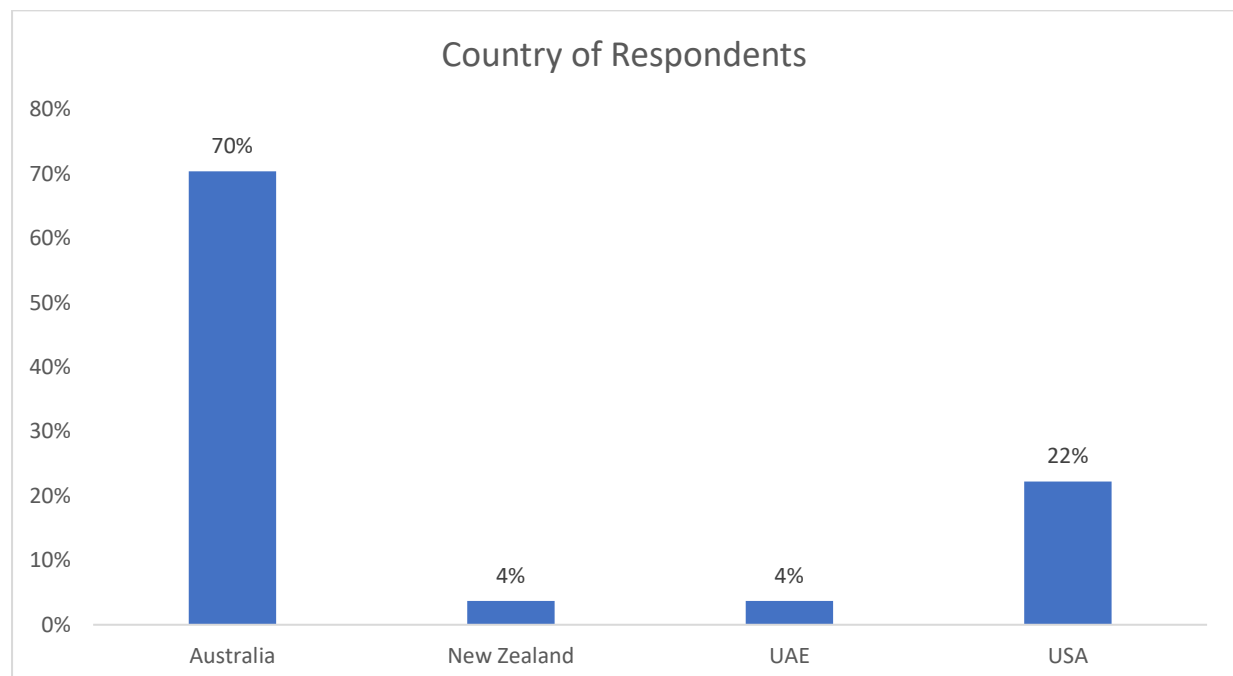
We hypothesize that participants will exhibit varying degrees of appreciation for different forms of Indian music, influenced by factors such as cultural exposure, personal musical backgrounds, and emotional resonance. Specifically, we anticipate that ghazals and devotional music will garner higher favorability due to their universal themes and emotional depth.

Research Methodology of the Study

The development of a constructive research study is facilitated by proper research. A Research design collects and measures data to lay out a plan for the research in order to conduct a logical study, it functions as a roadmap while also assisting in data analysis. This study relied on Primary Data. Primary data includes the data collected through an online survey to obtain information about first impressions of respondents to the questions asked.

To address our objectives, we conducted a comprehensive survey among participants from the aforementioned countries, employing a mixed-methods approach that combined quantitative Likert-scale ratings and qualitative open-ended responses. This methodology allowed us to both quantify and contextualize the participants' preferences.

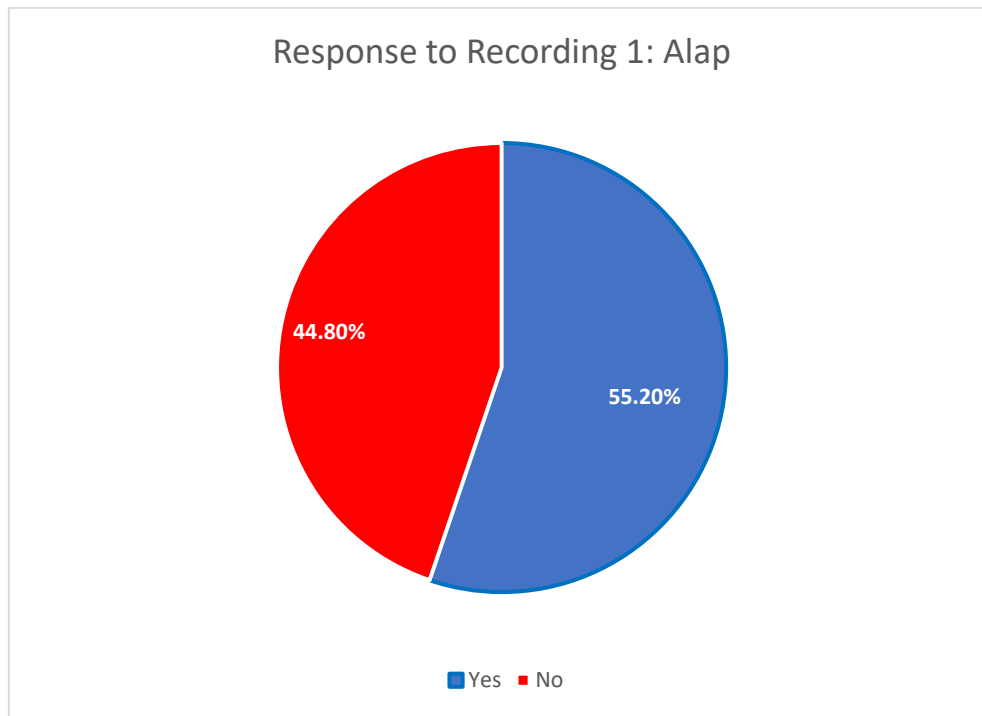
Respondent Demographics



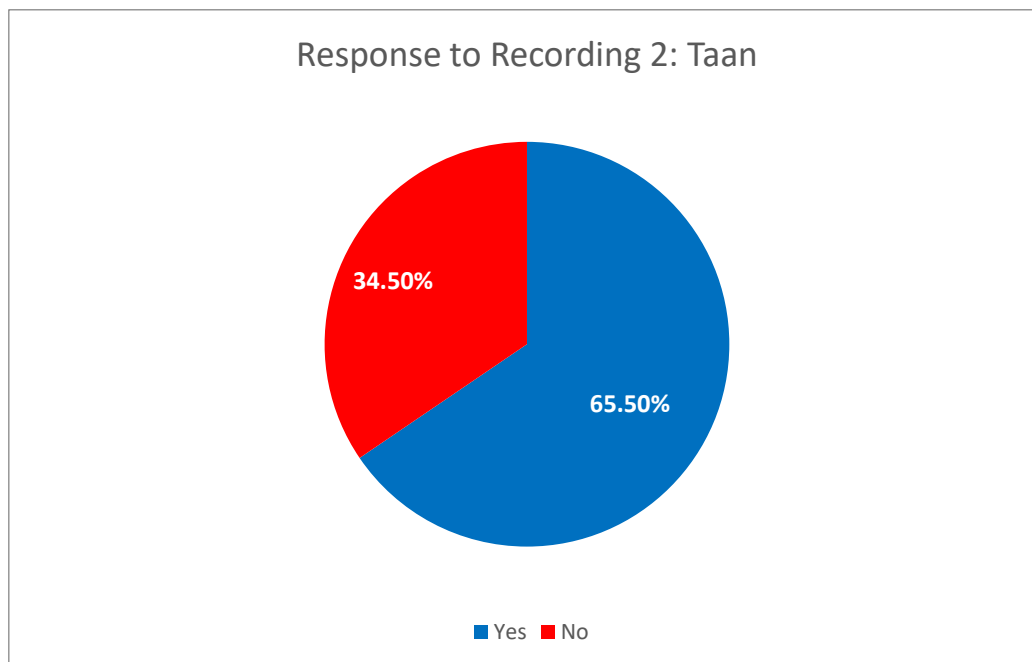
The respondent was from 4 countries Australia, New Zealand, UAE & the United States of America.

Responses

7.1 Alap: The Alap is the opening section of a typical North Indian classical performance. It is a form of melodic improvisation that introduces and develops a raga. In dhrupad singing the alap is unmetered, improvised (within the raga) and unaccompanied (except for the tanpura drone), and started at a slow tempo.



Taan: Taan is a technique used in the vocal performance of a raga in Hindustani classical music. It involves the singing of very rapid melodic passages using vowels, often the long "a" as in the word "far", and it targets at improvising and to expand weaving together the notes in a fast tempo.

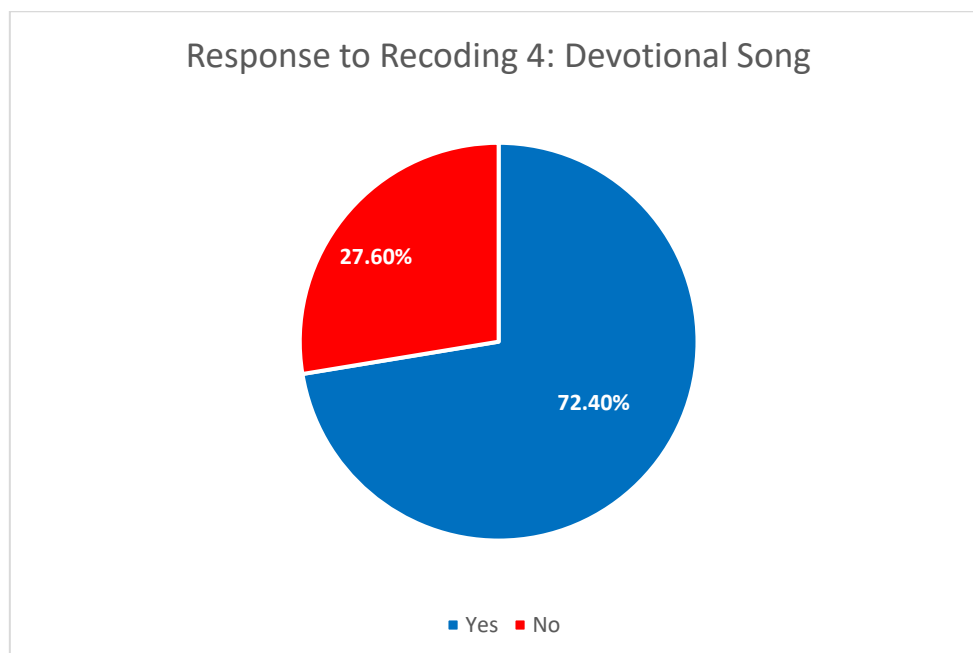


Ghazal: The ghazal is a form of amatory poem or ode, originating in Arabic poetry. A ghazal may be understood as a poetic expression of both the pain of loss or separation and the beauty of love in spite

of that pain. It's a popular form of Indian music and is sung in various raags, setting up a smooth and relaxing tempo.

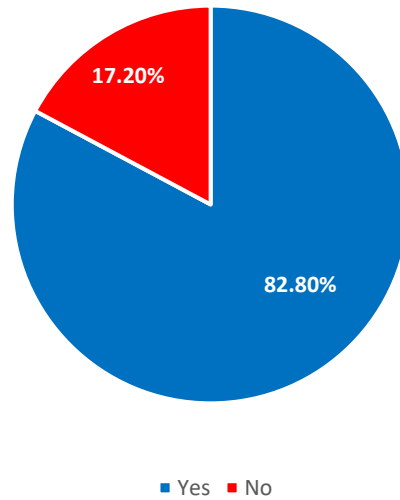


Group Devotional Singing (Bhajan): Bhajan refers to any devotional song with religious theme or spiritual ideas, specifically among Indian religions, in any of the languages from the Indian subcontinent.



7.5 Instrumental: Raag Hamsadhwani on santoor was chosen for this recording.

Response to Recording 5: Instrumental Music



7.6 Summarized Findings

Recording	Theme	First Impression (Like)	
		Yes %	No %
1	Alap	55.2%	44.8%
2	Taan	65.5%	34.5%
3	Ghazal	86.2%	13.8%
4	Devotional Music	72.4%	27.6%
5	Instrumental music	82.8%	17.2%

This research will provide an insight into the use of different aspects of Hindustani classical music as a form of therapy to improve the mental well-being. Analysis reveals that light and instrumental forms of Hindustani classical music are likely to be more effective on people from different cultures who do not have a background in this form of music.

Conclusion

Our findings reveal that, indeed, ghazals and devotional music hold significant appeal across diverse cultural contexts. This suggests a universal human inclination towards emotionally resonant and spiritually enriching musical expressions. Understanding these preferences not only contributes to the field of music therapy but also highlights the unifying power of music in bridging cultural divides and fostering cross-cultural appreciation. This study opens doors for further exploration into the global interplay of musical traditions and cultural exchange.

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