



Investigating the impact of different music genres on emotions and  
motivation

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of the current study is to investigate the impact of different musical genres on our emotions and our motivations. The reasoning behind this study was to build on the information within the existing literature in relation to how music effects our emotions and our motivations, but also filling a gap in the literature by examining four genres specifically. This study uses a qualitative approach to it, applying thematic analysis to consider the reasons behind why we feel certain emotions, and why we have certain motivations after listening to a specific genre of music. The study focused on four specific genres; Jazz, Reggae, Trap and Disco. The results for this study revealed happy emotions emanated from Jazz, Reggae and Disco music most prominently. Trap music unveiled rather indecisive opinions, for the emotional and motivational questions. The main findings in this study was the overwhelmingly consistent associations throughout the received data between nostalgia and happiness while listening to jazz music, relaxation and happiness with reggae music and dancing and happiness with disco music.

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## 1.1 Introduction

This literature review will investigate the topic of how different genres of music can influence your emotions and motivation for performance using a qualitative approach. Based on my readings of different existing literature, and particularly stated in Saarikallio and Erkkilä's paper from 2007, it has been made clear that there is a strong correlation between music and emotions by acknowledging music as a regulatory intervention for emotions (Saarikallio & Erkkilä, 2007). Although the area of research is heavily analysed, and there are clear affiliations between music evoking emotion and motivation, it has been noticeably under-researched by psychologists using a qualitative approach.

A major topic of discussion in this study is how various styles of music can influence your mood, taking a special interest in the main themes of emotion and motivation, and different discussions within these themes such as mental health, memories and behaviour (Sloboda & Juslin, 2001). While researching already existing literature, the majority of the studies done before have all had a quantitative approach to them. This study, as previously mentioned, is taking a qualitative approach with the intentions of filling this gap in the literature. So for these reasons, this study will use thematic analysis to find consistent themes in each of the four genres; Jazz, Reggae, Trap and Disco. Thematic analysis is a method used in qualitative studies of which focuses on identifying patterns of themes that arise in a consistent manner throughout a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The four genres were chosen as they collectively have a potential positive effect on mental health, resulting in this research being a possible application in society in the future.

## 1.2 Emotions

People listen to music predominantly for the emotional experience (Juslin & Sloboda, 2001). Recognizing basic emotions, for example primary feelings of sadness or happiness, in music are in general quite clear (Peretz et al., 1998), children from the age of three years old are even able to distinguish between the two emotions (Kastner & Crowder, 1990). Tempo, rhythm and dissonance is something that will be discussed in depth in this review as can heavily differentiate various musical genres (Fernández-Sotos, Fernández-Caballero & Latorre, 2006). There are many existing studies that propose that music is heard intermittently in life everyday (Juslin & Laukka, 2004; Juslin, Liljeström, Västfjäll, Barradas, & Silva, 2008; North, Hargreaves, & Hargreaves, 2004; Sloboda, O'Neill, & Ivaldi, 2001). Music has the capabilities to arouse emotions, varying from basic emotions such as feeling happy or sad, to emotions such as nostalgia and pride, although are still classified as emotions, they just have greater complexities (Juslin, 2001).

Although manipulating our levels of arousal, it was noticed that individuals associate specific genres of music with their own emotions subconsciously (Johnson-Laird, & Oatley, 2008). With this in mind, it has been argued that emotions expressed in music is connected to the emotions experienced by listeners (Levinson, 1996; Robinson, 1994). The emotion in the music does not cause the emotion of the listener, but it induces these emotions in the listeners imagination while they're listening to the piece (Konečni, Brown & Wanic, 2008). Music's affiliation with memories is also something that should be considered when discussing the correlation between music and emotion. Memories that are attached to music can build a significant relationships towards specific songs, musicians or genres in their entirety. These memories can potentially establish powerful, emotional nostalgia (Jänke, 2009). The strongest experiences with music all occur in adolescence and the earlier years of adulthood (Gabrielsson & Lindström Wik, 2003). This

age category involves a lot of life transitions, particularly between adjusting to different educational surroundings, various shifts within friend groups, there tends to be a lot of experiences in this stage of life that generally consist of being out of a person's comfort zone. These situations can often create a need for emotional comforts, which some people search for in music. Music can be used to satisfy personal needs in everyday life (DeNora, 2001), and investigating why that is was one of the main aims when choosing this particular topic.

Jazz is the first genre that this study is focusing on. Jazz would be considered an older genre, dating back to it being discovered between approximately 1900 and 1920, it stemmed from other musical styles such as Blues starting from the 1800s. This music is known as a Jazz musical ancestor (Gushee, 1994). The first smooth, "New Orleans style" Jazz, that would be well known to society today really started with influential musicians such as Louis Armstrong, who was performing between the era of 1920s and 1960s (Armstrong, Jenkins, Washington, Tormé, Lee, Hampton, & Horne, 2001). According to existing literature, we know that music is frequently used for emotion regulation (Laukka, 2007; Saarikallio & Erkkilä, 2007; Sloboda & O'Neil, 2001). The previous literature is immensely lacking justification for how jazz, specifically, elicits emotional responses. The existing research focuses on different aspects of how music evokes emotions such as how it is used in everyday life (Juslin & Laukka, 2004; Laukka, 2007; Sloboda & O'Neill, 2001), how we obtain strong experiences by music (Gabrielsson, 2001, 2006) and how we experience thrills from music (Guhn, Hamm, & Zentner, 2007; Konecni, Wanic, & Brown, 2007; Panksepp, 1995).

Trap music was the second genre of music being analysed in this study. Trap is a particular style of Hip-Hop music, which originated during the 1990's in America (Motley & Henderson, 2008), nearly a century after Jazz was discovered. Again, similarly to Jazz,

there is not a lot of existing literature on Trap music specifically, especially with regards to how it is emotionally reacted to. This study is aiming to investigate this further and fill this gap in the literature.

The third genre in this study is Reggae. This genre was chosen as there are positive, happy emotions affiliated to it, and this study is choosing genres that could be potentially applicable to enforce positive mental health and society. Reggae music originated in the late 1960's in Jamaica (Anderson, 2004). Happiness is the main emotion that is associated with Reggae as a genre, according to existing literature (Chang & Chen, 1998). In agreement with some studies, this genre of music has been known to have two sides to it; one side representing the struggle and inequality from the late 1960's when the genre was initially discovered, and the second side displaying joyful emotions incorporated through the syncopated and easy listening tunes of reggae (Veith, 2012).

The fourth genre of the study is Disco music. Emerging from the 1970's, disco music is strongly linked to dancing and having fun (Butler, 2017). Basic emotions affiliated with disco music specifically, again, has been rather under-researched. Although, there are existing studies that express that listening to styles of music that gives you an urge to dance is known to be one of life's most pleasurable activities, and not listening to music may undoubtedly decrease the level of amusement of the activity (Vuust & Kringelbach, 2010). This study is aiming to contribute to the research this gap in the literature to compare how these different music genre's evoke our emotions.

### 1.3 Motivations

The attitudes and behaviour to do with music has affiliations with motivation when it comes to music as a social perspective. More often than not, people have been found listening to music in order to make a connection with others, essentially judging others for their music preferences (Riseman, 1950). This can become a hugely pressurised social factor to acknowledge and in more recent years, with the explosion of social media, sharing musical preferences on social media platforms has a very high potential for allowing others to judge that music preference (Kwok, 2002).

Music's affiliation with motivation could acknowledge why people chose to listen to a particular genre of music whilst doing a specific task. For example, when going to the gym, it has been analysed in previous studies that listening to music with steady rhythmic features and fast tempos while exercising is very beneficial, and if someone in an unpleasant, highly pressured or stressful situation they would, more than likely, prefer to listen to more quiet and relaxing music (Hargreaves & North, 1999) in an attempt to calm them down. Evidence from neuroimaging shows that visual cues dominate auditory cues when it comes to behavioural responses (Colavita, 1974; Koppen, Levitan, & Spence, 2009), but without either external visual or auditory cues, the body when exercising will be more focused on internal fatigue information that is received when performing physically demanding activities in the gym (Karageorghis, & Ekkekakis, 2014). This theory was tested using a blindfold or noise-cancelling headphones on participants while they are exercising (Boutcher & Trenske, 1990). Listening to music while exercising is also often used in a way that there is no conscious effort made to synchronize movements to the beat of a song (Karageorghis & Priest, 2012) and this has a positive effect on motivational outcomes (Hutchinson & Karageorghis, 2013; Hutchinson et al., 2010; Karageorghis, Jones, & Stuart, 2008). It is known that this is more affective for women while performing

more complex motor exercises such as circuits. The auditory surroundings while people exercise have a very important role with regards to the responses to exercise (Annesi, 2001; Karageorghis & Priest, 2012a, 2012b; Pretty, Peacock, Sellens, & Griffin, 2005) and those who perform exercise in a more aesthetically pleasant surrounding with this respect, have an increased likelihood of exercising more (Humpel, Owen, & Leslie, 2002).

Listening to music when exercising leads to a more pleasurable experience of exercising when compared to not listening to any music.

Music is known to be able to positively change psychological, physical and social functioning of individuals with health and educational problems. This is where music therapy can be introduced. Music therapy is used as an intervention method to strengthen areas in people's lives by participating in musical experiences (Patterson, 2003). This can provide significant motivation and benefits for individuals to perform day to day tasks especially when it comes to educational purposes. Music therapies are also being used in hospice environments for people with life-limiting illnesses and their loved ones. The music therapy in this case is aimed to motivate the patients and decrease any pain perceptions and increase distractions. It can motivate them to express their anxieties, any fears for the rest of their lives and provide comfort and acceptance in their illnesses. The intervention of music therapy in this situation has proven to significantly increase the motivation of contentment and acceptance in these patients lives, and hospices have continued to suggest these comforting methods in order to maintain motivation (Krout, 2001).

With all of this information in mind, this study will investigate further the literature that is already existing, as well as aiming to fill the gap in the literature with regards to specific information on the four selected genres; jazz, trap, reggae and disco, and how these genres in particular evoke our emotions and affect our motivation. After reading the

current literature, there seems to be an opportunity to thematically analyse our emotional responses and motivational factors when listening to music using a qualitative approach. Comparing the impact of how the four different genres in this study impact the emotional responses and motivation will be something that will make this study completely unique and will provide significant research to what already exists in this area of study. The qualitative approach will give this study the chance to highlight why we actually feel the emotions towards the music and hopefully the descriptive answers from participants will increasingly emphasize this rather than using quantitative numerical data.

## 2.1 Methods

### 2.2 Participants

Using a qualitative approach to this study, forty-five participants in total were recruited to take part in the questionnaire. The participants were recruited mainly using snowball sampling strategies through social media platforms. Participants had to consent that they were between the age range of eighteen to twenty-five. This age range was chosen due to it being a rather transitional stage in life, and our connection to music during this age range being the strongest. The exact age was not specified, it was just made sure that the participants were within the age range. No other demographic questions, for example gender, were examined throughout this survey as it was focused on primal emotions and motivations in individuals. Participants were not offered any remuneration for taking part in the study, resulting in the participation being entirely voluntary.

### 2.3 Design

This study of investigating the impact of different music genres on emotion and motivation uses a qualitative approach. The data was thematically analysed, and it had a cross-sectional method as information had only been taken from the participants in one point in time. The study used snowball-sampling strategies to recruit participants, mainly through social media platforms. The study used an online survey platform, supporting descriptive text boxes for each question to encourage qualitative answers for each question. The study looked at four particular music genres; Jazz, Reggae, Trap and Disco. Each question played an excerpt of originally created music from each genre. The first question, which focused solely on emotion asked “In the text box below, please elaborate in as much detail as you can, an emotion that you felt during this musical excerpt and why you think you may have felt it”. The second question, which focused on motivation, asked “In the text box below, please write down, in as much detail as possible, if you felt the

excerpt of music motivated you to get up and perform an active task, or if it made you feel more relaxed. Why do you think the music made you feel this way?”.

## **2.4 Materials**

For this study, the online survey platform that was used to collect the data was called “Smart Survey”. Smart Survey offered a facility to accommodate audio clips to be attached to each question, and for it all to be on the one page to make it as accessible to the participant as possible. Garageband, a digital audio workstation that can be used for macOS and iOS devices, was used to create the four original musical excerpts for each of the four genres. When the music was created, it was uploaded to Soundcloud. From there, the four excerpts of music were directly attached to each question appropriately to the genre. The participants were asked to use earphones if possible to allow for the optimum music quality and concentration on the survey.

## **2.5 Procedure**

Participants were given a link to access the questionnaire at their own convenience. They were recruited by using snowball-sampling strategies through social media platforms. The participants are initially brought to the information sheet attached to the questionnaire. It was a requirement for the participants to read the information sheet in full, and confirm that they are between the age range of eighteen and twenty-five to continue on to the questionnaire. The information sheet included the explanation of the study, the nature of the research and how their data would be anonymously used. It informed the participants of how they had the option of withdrawing from the study at any time throughout the process, but once they submitted their answers, they were unable to retract them. They were provided with helplines and counselling services if the survey affected them in any way. Once the participants ticked the two boxes of consent, they were brought to the questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of four questions, each with two

parts to it. Each question focused on one genre; Jazz, Reggae, Trap and Disco. An excerpt of originally created music of each genre was attached to each question appropriately. Each excerpt applied typical traits of the desired style of music in order to accurately categorise it as that genre. For the Jazz excerpt, typical instruments such as saxophone, upright bass and muted percussion were used to define the piece of music as jazz. The rhythm used a swing syncopation, another Jazz trait that classifies a musical rhythm into the specific style. The Reggae excerpt was in 4/4 timing, which is expected for this genre of music. It also used typical reggae instruments such as the muted bass, and various drums to emphasize the common 4/4 musical rhythm. The Trap excerpt included typical electronic instrumentation; the electronic drum kit was fast and consistent throughout the entire excerpt, emphasizing the “hi-hat beat” which is essential for a musical genre like Trap. There was a fingerstyle bass and a heavy sub bass used to incorporate the electronic-type feel to the song, again, a very common characteristic for the genre. The last genre, Disco, integrated a prominent syncopated electric bass line. The instrumentation, also quite electronic, included electric guitar, muted bass, electric piano and electric drum kits. All of these instruments added fast-paced and excited feeling to the song, which is exemplary for disco music. Each genre asked the same two questions. The first question focuses on emotion and the second question focused on motivation. The respondents were asked to answer the questions with as much detail as they possibly could, in order to collect as many descriptive answers as hoped. The survey took approximately ten minutes in total to complete, and each participant submitted their answers to the website, where the answers were then stored to the Smart Survey database. When the data collection was complete, the data was then thematically analysed. The thematic analysis was used with the aim to find themes that was consistent throughout the data. The study allowed for an inductive thematic analysis approach, which involved allowing the data determine the themes itself

through consistency, instead of having any preconceived ideas or expectations while carrying out the analysis. The thematic analysis followed the Braun and Clarke (2006) six-phase guide. This guide provided a framework for a structured analysis for finding the themes for this study. The Braun & Clarke (2006) thematic analysis steps that was followed for this are as follows; The first step, was ensuring the data was thoroughly understood before codes and themes were created to establish familiarity as a whole with the received data. For this, each response for each genre was carefully read and initial findings of consistent words and sentences in the emotion and motivation questions were conscientiously noted. Step two was focused on generating initial codes for each of the four genres' responses. The words and sentences that came up most consistently throughout the responses were separated and noted clearly in order to create themes for each genre. Step three was dedicated to searching for themes within the initial codes that were just discovered. Once the consistent codes were thoroughly analysed and noted for each of the four genres, the themes were then created in turn from those codes. Step four was to re-examine the themes for each genre, to make sure they were all completely appropriate to the answers received for the four musical styles. Step five was to define the themes, so reviewing all of the coded answers that were written down and labelled for each given theme for each genre. The final step was to write up the analysis in full, which will be referred to in the following results section (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These steps will be written in a table and will be found in the appendix section in this study (please refer to Appendix D for this table).

### 3.1 Results

In order to appropriately carry out the thematic analysis for this study, four separate thematic analyses were applied for each genre separately, as they all produced their own individual themes. The analysis proved that there was three main themes for the Jazz excerpt; happiness, relaxation and nostalgia. For Reggae, the two main themes that were received were happiness and relaxation. Trap music expressed three very conflicting themes of excitement, chilled and no emotions. The last genre, disco, communicated themes consisting of happiness, excitement and strong urge to dance. There will be greater detail given on these themes in the below paragraphs.

### 3.2 Jazz

The first genre, Jazz, had rather steady responses throughout the two part question. The first question referring to what emotions the participant felt while listening to the jazz excerpt revealed consistent emotions of happiness and nostalgia. Happiness was the most prevalent primary emotion. One in five participants (20%) mentioned the word happy in their answers to what emotions evoked them while listening to the Jazz excerpt. Some of the reasoning behind the happy emotions varied from expressing sentences such as “the music was very upbeat” (p #24), or that the music had a “soothing sound” (P #39), making them feel happiness.

Nostalgia was another emotion that was quite persistent throughout the responses (13%). Participants mentioned nostalgic orientated sentences such as the jazz genre “reminded [them] of family parties when [they] were younger” (P #3) and that they “associate this genre/type of music with [their] grandparents as they were avid listeners of jazz” (P #2).

The majority of the participants in this study (78%) mentioned how they felt motivated to relax or be calm. Some participants said that the music made them feel

relaxed due to the “slow bpm” (P #16), or because of the lack of “heavy instruments and the music was quite slow and melodic” (P #29). One participant described the music as tranquil as the relaxing sound “let [their] mind wander”, describing utter relaxation. Some described the “slow piano chords [as] very comforting”, making them wanting to “sit down and enjoy it” making a “soothing, relaxed environment” (P #6). The lack of “harsh notes and tones” (P #16) were noticed as making participants feel more relaxed, as well as the calming “soft saxophone” (P #18).

### 3.3 Reggae

The second genre, Reggae, was slightly more conflicting when it came to the motivation question. The question surrounding emotion was slightly more straight forward. 53% of participants mentioned that the Reggae excerpt made them feel a sense of happiness. Some participants revealed that their feelings of happiness were due to the “Happy-go-lucky upbeat tune” (P #4) and the “major chords being played” (P #17) throughout the excerpt. Other participants voiced that they “instantly felt a bit happier once this music began to play” (P #33) and that the sound made them “feel naturally happier” (P #40).

As mentioned previously, the responses from the motivation question on Reggae was slightly more conflicting, especially in contrast to the reactions from the Jazz question. The two contrasting opinions were not drastically opposing, but they were slightly dissimilar. One opinion side described the reggae music as motivating them to be more active (47%), especially in doing more “habitual activities” (P #28) such as house chores or going for gentle walks. Some participants described the reggae beat as resembling “footsteps” (P #4) so they found the excerpt would motivate them to go for a walk. Others mentioned that they “found [their] head nodding along to the beat” (P #7, P

#11) or that they associate the music with “clean[ing] [their] room or study while listening to this music” (P #21).

On the contrary, others opinions from 46% of participants included descriptions of the reggae excerpt as being the “embodiment of chilled out music” (P #6). Some say that the beat was “too slow” to motivate them into doing an active task, and that it “gave [them] the feeling [they were] laying on a beach rather than encouraging [them] to move” (P #13). 18% of participants mention either holiday or beach settings scattered throughout their responses alone, emphasizing the level of relaxation they experience while listening to this genre of music.

### **3.4 Trap**

This genre had the most conflicting responses out of the four musical excerpts. There was a large discrepancy between 31% of participants experiencing this musical genre as exciting and energetic, and 13% of participants experienced it as completely chilled and relaxing, and 20% of participants not feeling any emotion towards to whatsoever. With exciting and energetic emotions being the majority opinion within these responses, it is unusual to have such opposing emotions of feeling chilled or the experience of no emotions at all at such a close percentage to that. The energetic responses stated that the music “reminded [them] of clubbing” (P #4), and that with the “rhythm of the snare drums constantly changing and such a high BPM, you are constantly trying to follow along. It is impossible to not nod your head along to the beat” (P #6). A few participants mentioned that “the upbeat rhythm grabbed [their] attention more” (P #13) and that they felt “hyped up” as the music “had a faster and more exciting beat” (P #26). Many participants also suggested that the music “gave [them] more energy almost” (P #40) and that “the music evoked a desire to dance” (P #43) for them.

On another note, there was still a significant amount of participants that found the Trap musical excerpt “fairly chilled” (P #3). Some said that they would feel motivated to “clean [their] kitchen to this sort of song” (P #12) and the “repetitive beat” (P #15) was what made them feel most relaxed. The feeling of being relaxed and chilled was at a minority out of the three themes for Trap overall.

Finally, the third theme under the Trap genre was having no emotional response at all towards the style of music. For 20% of the study’s participants, this genre “didn’t really evoke any emotions” (P #15), and some mentioned that they weren’t sure if they could even “infer an emotion from this piece of music” (P #27). Most of the participants that felt they couldn’t “pin point an emotion to this beat” (P #31) said that the music neither excited or relaxed them. Some participants suggested that perhaps they lacked emotion due to the robotic style of the music, and a few simply stated they just “don’t like trap music” (P #17) so it did not motivate them to do anything.

### **3.5 Disco**

For the fourth genre, Disco, had incredibly consistent responses throughout. Every response for the question for emotion consisted of happy emotions. There was a full 100% response rate for happiness throughout all of the answers for the emotion questions. Reasons for the volume of happy emotions were due to the “upbeat and groovy” (P #3) tune throughout the excerpt. Some participants mentioned how they found this genre “lift[ing their] spirits” (P #6) and the “upbeat notes and faster bpm” (P #16) made them feel emotions such as “joy, enthusiasm, energy”. There was mentions of disco being “fun music” (P #1) as it got their “adrenaline going” (P #27) and put a “smile on [their] faces” (P #29).

“This beat made me feel very happy. I think this was because of the clapping in the background and the sense of people being able to gather together to enjoy this kind of

music. Disco also has that association of everyone gathering together in the actual disco building so it has a sense of community ingrained in the music itself in my mind. Everything about disco is happy and corny and over the top and these ideas are brought to mind when I hear it. I also really enjoy disco music and disco beats so I associate it with good times dancings with my friends.” – (Participant #43)

“For the question on motivation, the responses most clearly defined active motivation after listening to the disco excerpt. 51% of participants mentioned that they felt motivated to perform an active task, and 44% of participants specifically mentioned that the music made them want to get up and dance. Some participants mentioned that the excerpt “gave [them] that Friday feeling when [they’ve] just finished college for the weekend and [they] don’t have to set an alarm for the next day” (P #21).

In conclusion to the results, as the four genres consisted of four separate thematic analyses, the themes that came from Jazz included happiness and nostalgia with regards to the question on emotion, and relaxation and feelings of being calm for the question on motivation. The themes for the Reggae genre revealed consistent happy emotions, and a rather close half way split between motivations of being active and feelings of being completely chilled while listening this excerpt. For Trap, the most conflicting set of results, the themes described emotions going from utter excitement, to very chilled, to absolutely no emotion whatsoever. The responses for this genre included similar answers for both emotion and motivation questions, with some mention of conflicting active and inactive motivations, and some who felt it motivated them to be neither active or relaxed. The last genre, Disco, revealed a full 100% response of happiness for the emotion question, and the motivation question revealed harmonious answers of wanting to perform an active task and the want to start dancing.

*Table of the complete set of identified themes:*

<b>Genres:</b>	<b>Jazz</b>	<b>Reggae</b>	<b>Trap</b>	<b>Disco</b>
<b>Themes found:</b>	Relaxed (78%)	Happy (53%)	Excited (31%)	Happy (100%)
	Happy (20%)	Relaxed (46%)	Chilled (15%)	Excited (51%)
	Nostalgic (13%)	Active (47%)	No Emotion (20%)	Urge to Dance (44%)

## 4.1 Discussion

As this is a qualitative study, there was no hypotheses for the results, but there was multiple aims for this study. As mentioned in the introduction, an aim of this study was to fill the gap in the existing literature by discussing the four chosen genres; jazz, reggae, trap and disco specifically to analyse how they potentially have different impacts on our emotions and motivations in order to fill the gap of using specific genres for this investigation, and to build on the existing research that already exists on music on our emotions and motivations.

Starting with the Jazz genre, Nostalgia was heavily mentioned throughout the data for this question on emotion. This was an interesting emotion to be so frequently communicated as it was mentioned in the introduction to this study that this genre would be considered an older genre, originating back to early 1990's (Gushee, 1994). It was also mentioned in the introduction of this study that taking memories into consideration was vital for this study as music is massively linked to our memories (Jänke, 2009). Nostalgia is described, in the existing literature, as a "bittersweet sentiment" (Batcho, 2013). It originally was a diagnosis for a physical disease, for people experiencing symptoms such as sadness, insomnia, fever, loss of appetite and cardiac palpitations (Havlena & Holak, 1991; Rosen, 1975). In more modern days, nostalgia is no longer treated as a diagnosis of a disease, and is not so negatively sought after anymore. Rather, it is considered to be more of a natural and inevitable feeling, when reflecting back on memories. Whether these memories are positive or negative, is up to the individual (Batcho, Nave, & DaRin, 2011). Another emotion that was quite emphasized throughout the responses for the Jazz excerpt was happiness. Having the association of happiness to a specific musical genre ties, rather positively, back to what was mentioned in the introduction of this study. The existing literature so far reveals that the investigated links between music and emotions were

through a perspective of how we use it in everyday life (Juslin & Laukka, 2004; Laukka, 2007; Sloboda & O'Neill, 2001), how we obtain strong experiences with music (Gabrielsson, 2001, 2006) and how thrills are experienced from music we listen to (Guhn, Hamm, & Zentner, 2007; Konecni, Wanic, & Brown, 2007; Panksepp, 1995), therefore discovering that there was a majority from a sample of participants who experience happy emotions affiliated with one specific genre could potentially reinforce positive behaviours and attitudes on daily basis, if encouraged to society. As said in the results section of this study, the responses for the motivation question for the Jazz genre revealed a majority for urging relaxation rather than an active task. According to existing literature, smooth jazz has been a preference for relaxing to and soothing musical genres, such as jazz, have many benefits when it comes to relaxing (Lai, 2004).

The second genre that was tested in this study was Reggae. This genre got an outstanding response for happiness as an emotion felt during the reggae excerpt. Reggae is known to have an already existing emotional status for happiness (Schellenberg, Peretz, & Vieillard, 2008). It was expressed in the introduction of this study that happiness was massively linked to reggae, mainly due to reggae consistently having a major tone and steady beat. These two factors, generally, are obvious contributors to categorising music into happy music (Gabrielsson, & Lindström, 2001; Schellenberg, Krysciak, & Campbell, 2000). In the introduction of this study, it was mentioned that reggae was thought to express two sides to it; one of happiness and one of struggle and inequality from when it originated in the 1960's (Veith, 2012). This conflict of emotions did not seem to establish throughout my data, perhaps due the age range of my participants and they're too young to have experienced the struggles of inequality in the 1960's directly, allowing them to have an opinion that is purely to do with how the music sounds, rather than the history behind it influencing their thoughts of it. For the question on motivation for the Reggae genre, there

was rather conflicting responses for it urging participants to be active, and urging them to relax. Many of the activities that participants expressed they felt an urge to do were nothing to strenuous. There was mentions of going for walks, nodding their heads, and slightly dancing, along to the beat or carry out a task such as cleaning their rooms. Some participants mentioned that they thought the music resembled the beat of footsteps, so perhaps that explains why they felt this motivation for gentle movements. Beat synchronized walking has been investigated in previously existing studies, and the speed of the beat physically mirrors in the strength of the movement that is being carried out (Leman et al., 2013). It has also been previously investigated that when the beat of the music matches your heartbeat, happiness and relaxation are almost always affiliated with these songs (Schedl, Breitschopf, & Ionescu, 2014). A lot of participants mentioned that they associated Reggae music with being on holidays, or being on the beach. These are the responses that were included in the contrary opinion from the Reggae motivation question, where nearly half of the participants expressed that they're motivation is utter relaxation when listening to this style of music. Conforming to existing studies, reggae music is most preferred to be played when at the beach and relaxing (Schedl, Breitschopf, & Ionescu, 2014).

The third genre that was analysed in this study was Trap music. As mentioned in the introduction section, Trap stems originally from Hip-Hop music, and was discovered during the 1990's in America. It was mentioned in the results section about how conflicting the responses were that came back from the emotion and motivation question for the Trap excerpt. Some participants experiencing the excerpt as exciting and energetic, some finding it very chilled and relaxing, and some participants struggling to feel any emotion towards it. As there was not a lot of existing literature on this genre specifically, there was no expectation for these results. The general negative, emotionally lacking

opinions towards Trap music has previously been to do with the controversial cultures that are coded within the lyrics. The controversies, conforming to previous studies, included topics such as violence, sex, racism and other inequalities experienced specifically within the black American neighbourhoods, which is where the music originated from (Rose, 1991; Lipsitz, 1994). As trap is becoming one of the most mainstream genres of music of this generation, and some participants who indicated that they felt excited emotions after listening also voiced that it reminded them of going out clubbing with their friends. These associations between the music and night life encourages excited, energetic emotions on the music. Lyrics in trap and general hip-hop music can be very educational as they can entail important and topical messages within in the text. Rappers and trap artists often refer to themselves as educators, as they veer away from more traditional lyrical messages to do with love and relationships to talk about more realistic issues that some individuals experience throughout their lifetime (Powell, 1991). Trap music can be used to link academic individuals to other individuals in less privileged backgrounds (Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2002). The final adverse opinion consisted of participants declaring that the music made them feel more chilled then energised. This description for trap music is relatively unexamined in academic publication, but there is another stem of hip-hop music known as “lofi” that has been investigated in existing literature and has been described numerous times as being chilled and is known as the best genre of music to relax to (Winston & Saywood, 2019). Perhaps the trap excerpt given in this study reminded those participants that felt more relaxed after listening of more of a lofi beat rather than something more energetic that could be potentially played in a nightclub. The three completely contrary opinions expressed throughout this data reveals indecisive thoughts towards this genre of music. In comparison to the certainty of opinions from the Jazz genre, should these results suggest that perhaps this generation of participants aren't

comfortable with this style of music yet and in the future, Trap could potentially be as highly regarded as Jazz music is now.

The fourth genre of music that this study investigated was Disco. As previously mentioned in the introduction section of this study, Disco music is strongly linked to feelings of fun and dancing (Butler, 2017), which was emphasized heavily throughout our responses as well. As dancing was so frequently mentioned throughout the disco genre answers, it corroborates with what was said in the introduction section that the motivation to dance while listening to disco-themed music is quite irresistible. The emotions given back in the answers were overwhelmingly positive and emphasized happiness throughout. The relationship between dancing and happiness has been densely researched among existing literature. It is suggested by research that there are many positive influences on our mental wellbeing that come from musical experiences with dancing (Quiroga Murcia, Kreutz, Clift, & Bongard, 2010). The feelings of joy and enthusiasm were without a doubt extremely consistent throughout the responses from this study. These completely positive emotions and motivations being tied to one musical genre can serve numerous applications to how this information could help in scenarios in life, especially taking mental health into consideration (Bungay, Hughes, Jacobs, & Zhang, 2020). These harmonious answers can be a very effective application to society.

There are many implications, as well as limitations, to this study. The range of implications to the study are generally focused on a perspective of mental health. Musical therapies are becoming a very popular form of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT-Music), especially for children. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy based Music alleviates mental health disorders, especially focusing on issues such as mild to moderate anxiety and depression (Butler et al., 2006). The demand for a therapy as non-intrusive as 'CBT-Music' is powerfully increasing, although there is still a risk of the lack of client

engagement resulting in a potential future relapses (Naeem et al., 2015). The music based form to CBT allows for non-verbal methods, adding to further therapeutic ramifications (Trimmer, Tyo, & Naeem, 2016). If this form of CBT focused on music that could encourage happier emotions after listening to it, it could greatly improve mental health facilities. There was a study done on hip-hop music specifically, to see how relevant that specific genre of music is for social workers to use as a practise for patients from urban cultural backgrounds. As previously mentioned, there are people who find themselves immensely relating to lyrics from hip-hop and rap music. Educating social workers to these genres of music can thoroughly expose them to what individuals from cultures of low socio-economic backgrounds and ethnic minorities can relate to (Kobin & Tyson, 2006). Using knowledge from specific genres could help people in need of social work to feel comfortable in these spaces and could form healthy relationships between the social workers and their clients, having this interest of music in common.

The limitations of this study would firstly involve the layout of the questionnaire. There was concerns towards how the layout was, in terms of the order the excerpts were heard. A limitation could have been to do with the previous excerpt influencing how you felt towards the next excerpt. It was noticed that a small minority of participants mentioned comparisons between excerpts instead of answering the question fully, which effected the results slightly as they sometimes didn't name an actual emotion or motivator. Another limitation with the questionnaire itself could be to do with the participant potentially getting distracted while listening to the excerpt, and not concentrating fully on the study. In this case, doing an in-person qualitative analysis may have been more beneficial as the participants would have been more focused on the study itself. Pre-conceived ideas of the genre could have also influenced the participants answers as the name of each genre was given for each question, so the participant would have had an

expectation to what they were about to hear for the questions. Perhaps if this study was to have further research, it might be more appropriate to keep the genres anonymous in order to maintain entirely non-bias responses.

## 5.1 Conclusion

In conclusion for this study, the topic of how different genres of music can influence our emotions and motivations was investigated. Using a qualitative approach to the study filled a gap in the literature as the majority of the existing studies all used quantitative methods and didn't focus on specific genres of Jazz, Reggae, Trap and Disco to test these areas of psychology. The results showed that positive emotions definitely come from some specific genres; Jazz music, Reggae music and Disco music. Trap music was rather indecisive from the participants for both an emotional and motivational perspective. Associations between Nostalgia and Jazz music was a major discovery made from this study, and how the power of the connection between dancing and disco music can improve our emotions for the positive. Reggae music was definitely found to encourage and promote relaxation and happy emotions for the participants who volunteered in the study. Future studies could carry out qualitative interviews and get the participants to one hundred percent focus on the task at hand. This would also increase the probability of the participant giving their initial reactions to the excerpts. To carry out more frequent qualitative studies in this area would be very beneficial as it will encourage participants to use more descriptive language to really investigate what emotions are evoked in the music we listen to, especially for what we experience on a daily basis.

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## 7.1 Appendices

### *Appendix A: Information Sheet*

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study! The general purpose of this research is to investigate the impact of how different genres of music affect our emotions and motivations.

I am inviting specifically people between the ages of 18 and 25 only to participate in this study. I have chosen this age bracket as, according to existing literature, our strongest experiences with music occur within this age range. I am the sole conductor of this study, meaning I am the only person who will ever have access to the anonymous pool of generated data. You have the right to withdraw from this survey while it is in progress if you feel necessary. Due to the study being entirely anonymous, none of the data you produce for me will be at all recognizable. In this survey, you will be asked to listen to a short excerpt of music following a two-part question to each excerpt. There will be four pieces of music in total in the survey, all within a completely different musical genre. You will answer these questions as a reaction to the music being played. You will then be provided with two text boxes. The first text box will be used for elaborating more on your emotional reaction to the musical excerpt as much as you can possibly can. Even if it is just one or two sentences, I will appreciate the extra detail! The second text box will be for answering my question on how motivated you felt after listening to the music. Did it make you want to get up and do something active? Or did you feel more relaxed and at ease after listening? These results will allow me to generate a pool of data that will give me a deeper insight on why we use music on an everyday basis.

Thank you in advance for participating! I appreciate the time you have taken out of your day to contribute to my study. If anyone is interested in finding out the overall result to my study, feel free to email me at [x17509983@student.ncirl.ie](mailto:x17509983@student.ncirl.ie) and I can let you know when I have completed it.

If you have been affected at all by my study, please find below some numbers for helplines that may be able to assist you;

**The Samaritans**

[www.samaritans.ie](http://www.samaritans.ie)

Tel: 116 123

Text: 087 260 9090

**Niteline**

[www.niteline.ie](http://www.niteline.ie)

Tel: 1800 793 793

**Pieta House**

[www.pieta.ie](http://www.pieta.ie)

Tel: (01) 623 5605

**Shine (supporting people effected by mental health)**

[www.shine.ie](http://www.shine.ie)

Thank you for your time!

Project by: Erica Verling

Supervisor: David Mothersill

## Appendices

### *Appendix B: Consent Form*

#### Consent Form

- I consent that I have read the debrief form above in its entirety and agree that once I have submitted my answers, I will not be able to retract any of my information.

- I consent that I am between the ages of 18 and 25.

## Appendices

### *Appendix C: Questionnaire layout*

#### Question 1: Jazz Excerpt

- (i) In the text box below, please elaborate, in as much detail as you can, an emotion that you felt during this jazz style musical excerpt and why you think you may have felt it.
- (ii) In the text box below, please write down, in as much detail as possible, if you felt the excerpt of music motivated you to get up and perform an active task, or if it made you feel more relaxed. Why do you think the music made you feel this way?

#### Question 2: Reggae Excerpt

- (i) In the text box below, please elaborate, in as much detail as you can, an emotion that you felt during this reggae style musical excerpt and why you think you may have felt it.
- (ii) In the text box below, please write down, in as much detail as possible, if you felt the excerpt of music motivated you to get up and perform an active task, or if it made you feel more relaxed. Why do you think the music made you feel this way?

#### Question 3: Trap Excerpt

- (i) In the text box below, please elaborate, in as much detail as you can, an emotion that you felt during this Trap style musical excerpt and why you think you may have felt it.

- (ii) In the text box below, please write down, in as much detail as possible, if you felt the excerpt of music motivated you to get up and perform an active task, or if it made you feel more relaxed. Why do you think the music made you feel this way?

Question 4: Disco Excerpt

- (i) In the text box below, please elaborate, in as much detail as you can, an emotion that you felt during this Disco style musical excerpt and why you think you may have felt it.
- (ii) In the text box below, please write down, in as much detail as possible, if you felt the excerpt of music motivated you to get up and perform an active task, or if it made you feel more relaxed. Why do you think the music made you feel this way?

