The Elephant in the Room: The Role of Songs in Developing Social Prejudice Attitudes Among University Students

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Abstract: Adolescents and the youth experience major psychological changes related to the issues they face. In some countries, local songs broadcasted on YouTube and by local radio stations have been significantly correlated with adolescents' prejudiced behaviors as songs occupy a central role in their life. This study investigates the effects of exposure to different kinds of songs (national and local) on developing prejudiced attitudes in university students. A Prejudice Attitudes Scale (PAS) was developed and used to evaluate the students' prejudice levels. A total of 111 undergraduate students who participated in the current study were randomly assigned to one of the two groups: the national song group and the local song group. In both groups, participants were requested to listen to certain songs for one month. The findings of the current study indicate that listening to local songs increased students' prejudicial attitudes. Further, males tended to produce higher levels of social prejudicial attitudes compared to females.
Keywords: prejudicial attitudes, local songs, national songs, university students.

Prejudice is defined as a negative attitude and feeling toward persons based only on one's membership in a particular social group (Allport, 1954; Brown, 2010). According to Whitley and Kite (2010), there are different types of prejudice: racial, ethnic, and sexual prejudices in addition to prejudices concerning age, social status, occupation, and membership in a certain group. Several studies (Arkes & Tetlock, 2004; Segura-Robles et al., 2016) tried to differentiate prejudice from stereotypes and discrimination. For instance, stereotypes refer to the people's emotional aspect, while prejudice represents the cognitive process aspect (Barden et al., 2004; Castelli & Tomelleri, 2008; Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2006; Mackie & Smith, 2002), and both aspects lead explicitly and/or implicitly to discriminatory actions and behaviors (Lai et al., 2013; Ranganath & Nosek, 2008).

Since the beginning of the 21st century, educators have confronted several multicultural and global perspectives, but social prejudice among students in universities remains an issue worthy of further scientific investigation (Cole et al., 2011). Colleges and universities are microcosms of an entire society and are, therefore, logical places to address the causes of social prejudice. Moreover, ways to reduce such prejudice, such as engaging in dialog (Gonzalez & Kokozos, 2019), can be applied when preparing students to function in today's racially diverse

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community. Most social experts agree that students currently enrolled in higher education express social and racial prejudice at many college campuses (Umbach & Kuh, 2006). One of the most important works that explains prejudice may be the social identity theory (SIT).

Social Identity Theory

Identity can be defined as a self-perception overstuffed by cultural background and values, which may be identified as a primary factor of the social conflict by assessing one's perception about their own self within the social and cultural context. Identity can be theoretically organized into three main types: individual, group, and intergroup. These different levels construct one's social identity, which shares aspects with others' identities through many emotional and psychological dynamics (Rothman & Alberstein, 2013). This identity can be explained by a comprehensive theory of SIT.

Formulated by Tajfel and Turner (1979), SIT suggests that people inherently tend to distinguish themselves from others based on group memberships and their willingness to sacrifice to maintain relative superiority over members of other groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). SIT proposes three cognitive processes that could explain identity conflict: social categorization, social identification, and social comparison (Tajfel, 1982).

The three cognitive accumulative processes lead to people in-group favoritism as well as out-group prejudice and discrimination. Social categorization refers to the ability of an individual to make inferences about others, to what others may share with them to feel a sense of belonging, and to understand one's identity within a group. Meanwhile, social identification suggests behaviors based on one's thoughts, feelings, and actions based on those inferences. Finally, social comparison underlies our own mental models that frame our assumptions of others (Tajfel & Turner, 1986, 2004; Turner & Oaks, 1986; Turner & Reynolds, 2003). These assumptions consist of our beliefs, norms, values, preferences, feelings, and thoughts, which further develop our attitudes that in turn guide our behaviors in the social functioning and make us judge others according to our in-group thoughts, feelings, and actions. Such a social comparison process often results in stereotype-based comparisons (McKinley et al., 2014; Moreno-Fernández et al., 2021).

Prejudice and Music and Songs

Music and songs are considered a cultural outcome that reflect the social, political, and economic aspects of people in a society in a way that enhances the understanding of the shared meanings of their identity (Baker, 2013; Bodner & Bergman, 2016, Bodner & Fradkin, 2013; Greitemeyer, 2009a). Lonsdale (2021) found that people tend to prefer individuals who share their music and song over those who do not. Moreover, music can break boundaries and make the world more peaceful through fostering social and cultural positive changes. Bodner and Bergman (2016) and Neto et al. (2019) concluded that there is a high probability of reducing aggressive behaviors through enhancing positive attitudes when removing the conflictual context from songs, and it is thus possible to reduce prejudice between two groups of conflict. Researchers have also examined the importance of songs in adolescents' social and personal lives (Baker, 2013; Bodner & Gilboa, 2009) and how adolescents actively use music to satisfy particular social, emotional, and developmental needs (Bodner & Gilboa, 2009; Greitemeyer, 2009b; Herbert, 2012; Schwartz & Fouts, 2003). This use may lead to positive contributions to the general education, cultural awareness, and socialization process for those included in the disadvantageous communities such as in Gypsy children. As such, the opportunities to turn music into a pedagogical instrument is quite important (Gül & Eren, 2018).

While music and songs can play a positive role in establishing relations and romance in the life of adolescents, it was reported that songs with violent lyrics could play a crucial role in establishing aggressive thoughts and feelings, which can lead to subsequent violent behaviors (Greitemeyer, 2009b). Bergh and Sloboda (2010) and Esteve-Faubel et al. (2018) argued that music and songs are often used to manipulate people's identities and social preferences and references.

The role of songs and music in generating or supporting social violent acts or other interpersonal conflicts have been studied by researchers exploring their role in conflict transformation and the contextualization of songs in generating prejudice attachments (Bodner & Gilboa, 2009; Hargreaves & MacDonald, 2002; Harwood, 2017; Herbert, 2012; Robertson, 2010; Tekman & Hortaçso, 2002). This role can be seen in how they shape in-group norms and behaviors while, at the same time, excluding the others (out-group), which could lead to violent or aggressive behaviors and direct their identities by concepts such as self-concept or self-image (Appiah et al., 2013; Hargreaves & MacDonald, 2002).

Some attempts (Brewer, 1999; Greenwald et al., 2002; Harwood & Roy, 2005) tried to link listening to some songs with prejudice behaviors that foster a sense of shared identity, which establishes intergroup boundaries and maximizes the differences between them and the others (out-group). This effect would divide society into small communities by which we formulate and express our individual characteristics and identities (Hargreaves & MacDonald, 2002).

Moreover, given that some studies (Brewer, 1999; Ekehammar et al., 2003; McKinley et al., 2014) revealed that males have consistently displayed more prejudices than females, the current study tried to examine if there were statistical differences on displaying prejudice due to gender or the interaction between gender and type of song.

Because there was a particular interest in studying whether listening to music and songs could influence individuals' thoughts and values in certain ways, educational institutions, and especially universities, are considered the key settings for research on the possible development and improvement of the society. Therefore, the confront of a very sensitive concept such as social prejudice as an effect of a chaos movement of songs could contribute toward the comprehensive national and international understanding of how to reduce prejudice among students. Moreover, this effort can raise their awareness of how biases work and provide a baseline for change. These outcomes can help decisionmakers in these institutions and at the policy level to create structural legislation to revisit their visions and curricula in an age of globalism.

Problem Statement

The current study argues that investigating one of the causes of social prejudice could create an opportunity for students to understand and appreciate the differences between the different groups and to encourage the development of positive actions to combat identity conflict. In order to achieve this, the contribution of local songs (songs that are specified to a particular group, city, etc.) and national songs (songs that are specified to the whole country) in developing the social prejudicial attitudes among university students are empirically examined. This study hypothesized that listening to songs could be a resource of social prejudice. Subsequently, the current study tried to answer the following questions:

1. Are there statistically significant differences in social prejudice between male and female students after listening to both types of music (local and national songs)?
2. Are there statistically significant differences in social prejudice between students who listened to local songs and those who listened to national songs?

3. Are there statistically significant differences in social prejudice due to the interaction between gender and group type (students who listened to local and national songs)?

Methodology

Participants

A total of 111 undergraduate students in the educational sciences faculty at the Hashemite University, Jordan, participated in the study, with 45 male (40%) and 66 female (60%) students. Prior to the study, consent forms were provided to all participants consenting to voluntarily participate in the research. All ethical considerations were met in conducting this study. Data collection was conducted in an anonymous manner, such that data were only identified by gender, kept strictly confidential, and used only for the research purposes and subsequent analysis.

Instrument

Prejudice Attitudes Questionnaire (PAQ)

This questionnaire was developed based on various related literature (Jasim, 2017; Martini et al., 2016). The instrument consisted of 21 items measuring cultural, tribe, and athletic issues. All items utilized a three-point Likert scale (from 1 = "disagree" to 3 = "agree." This questionnaire was revised by some experts to ensure the contents' validity. An internal consistency was calculated by Cronbach's alpha (0.94) to estimate reliability.

Lists of Songs

Two lists of songs were chosen: local songs that were written about a specific city, tribe, or athletic club and national songs that were written about a country-wide experience, not for a specific city, tribe, or athletic club. The songs were chosen with the assistance of two associate professors specializing in musical education at the Hashemite University.

Procedure

This study is an experimental study that utilized a quasi-experimental design: the pretest-posttest nonequivalent control-group design. There were two experimental groups: national songs group students ($n = 52$) and local songs group students ($n = 59$).

All participants completed two tasks. First, they were asked to complete a PAQ to assess the level of prejudice. Students were then divided randomly into two groups: students who listened to national songs (47%) and students who listened to local songs (53%). To ensure that all students in both groups listened to the songs, they were asked to provide a written report of the lyrics and a self-reflection of the content of the songs by analyzing the themes and metaphors embedded in the songs. After a month, the two groups completed the second task: filling in the PAQ.

At the end of the study, the authors were worried that the songs may have resulted in an increased prejudice among participants in the local songs group. Therefore, the third author, who specializes in counseling, conducted three sessions of group counseling with the participants to return them to their original status. Most importantly, he explained the goals of the study and asserted that the procedures were just for the study's purposes and that the goal was not to make them sectarians.

Data Analysis

To explore the varied effects of listening to two types of songs on developing social prejudice among students and to test if there were any differences in the feelings of prejudice due to the interaction between gender and the type of songs, a two-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted. The type of songs and gender constituted the independent variables, while the posttest scores on the PAQ were dependent variables. Then, the pretest scores of PAQ were used as a covariate. The use of ANCOVA allowed for the examination of the effect of the two independent variables and the interaction between them after controlling for the covariate. All analyses were carried out using SPSS v.23 computer program.

Results

Means (*M*) and standard deviations (*SD*) for the pre-and posttest scores of male and female students' PAQ responses are presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Pre-and Posttest Means and Standard Deviations on PAQ

Gender	Group	*n.*	Pretest Scores		Adjusted Posttest Scores	
			M	*SD*	*M*	Std. Error
Males	Local Songs	24	32.46	5.91	52.84	1.30
	National Songs	21	31.29	4.36	35.12	1.40
Females	Local Songs	35	33.14	5.72	42.04	1.09
	National Songs	31	31.55	5.42	33.19	1.15

Table 1 shows that virtually no differences were found in social prejudice among male and female students and between their pre-and posttest scores on the PAQ. However, virtual differences were found between male and female students according to the types of songs after differences in pre-scores were controlled. A two-way ANCOVA was used to assess whether male students have higher levels of social prejudice than female students in the two groups of the study (local and national songs) after controlling for their levels of social prejudice and before being exposed to the two experimental conditions. These results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Two-way ANCOVA

Source	SS	*df*	MS	*F*	*Sig.*	Partial Eta Squared
Pretest	58.995	1	58.995	1.45	.232	.013
gender	1078.493	1	1078.493	26.43	.000	.200
group	4629.377	1	4629.377	113.45	.000	.517
gender * group	522.479	1	522.479	12.80	.001	.108
Error	4325.312	106	40.805			
Corrected Total	10490.757	110				

Note. This two-way ANCOVA was conducted for posttest scores on social prejudice scale as a function of gender using pre-scores on the social prejudice scale as a covariate.

The assumption of homogeneity of regression slopes was met since all possible interaction effects were not significant. On the other hand, the assumption of homogeneity of variances was violated ($F(3,107) = 4.85$, $p < 0.01$). However, because all cell sizes were similar (24, 21 and 31, 35), this violation did not present as an issue. Table 2 shows that, after controlling for the pretest scores on the social prejudice scale, male students had significantly higher levels of social prejudice compared to female students ($F(1,110) = 26.43$, $p < 0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.20$).
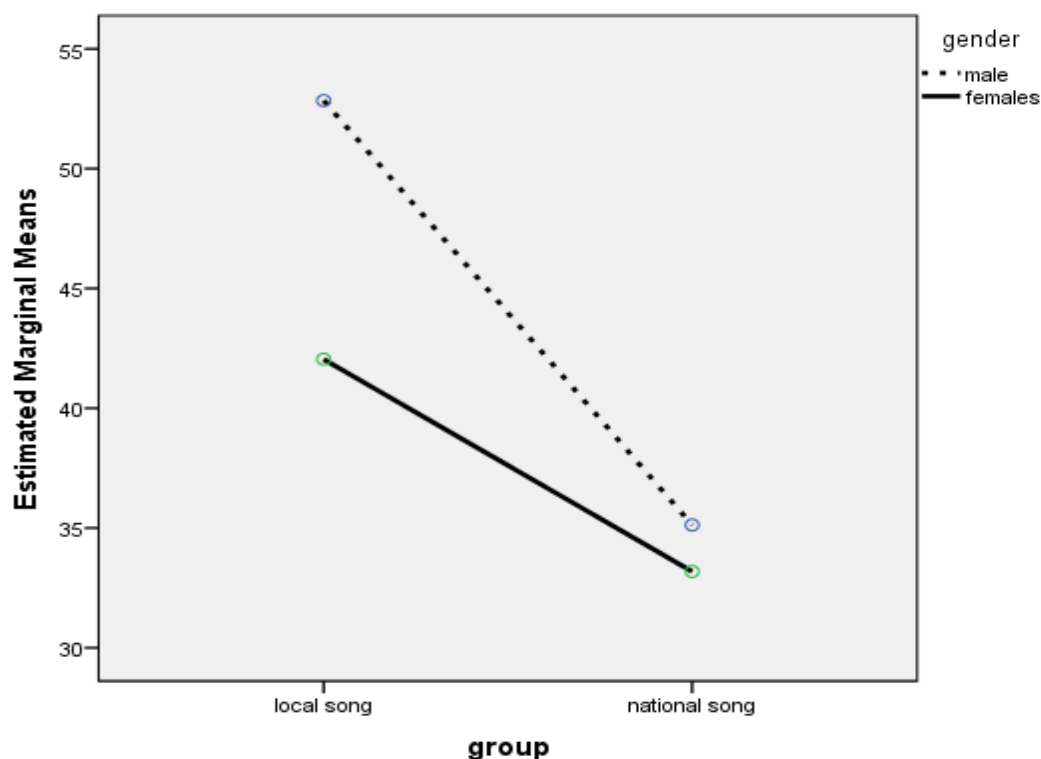
Moreover, listening to local songs produced significantly higher levels of social prejudice among students compared to listening to national songs ($F(1,110) = 113.45$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.52$). However, these results should be considered with caution since the interaction effect between gender and group was significant ($F(1,110) = 12.8$, $p < 0.01$, $\eta^2 = 0.11$). This significance indicates that a simple main effects analysis was required to explore the effect of listening to different songs on social prejudice between male and female students. The results are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3
Differences in Effect on Gender for Each Type of Song

Group	Gender	Mean Difference	Std. Error	F	Sig.
Local Songs	Male Female	10.797	1.695	40.59	.000
National Songs	Male Female	1.939	1.806	1.15	.285

Figure 1

Interaction Between Songs and Gender on Social Prejudice

Note. The diagram illustrates the interaction between types of songs and participants gender on social prejudice.

Table 3 shows that listening to local songs produced significantly higher levels of social prejudice in male students compared to female students ($F(1,106) = 40.59$, $p < 0.001$). On the other hand, listening to national songs had the same effect on social prejudice in male and female students ($F(1,106) = 1.15$, $p > 0.05$), as demonstrated graphically in Figure 1.

Figure 1 shows the interaction between the gender of university students and the type of songs they listened to at their levels of social prejudice. It also illustrates that the gap in the levels of social prejudice between male and female students was much wider when they listened to local songs as compared to when listening to national songs. At the same time, this figure shows that listening to local songs produced higher levels of social prejudice in both genders compared to national songs.

Discussion

The aim of the current study was to explore the effect of repeated exposure to different kinds of songs (local or national songs) on developing significant levels of social prejudice attitudes among male and female undergraduates. The findings indicated that listening to local songs that were related to certain city, tribe, club, etc. could increase chances of developing social prejudice attitudes in university students as compared to listening to national songs. This difference revealed that local songs tend to impact individuals' social identity with the three cognitive processes that entail identity conflict. Moreover, music and songs may affect individuals' emotional and cognitive roots, which may further influence social categorization, social identification, and social comparison. This finding confirms what SIT suggests: people tend to favor those who share their music and songs over those who do not (Lonsdale, 2021).

As such, it can be said that local songs play a crucial role in constructing students' values and attitudes in a cumulative manner. Our findings are supported by recent literature in music psychology (Bergh & Sloboda, 2010; Bodner, & Gilboa, 2009; Gassner & McGuigan, 2014; Lai et al., 2013).

Furthermore, university students as adolescents tend to gather on a campus as cliques or closed groups according to the similarities in their social status, ethnicity, sport orientation, and tribes. This grouping may put them at further risk of developing prejudicial attitudes (Brown et al., 1994; Ennet & Bauman, 1996). Hence, local songs can foster prejudicial attitudes, especially if recited in these crowds. Such actions could also limit their interaction with out-groups because of their xenophobia. Defined as an expression of perceived conflict between an ingroup and an outgroup, it may manifest in suspicion of the other's activities, a desire to eliminate their presence, and fear of losing a national, ethnic, or racial identity to another (Ekehammar & Sidanius,1982; Moreno-Fernández et al., 2021; Sidanius et al., 1979). Another possible reason for the increase in prejudice levels among the study sample is that music reduces hostility inside in-groups and may increase prejudice toward out-groups. This finding is in line with what Holtz (2009) found regarding music being considered a tool of conflict between intergroups.

The results of the current study showed that males had higher levels of social prejudice than females after listening to local songs. This finding has generally been widely acknowledged in previous studies (Brewer, 1999; McKinley et al., 2014; Segura-Robles et al., 2016). This difference might be due to the cultural gender roles that may influence the socialization processes allowing males to have more channels to express their feelings and actions. On the other hand, there was a slight increase in the levels of social prejudice for females in the local songs group. This result could be justified by some earlier research attempts (Augoustinos et al., 1994; Ekehammar et al., 2003; Lepore & Brown, 1997) that revealed that female students could develop prejudice attitudes in implicit and unconscious thoughts and values.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the current study, it was concluded that songs that are specific to a particular tribe, city, club, or even an individual could play an undesirable role in developing prejudice attitudes among university students. For instance, local songs may impact students' inflated self-image, leading to them feeling superior to out-groups and treat others more negatively. Therefore, songs and music that are directed toward adolescents should be carefully produced to help students develop positive affects for multiculturalism and reduce prejudice.

Implications

The findings are interesting and beneficial because of the following reasons:

- It provided empirical evidence for those who work in education; they can now be vigilant when using songs and music in their schools and colleges.
- It is also beneficial for those who work in producing songs to avoid creating songs in the future of the local nature as they could divide people and societies.

Future research could further examine gender differences between implicit and explicit attitudes, since implicit prejudice may unconsciously and slowly emphasize more particular similarities between genders. Furthermore, the approach of using various methodologies and

tools for further explicit and implicit gender exploration should capture the attention of future studies.

Limitations

The participants were chosen from one university, but this university contains students from different regions in Jordan. Moreover, the generalization of the results can be limited by the period of exposure to the songs and by the number of the songs they listened to.

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