Music for Confidence: Exploring the Relationship Between Music Preference and Self-Esteem in College Students

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the relationship between music preference and self-esteem in university students. The hypothesis proposed is that there is a positive relationship between music preference and self-esteem in Yogyakarta students. The subjects of this study amounted to 303 respondents. The research subjects were taken using purposive sampling technique with the characteristics of students from the age range of 18-27 years. The data collection method uses a music preference scale and a self-esteem scale. The data analysis technique used Pearson's product moment correlation analysis. Based on the results of data analysis, the correlation result (rxy) = 0.187 (p = 0.001) was obtained, which means that there is a positive relationship between music preference and self-esteem in adolescents. This shows that the proposed hypothesis is accepted. The coefficient of determination (R2) obtained is 0.032 which indicates that the music preference variable has a contribution of 3.2% to the self-esteem variable and the remaining 96.8% is influenced by other variables.

Keywords: *music preferences, self-esteem, college student, human development*

Introduction

Every individual inevitably encounters a variety of challenges in daily life, with problems stemming from numerous sources that can significantly impact their personal well-being. This reality also applies to students pursuing higher education. Students are individuals who possess a relatively high intellectual capacity, enabling them to think critically, communicate effectively, and solve problems more efficiently (Afriani, 2023). Consequently, students often have an awareness of how to enhance their self-quality by engaging in positive and constructive activities. However, some students may still struggle to navigate challenging periods, easily succumb to pressure, and experience confusion regarding self-identity.

During developmental phases, individuals require support and recognition from those around them to cultivate their abilities, establish a strong sense of identity, and effectively resolve issues, all of which contribute to enhancing self-esteem.

According to Murk (2006), self-esteem is an individual's attitude based on their perception of self-worth, encompassing both positive and negative self-regard. Self-esteem comprises two main aspects as described by Tarafodi & Swann (2001): self-competence and self-liking. Self-liking pertains to one's sense of social worth, while self-competence refers to one's self-assessment of being capable, effective, and reliable.

Low self-esteem is common in Indonesia among adolescents and young adults (ages 15–24), with approximately 60% of university students reporting low self-esteem and rising rates of suicide each year (Dat et al., 2022; Rahmatulloh & Retnowati, 2021). Coopersmith (1967) identified four factors influencing self-esteem development: (1) self-acceptance, (2) history of achievements and attained status, (3) individual values and aspirations, and (4) methods of coping with failure. Among these factors, values and aspirations are essential for achieving success and personal accomplishments. One potential medium for fostering values and aspirations is music Manolika & Baltzis, 2022). Djohan (2020) explains the relationship between values, aspirations, and music, describing music as a fundamental part of human life with cultural and positive values that support cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development. Music also facilitates activities that encourage creativity through ideas or imagination, promoting divergent thinking, solution-finding, and imaginative decision-making (Djohan, 2020).

Music, defined as the science and art of combining vocal and instrumental sounds in a rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic expression of feelings, especially emotional ones (Barrett et al., 2019), includes six core elements: rhythm, melody, harmony, timbre, dynamics, and form (Berger, 2002). Each musical aspect contributes to the creation of different musical genres, which can evoke unique impressions on listeners depending on their music preferences. Positive and uplifting music preferences, for instance, can generate positive emotional states and enhance psychological well-being (Arjman et al., 2017). Music genres containing reinforcing elements have been shown to restore emotional health, bolster personal strength, and maintain self-esteem quality (Hunter & Schellenberg, 2010).

Music becomes especially beneficial when individuals have their own musical preferences, as it can provide significant positive effects during times of pain (Arjman et al., 2017). When someone selects their preferred music, it influences their reactions to situations and can serve as a tool for pain or stress relief, comfort, and the restoration of individual well-being, including improvements in self-esteem

(Lawendowski & Bieleninik, 2016). Based on this background, this study aims to investigate the relationship between music preferences and self-esteem in university students.

Methods

This study used a purposive sampling technique in which the sampling was carried out based on predetermined characteristics (Creswell, 2018). The subjects in this study were students who were studying 18-27 years old. The variables used in this study are self-esteem and music preference. The data collection method used is the scale method. self-esteem will be measured using a self-esteem scale compiled by researchers based on the aspects put forward by Tarafodi & Swann (2001), namely self-competence and self-liking with an Alpha Cronbach reliability of 0.942. The music preference variable will be measured using a music scale compiled by the researcher according to the aspects according to Berger (2002) with an Alpha Cronbach reliability of 0.874.

The data analysis used in this study is product moment correlation analysis developed by Pearson. Researchers used the product moment analysis technique because it is suitable for testing hypotheses regarding the relationship between the independent variable (independent) and the dependent variable (dependent). Data analysis was carried out using the help of a data analysis program on a computer, namely SPSS v.29 (Statistical Product and Service Solution version 29).

Results

This study was conducted using a music preference scale with a self-esteem scale to test the hypothesis. The data description will be calculated using empirical scores and hypothetical scores consisting of minimum, maximum, standard deviation, and average (mean) values.

Tabel 1. Description Data

Variabel	N	Hipotetik				Empirik			
		Min	Maks	Mean	SD	Min	Maks	Mean	SD
Self Esteem	303	26	104	65	13	41	101	70,08	9,351
Music preferences	303	26	104	65	13	56	88	70,31	4,650

The data categorization uses three criteria which are high, medium, and low. The self-esteem variable is categorized into three parts, namely high, medium and low. The results of categorization based on the hypothetical mean and standard deviation can be obtained, namely high categorization there are 54 subjects (17.8%), moderate category there are 243 subjects (80.2%), and low category there are 6 subjects (2%), so it can be concluded that in this study most subjects have self-esteem in the moderate category.

In this study, the normality test used the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The Kolmogorov Smirnov test results for the self-esteem variable obtained K-S Z = 0.104 with p = <0.001 and the normality test results for the music preference variable obtained KS-Z = 0.075 with p = <0.001. The data shows that the scores of self-esteems and music preference variables are not normally distributed. In addition to the normality test, there is also a linearity test which aims to determine whether two variables have a linear relationship or not significantly. The linearity test results obtained a value of F = 11.779 with p = <0.001 which means that the relationship between music preference and self-esteem is a linear relationship.

This study uses product moment correlation (Pearson correlation) to measure the relationship between two variables. Based on the results of the product moment correlation, it was found that the correlation coefficient (rxy) = 0.187 (p = 0.001), which means that there is a positive relationship between music preference and self-esteem in college students. This shows that the proposed hypothesis is accepted and has a positive relationship. It can be interpreted that the higher the music preference, the higher the self-esteem in college students. Vice versa, the lower the music preference, the lower the self-esteem in college students. The results of this study indicate that the coefficient of determination (R2) is 0.032, which means that the music preference variable contributes 3.2% to self-esteem and 96.8% is influenced by other factors.

Discussions

This study aimed to explore the relationship between music preferences and self-esteem among university students. Using the product-moment correlation method, the analysis yielded a correlation coefficient of 0.187 (p = 0.001), indicating a positive relationship between music preferences and self-esteem in students. This positive correlation suggests that the higher a student's preference for music, the higher their self-esteem, and conversely, the lower the music preference, the lower their self-esteem. Based on this finding, the study's hypothesis was accepted.

Self-esteem categorization results showed that 17.8% (54 subjects) fell in the high category, 80.2% (243 subjects) in the moderate category, and 2% (6 subjects) in the low category. Individuals with high self-esteem were observed to have inner peace, self-comfort, self-control, optimism in their work, and positive relationships with their surroundings. In contrast, individuals with low self-esteem struggled with self-worth, lacked confidence in their abilities, were quick to give up, frequently blamed themselves, and often pushed themselves too hard.

Regarding music preference categorization, 5.3% (16 subjects) had high music preference, 94.7% (287 subjects) moderate, and 0% low. Those with high music preference used music as a tool for positive benefits, such as gaining calmness, restoring mood, relieving stress, gaining motivation from lyrics, reducing negative emotions, and improving focus, driven by the supportive elements within the music. On the other hand, those with low music preference did not use music as a supportive medium for positive benefits and tended not to react to music beyond merely listening to it. This finding suggests that most students have moderate levels of self-esteem and music preference, which may reflect a developing sense of pride and satisfaction in themselves and an ability to benefit from music choices positively.

Individuals with good self-esteem tend to have a positive view of themselves, are able to recognize their mistakes without feeling inferior, and appreciate their positive qualities without being unduly affected by failure or error, maintaining a healthy balance between self-appreciation and openness to learning (Shayan et al., 2011; Harpaz & Vaizman, 2022). The relationship between music preference and self-esteem becomes apparent when music provides positive emotions and energy during listening. This is supported by music genres with themes of reinforcement and encouragement, which can restore individuals' well-being during difficult times, including instances of low self-esteem (Powell et al., 2023). Personal music choices can help individuals recover from pain and regain a sense of security when listening to their favorite playlists (Lee, 2016). Music choices are also believed to enhance cognitive performance, reduce anxiety, help manage stress, improve memory, increase motivation, and bolster stamina, reducing feelings of fatigue during activities (Abrahan et al., 2019).

Various musical harmonies stimulate the brain in processing lyrics, with cochlear nerves capturing music and transmitting it to cranial nerves, subsequently influencing the pituitary gland to release beta-endorphins, or "happiness hormones" (Zhang, 2020). Soothing music preferences can elevate the listener's oxytocin levels—a neuropeptide essential for social bonding, memory, pain relief, and self-worth (Lee, 2016). Consequently, music can provide even greater benefits when

individuals have their own music preferences, as personal music choices can positively influence pain perception and contribute to self-esteem enhancement (Lawendowski & Bieleninik, 2016). Such findings underscore how music supports subjective well-being, including sustaining self-esteem by encouraging positive behavioral changes while listening.

However, this study has several limitations. Data collection relied solely on online questionnaire distribution, potentially leading some respondents to provide inconsistent answers or respond in ways not fully representative of their experiences. Additionally, the researcher could not directly understand each respondent's background, making it challenging to assess in detail how music preferences relate to self-esteem for each individual.

Conclusion

The results state that there is a positive relationship between music preference and self-esteem in college students. The higher the music preference, the higher the self-esteem in college students tends to be. In contrast, the lower the music preference, the lower the self-esteem in college students. Based on the results of the research conducted, it can be concluded that the hypothesis of this study that there is a positive relationship between music preference and self-esteem in college students is accepted. The categorization results show that most students have a moderate level of music preference and self-esteem. In addition, based on the results of the research conducted, it is known that the music preference variable has an effective contribution of 3.2% to the self-esteem variable in Yogyakarta students, and the remaining 96.8% is caused by other factors.

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