

Full Length Research Paper

Effect of pop music on students' attitudes to music lessons

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This study aims to identify whether the use of popular music in teaching song creates a significant difference in attitudes of middle school students to music lessons. "Pretest-posttest design" from experimental models was used. The experimental and control groups consists of 8 classes of continuing education from four different middle schools in Burdur province which were selected randomly. The music lesson attitude scale was used for both groups by the researchers before the experiment. The "syncopation/off-beat" topic chosen by the researchers was taught to the experiment and control groups for four weeks. While the song teaching related to the topic was taught traditionally to the control group, examples of songs from Turkish pop music chosen by the researchers were taught to the experimental group using prepared karaoke recordings. After the experiment, the music lesson attitude scale was applied to both groups again by the researchers, and an attempt was made to identify whether there was a significant difference in the attitudes of the students to music lessons. The research concluded that the use of popular music examples in song learning caused a general increase in attitudes of students to music lessons. Additionally, when the differences in mean attitude points for items are examined students had more enjoyment from music lessons where pop music samples were used for song learning. It was identified that their motivation for the lesson and their desire to participate in activities in class and outside of class increased.

Key words: Popular music, music attitude, music education.

INTRODUCTION

Primary school organizations prepare children for life and advanced learning along with citizenship rights and duties, and reveal the creativity and skills of the children (Otacıoğlu, 2007). Music lessons are one of the lessons that contribute to development of creativity and skills. "There are many elements that determine the interest and attitude of students to music lessons" (Saruhan and Deniz, 2011). Investigation and assessment of these

elements provide important contributions to music education.

Attitude

Attitude is defined as "the tendency of an individual to react positively or negatively to an organization, object or

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situation" (Aiken, 2008 as cited in Aktaş and Alıcı, 2012). The thought system determining the actions of an individual, the judgment of attitude, is not displayed as a behavior according to social scientists. Attitude, assessed as psychological readiness for future behavior, can be defined as a construct of completing this action with readiness (Aksoy, 2010).

Attitudes tend toward action and as a result may ease or obstruct action by individuals, groups, societies, states and at national level (Arul, 2017). Attitude may change to favorable or unfavorable without any change in the supporting thought. The thought supporting an attitude may change; however the attitude may remain fixed (LAO and KUHN, 2002).

There is an important correlation between attitude and behavior. Environmental factors can explain the formation of attitudes directing an individual's behavior. As a result, measuring the effects of environmental factors on individuals is a determining factor for the attitudes of individuals to that environment. "The correlation between attitudes and behavior makes it difficult to measure behavior easier.

Similarly, the intersection between attitudes at a certain level with behavior with the same aspect may be a tool. The fact that attitude towards an object may not just be an indicator of the behavior related to that object but also be an indicator of many behaviors is very important for social scientists and educational scientists" (Özmenteş, 2006.).

Factors like the appropriate teaching climate created by the teacher in the class, active participation in lessons by students, lesson methods, expectations related to that lesson and working environment affect the attitude toward that lesson (Aktepe et al., 2014).

The attitudes of students to music lesson are directly related to the song repertoire used in lessons. The song repertoire included in lesson books for the music teaching program applied in middle schools in Turkey mainly includes official children's songs.

Additionally, there are tonal songs and a very few popular music samples. Studies have emphasized that the use of pop music in lessons may create a positive change in the attitude and motivation of students (Çiftçi, 2010; Özden and Başeri, 2010; Sevim and Gülerüz, 2012; Sever, 2016; Sakar, 2009).

Popular music

Each period has its own unique social traces. These traces left on society by those living in that period are findings which allow differentiation of the previous period from a later one, illustrating the differences between the two periods. Pop music is encountered as such a product of distinct periods (Sevim and Gülerüz, 2012).

After students have chosen pop music as a means of self-expression, the majority learn that there are a range of obstacles limiting them from accessing education in

this music from primary school onward. Though school curricula categorically exclude pop music education, students continue to construct a cultural area around it for themselves and their friends (Daniel, 1998).

Within the music teaching undergraduate learning program in Turkey, there is only one lesson related to pop music called "Current Pop Music" for one semester in the third year comprising two lessons per week. "With the prevalence of pop music in the lives of teaching candidates and students, to develop a vision of authentic use in schools by future teachers it is important that teaching candidates have the opportunity to enter a significant interaction with pop music" (Davis and Blair, 2011).

In traditional music education, teachers do assessment according to style while teaching pop music. However, this model is not appropriate to assess the majority of pop music. The musical value of pop music cannot be evaluated only with style characteristics. The correct way to assess this music requires taking greater notice of the feeling and narrative created by the music along with the correlation between social and cultural constructs (Woody, 2007).

Pop music penetrates our lives and the lives of our students. When the opportunity to interact with pop music is given in the school environment, it is found that students display a previously unknown sophisticated musical comprehension (Davis and Blair, 2011).

When pop music and the surrounding aura are described as a very effective tool for youths to express feelings and thoughts independent of family, pop music is placed in a different category (Sakar, 2009). Of course pop music may harbor possible damaging elements for children with their vulgar contents or by promoting vandalism due to commercial concerns.

However, music teachers must identify songs to be used in music education carefully. "In this way, pop music will advance in the music education field through acceptance; music education futurism and music education philosophy are a symbol of the period that continues to develop" (Dunbar-Hall and Wemyss, 2000). Each class environment will encounter this case and success will be linked to the confidence level that students have in their teachers, the quality of the society within the class and the originality of lesson approaches (Davis and Blair, 2011).

Research question

When research related to the topic is investigated, it appears that the use of pop music samples in music lessons may have a positive effect on students. Based on the previous research, the research question intended to be answered is to identify whether the use of pop music in song learning creates a significant difference in attitudes of middle school students to music lessons.

Table 1. The schools and numbers of students participating.

School name	Experimental group (n)	Control group (n)
Gazi Middle School	27	25
Gökçebağ Middle School	20	19
Hüsni Bayer Middle School	19	19
Suna Uzal Middle School	25	22
Total	91	85

METHODOLOGY

The research used the “pretest-posttest design” from the experimental models. This pattern is commonly called a mixed pattern (Sun et al, 2017). In other words, research investigated whether the independent variable of the use of pop music samples in organized music education affected the dependent variable of the attitude of students toward music lessons during the song learning process.

Study group

To create the study group, the maximum diversity method was used from the purposive sample methods. According to this method, four different middle schools considered to represent different socio-economic levels in general were chosen from Burdur Province. From these schools, a total of 176 eighth class students volunteered to participate in the study. Of the total of 8 classes participating in the study, four were assigned to the control group and four were assigned to the experimental group randomly. Data obtained from students who could not fully complete the study due to absenteeism were ignored. The schools and numbers of students participating in the study are given in Table 1.

Experimental process

At the beginning of the application process, the music lesson attitude scale was applied to all students participating in the research. Based on the attitude points, experimental and control groups were chosen to have mean item points close to each other. In the application process, the “syncopation/offbeat” unit from the curriculum was chosen and taught in one lesson per week for four weeks. Both groups had the syncopation concepts explained in detail in accordance with the curriculum. Later in the control group, the sample children’s songs related to the topic were chosen from the educational music repertoire, while the experimental group used songs chosen from Turkish pop music samples. While music teachers in the control group taught songs in the traditional way, the songs to be learned in the experimental group were taught by researchers using prepared karaoke recordings. Three different songs which are “Arkadaşım Eşek (sung by Barış Manço), Gülpembe (sung by Barış Manço) and Hatıralar (sung by Mirkelam) were taught to the two groups during the application. The songs were chosen considering their melodic patterns. Additionally, the researchers refused to benefit from rap, hip-hop samples which are non-melodic. At the end of the three week study process, the music lesson attitude scale was applied to all participating students again.

Data collection tool

As the data collection tool in the research, the scale developed by

Nacakcı in 2006 to measure the attitudes of primary school students to music lessons was used. The scale was developed with 22 items, while those with correlation value below .30 during a pilot application were excluded. Factor analysis found the scale had a single dimension and explained 54% of total variance. The scale comprised 4 items about personal information and 15 items with 5-degree Likert scale about attitude. Answers to questions are given points from positive to negative as “completely agree (5)”, “largely agree (4)”, “partly agree (3)”, “undecided (2)” and “completely disagree (1)”. For negative questions, points are given inversely. The 1st, 2nd, 4th, 7th, 12th, 13th and 15th propositions used on the scale are negative while the rest are positive. The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient was calculated to determine the reliability of the scale and found to be 0.88. In this study, the Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was calculated as 0.76. The scale items are given in Table 2.

Analysis of data

With the aim of identifying whether the use of pop music was effective on attitudes of middle school students to music lessons in this study, the variation in attitudes to music lessons of students participating in the study before and after both the application processes was investigated. During the data analysis, the arithmetic mean and standard deviation of experimental and control groups were calculated and the “t test” was used to identify whether there was a statistical difference in pretest and posttest item points. Since the scale which was used to analyze data was not developed upon total score, comparisons were made separately for each item.

FINDINGS

With the aim of identifying whether the use of pop music was effective on attitudes of middle school students to music lessons in this study within each group, the result of the t test for pretest and posttest attitude points of experimental and control groups is given in Table 3.

When the mean points for each item before application are examined, the highest points were for items 5 and 6 ($\bar{X} = 3.67, 3.74, \bar{X} = 3.44, 3.39$). When these items are examined, it can be said that students had positive opinions related to making music before the application. When the lowest points are investigated they were for items 4, 14 and 15 ($\bar{X} = 1.97, 1.96, \bar{X} = 1.86, 1.91, \bar{X} = 1.91, 1.89$).

Looking at these results, it appears that the negative attitudes of students to music lessons before the application were related to the lesson flow of the music

Table 2. Attitude to music lessons scale.

S/N	Proposition	Completely agree	Largely agree	Undecided	Partly disagree	Completely disagree
1	I think music lessons are an unimportant lesson	-	-	-	-	-
2	If I didn't have to, I would not want to participate in music lessons	-	-	-	-	-
3	I would prefer to do music lessons instead of numerical and linguistic lessons	-	-	-	-	-
4	The reason I'm not as successful in music lessons is because of my teacher	-	-	-	-	-
5	I would like to be involved in music or play an musical instrument	-	-	-	-	-
6	I think music lessons help me gain enjoyment and preferences in listening to music	-	-	-	-	-
7	I only study for music lessons to pass the class	-	-	-	-	-
8	I want the weekly hours for music lessons to be much higher	-	-	-	-	-
9	I want to participate in music events in or outside school with what I learn in music lessons	-	-	-	-	-
10	I find the topics in music lessons beneficial and interesting to me	-	-	-	-	-
11	Music lessons are among my favorite lessons	-	-	-	-	-
12	I would prefer to spend time on other lessons instead of on music lessons	-	-	-	-	-
13	Music lessons are a boring class	-	-	-	-	-
14	I can see the effects of developing technology in the lesson flow in music lessons	-	-	-	-	-
15	Our music teacher does not teach music to us with an instrument or voice	-	-	-	-	-

teacher. The students generally stated that the music teachers do not use instruments in lessons and do not benefit from technological facilities. When items 3, 11, 12 and 13 are examined, students chose music lessons over other lessons though at a low rate (\bar{X} = 3.10, 3.26, \bar{X} = 2.92, 2.88, \bar{X} = 2.62, 2.54, \bar{X} = 2.80, 2.98). When the attitude points of all items are examined, students generally can be said to have moderately positive attitude toward music lessons.

After application, in the control group taught with traditional methods using examples from the educational music repertoire items 5, 6, 9, 11 and 15 had positive significant differences between

pretest and posttest attitude points ($t_{(180)} = 2.87$, $p < .01$, $t_{(180)} = 2.27$, $p < 0.05$, $t_{(180)} = 2.39$, $p < 0.05$, $t_{(180)} = 2.31$, $p < 0.05$, $t_{(180)} = 4.49$, $p < 0.01$). When propositions related to these items are examined, when songs are learnt using an instrument in lessons run with traditional methods, students developed positive attitudes to singing in music lessons, wished to use the songs learned in activities outside of classes and enjoyed music lessons more. There was no significant difference observed between the pretest and posttest attitude points of the control group for other items. As a result, the repertoire used in song learning with traditional methods can be said not to cause

significant variation, apart from the performance attitudes of students.

After application, in the experimental group taught using pop music samples with karaoke recordings, there was no significant difference observed in pretest and posttest points for items 4, 7, 8 and 15 ($t_{(168)} = 1.30$, $p > .05$, $t_{(168)} = .48$, $p > .05$, $t_{(168)} = .81$, $p > .05$, $t_{(168)} = .68$, $p > .05$). The proposition in the 15th item is about the music teachers use of instruments, and as karaoke recordings were used for the experimental group, this result is expected. When the other propositions in the items are examined, they appear not to be related to song learning but are

Table 3. T test results for experimental and control groups .

S/N	Groups	n	Pretest		Posttest		SD	t	p
			\bar{X}	sd	\bar{X}	sd			
1	Control	91	3	0.56	3.13	0.52	180	1.65	0.101
	Experiment	85	2.95	0.69	3.21	0.64	168	2.54	0.012**
2	Control	91	3.13	0.54	3.19	0.65	180	0.62	0.690
	Experiment	85	3.22	0.54	3.53	0.61	168	3.46	0.001*
3	Control	91	3.10	0.75	3.05	0.67	180	0.52	0.601
	Experiment	85	3.26	0.56	4.15	0.72	168	9.07	0.00*
4	Control	91	1.97	0.84	1.81	0.7	180	1.30	0.195
	Experiment	85	1.96	0.61	1.92	0.68	168	0.48	0.634
5	Control	91	3.67	0.78	3.99	0.72	180	2.87	0.005*
	Experiment	85	3.74	0.73	3.96	0.71	168	2.02	0.045**
6	Control	91	3.44	0.58	3.63	0.53	180	2.27	0.025**
	Experiment	85	3.39	0.51	3.6	0.73	168	2.19	0.03**
7	Control	91	2.47	0.62	2.51	0.62	180	0.48	0.633
	Experiment	85	2.69	0.72	2.88	0.76	168	1.65	0.101
8	Control	91	2.85	0.73	2.77	0.54	180	0.81	0.419
	Experiment	85	2.79	0.66	2.96	0.82	168	1.55	0.124
9	Control	91	2.63	0.66	2.86	0.64	180	2.39	0.018**
	Experiment	85	2.67	0.66	3.09	0.78	168	3.81	0.00*
10	Control	91	3.36	1.13	3.30	1.14	180	0.39	0.696
	Experiment	85	3.48	0.81	3.91	0.91	168	3.21	0.002*
11	Control	91	2.92	0.54	3.21	0.61	180	2.31	0.022**
	Experiment	85	2.88	0.57	3.24	0.75	168	3.46	0.001*
12	Control	91	2.62	0.87	2.75	0.72	180	1.11	0.267
	Experiment	85	2.54	0.87	3.34	0.98	168	5.63	0.00*
13	Control	91	2.80	0.96	2.93	0.79	180	1.02	0.311
	Experiment	85	2.98	1.03	3.36	1.12	168	2.35	0.02**
14	Control	91	1.86	0.81	1.76	0.71	180	0.88	0.381
	Experiment	85	1.91	0.73	4.18	0.62	168	21.78	0.00*
15	Control	91	1.91	0.74	2.39	0.68	180	4.49	0.00*
	Experiment	85	1.89	0.80	1.81	0.78	168	0.68	0.498

* = p<0.01; ** = p< 0.05.

related to attitudes to music lessons. When the mean points are investigated, the highest increase was observed for item 14 ($\bar{X} = 1.91$, $\bar{X} = 4.18$). The proposition in this item is related to the level of use of technological facilities in music lessons. The use of karaoke recording for song learning in the experimental group explains this increase in the mean points. As there was a positive significant difference observed between pretest and posttest attitude points for all other items, the

use of pop music samples in song learning during music lessons may be said to positively affect the attitudes of students to music lessons.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

When the mean item points are investigated at the end of the research, it was identified that the attitudes of

students to music lessons were generally positive though moderate. Additionally, it appears that music teachers do not give sufficient importance to using an instrument while teaching songs and do not sufficiently benefit from technology.

When the data obtained are investigated at the end of the application, the use of samples from the educational music repertoire while teaching songs and the use of instruments during this process ensures students gain more enjoyment from music lessons; however it was identified that there were difficulties in achieving the aims of the lesson. The use of pop music samples in song learning caused a general increase in the attitudes of students to music lessons. When the difference in the mean attitude points are examined, song learning using pop music samples made the students gain lots of enjoyment from music lessons, had increased motivation for lessons and increased their desire to participate in activities within and outside lessons.

Research has emphasized the positive aspects of the use of pop music in music lessons. Green (1999) stated that the inclusion of pop music within the national educational curriculum for music lessons would remove the barrier between teachers and students. Dunbar and Wemyss (2000) observed pop music included in music education would provide impetus to both learning and teaching processes and be a developmental tool for music education.

Jaffurs (2004) stated that the use of pop music in music lessons would develop the relationship between teacher and students and give lessons a more successful dimension. Green (2006) stated if pop music were included in music lessons it would allow students to focus on the natural aspects of music with social taboos removed, they would embroider music with their own depictions and enjoy a quality music experience. Campbell et al. (2007) stated that pop music was more enjoyable and motivating for youths, that they had their own esthetic and social values and that it had the potential to create ties with the daily life of youths. They emphasized that pop music processes like improvisation and group composition should be increased within the education experience.

Sakar (2009) working from the idea that pop music is a reality of life stated that the use of pop music in music education would achieve the ultimate objective of art to reach an interested audience. Çiftçi (2010) determined that generally the use of music experienced daily in music education was an unavoidable requirement and analysis and assessment of the music types experienced by individuals within music education; teachers teaching music was beneficial and that the use within the educational process when necessary was a significant requirement of the present age.

Özden and Başeri (2010) recommended a greater inclusion of quality examples of pop music, which students show great interest in, within the school music

repertoire from primary school and supporting pop music studies by students in university and their pop music societies. Kurtuldu and Nacakcı (2012) identified that students gained great enjoyment from listening and singing songs at their own level, whether in terms of lyrics or music, within infrastructure supported by pop music and that they learn and memorize songs similar to pop music more easily.

Sevim and Güteryüz (2012) found that teaching candidates had high attitudes toward pop music and had the necessary perceptive preparation for the use of pop music as a teaching tool in the second stage of primary school. Gregory and Gooding (2013) stated that the use of pop music in music education attracted the attention of students, and they concluded it was a strong motivation tool increasing students' participation. Küçük (2014) stated that the repertoire studied in music lessons should include current pop school music examples apart from known pieces, based on the opinions of music teaching candidates.

During the music education process, as benefitting from pop music examples in song learning applications positively affected attitudes of students to lessons, it is considered that a greater place should be given to pop music examples in teaching programs and lesson books. Students live engaged with pop music in all areas of life, within both visual and audio media. Greater inclusion of pop music in music lessons will create a link between the school and private lives of students more easily.

Additionally as students express themselves within a cross-section from their own lives during activities within and outside of lessons, positive changes will be observed in their desire to make music. In light of all these recommendations, considering the effect of pop music in development of national education policies and the application process, it is thought that it will contribute to an increase in the success levels of music education. The research was limited to Burdur Province because of time and budget limitations. To conduct similar research in different province and regions may contribute to the reliability of the results.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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