

Soundtracks of Wellness: The Role of Film Songs in Indian Music Therapy



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Abstract

Film songs hold a unique place in Indian culture, serving not only as entertainment but also as powerful emotional and cultural markers. In recent years, there has been a growing interest in utilizing these songs within music therapy practices to address the physiological and psychological needs of patients. This study explores the role of film songs in music therapy sessions in India, focusing on how the elements of film songs incorporate with different music therapy methods.

Keywords: Film songs, Music therapy, Physical and mental health, Elements of song, Music therapy methods.

Research Paper

Introduction

Film songs hold a special place in India's vibrant cultural landscape, serving as a unique fusion of music, storytelling, and emotion (Vijayakar). Unlike in any other country, Indian cinema incorporates songs as an integral part of its narrative, reflecting a wide range of moods and themes (Anantharaman). These songs go beyond mere entertainment, deeply resonating with audiences and connecting with various aspects of the human experience.

In the realm of music therapy, this distinctive feature of Indian cinema presents a valuable resource. Music therapy is a therapeutic approach that uses music to address emotional, cognitive, social, and physical needs. With their emotional depth and cultural resonance, film songs provide a versatile tool for therapists to engage clients in therapeutic processes. This paper explores the therapeutic benefits and impacts of using film songs in music therapy sessions in India, focusing on how they contribute to the physical and mental health of different populations.

Research problem

The primary problem this research addresses is the lack of formal recognition and understanding of the therapeutic potential of film songs in India. While anecdotal evidence suggests their effectiveness, systematic research is needed to establish their role and benefits in music therapy. There is a lack of literature

on how film songs (with different elements in it) can be used in many music therapy methods.

Objectives

- To investigate how film songs are used in music therapy sessions in India.
- To analyze the contribution of film songs in addressing various physical and mental health issues.
- To explore the impact of film songs on different demographic groups, including pediatrics, adult care, or geriatrics.

Hypothesis

The film songs significantly contribute to music therapy methods in India, helping to achieve physical and mental health improvements in clients.

Relevance

The relevance of this research lies in its potential to formally validate the therapeutic benefits of film songs in Indian music therapy. Despite anecdotal evidence, there is a significant lack of systematic research on how film songs can be effectively utilized in therapy. Addressing this gap can lead to culturally sensitive therapeutic practices, standardized treatment protocols, and a broader understanding of music therapy's scope, ultimately enhancing therapeutic outcomes for diverse populations in India.

Research methodology

This research type is a qualitative one. The research design is exploratory and the nature of study is descriptive. Data collection involves an extensive literature review and case study of music therapy sessions that incorporate film songs. The literature review provided a theoretical foundation, while the case study offers a practical example into the application and outcomes of using film songs in therapy.

Understanding Film songs and Music therapy

Film songs

Film songs are musical compositions that play a significant role in movies, often highlighting key emotions and story elements. In Indian cinema, these songs are unique and distinct from the global cinematic routine. While international films typically use music as background support, Indian films often feature songs as central to the narrative, expressing emotions, advancing the plot, and entertaining the audience (Beek).

These songs can vary widely, from romantic melodies to energetic dance numbers, and are often placed at crucial moments in the film. The difference between film songs and film music lies in their purpose and presentation. Film songs are complete pieces with lyrics, meant to be enjoyed both within the movie and independently (Sarrazin 93). In contrast, film music usually refers to the background score that enhances scenes but isn't a standalone feature (Jhingan 91-94)

Elements of Indian Film Songs

Lyrics: The lyrics, or words of the song, are often poetic and expressive, conveying emotions or narrating stories. They range from metaphorical to straightforward, depending on the song's theme and message. Written in various Indian languages like Hindi, Tamil, or Bengali, the lyrics reflect the regional diversity of India.

Melody: The melody is the central tune of the song, designed to be memorable and emotionally engaging. It's crafted to evoke specific feelings, whether it's joy, sadness, or love, making it a crucial part of the song's appeal.

Rhythm: The rhythm sets the pace of the song, from slow and soulful to fast and lively. It plays a key role in setting the mood and can influence how listeners physically and emotionally respond to the music.

Harmony: Harmony involves the use of chords and background music that complement the melody. It adds

depth and texture to the song, enriching the overall listening experience.

Instrumentation: Indian film songs often feature a blend of traditional instruments like the sitar, tabla, and harmonium, alongside Western instruments like guitars and drums. The choice of instruments can define the song's style, be it classical, folk, or contemporary.

Vocals: Vocals are usually provided by playback singers who record the songs, which are then lip-synced by actors on screen. The vocal style can vary widely, from classical and operatic to pop and folk, adding a unique character to each song.

Structure: The structure of a film song typically includes verses, choruses, bridges, and sometimes instrumental breaks. This structure guides the listener through the song's narrative and emotional arc.

Themes: Themes in film songs often reflect broader cultural or narrative elements, such as love, heartbreak, joy, patriotism, or spiritual devotion. These themes are closely tied to the storylines of the films they are part of.

Cultural and Regional Influences: Film songs often draw from various regional music traditions, incorporating elements of classical, folk, or devotional music. This adds a layer of cultural richness and helps the songs resonate with diverse audiences.

Visual Elements: While not an audio component, the visual presentation of film songs—including choreography, costumes, and scenic backgrounds—enhances the storytelling and emotional impact. The picturization often makes the song more memorable and engaging.

Music therapy

Music Therapy is a clinical practice that uses music to help individuals achieve specific health and well-being goals (Bruscia). It's not about teaching music or providing entertainment but rather about using music in a therapeutic context to address various health issues. Music therapists work in diverse settings, including hospitals, clinics, and therapeutic communities, (Heiderscheidt and Jackson) and use methods like Receptive, Collaborative and Participatory method. These interventions are tailored to each client's needs, helping with physical, emotional, cognitive, or social challenges through a structured treatment plan.

Methods in Music Therapy

Improvisation: This involves creating music on the spot, allowing clients to express their feelings freely.



It can include playing instruments or singing and often involves collaboration with the therapist to enhance creativity and social skills.

Receptive Listening: In this method, clients listen to selected music to evoke emotions, memories, or thoughts. It's a useful tool for relaxation, mood regulation, and stress relief, providing a basis for discussion and self-reflection (Grocke et al).

Songwriting: Clients are encouraged to write their own songs, with help from the therapist. This creative process helps in expressing emotions, processing experiences, and boosting self-esteem, resulting in a personal piece of music (Baker and Wigram).

Lyric Analysis: This method involves discussing the lyrics of songs to explore their relevance and meaning in the client's life. It helps clients articulate their feelings, gain new insights, and develop coping strategies.

Music and Movement: Combining music with movement, such as dancing or gestures, can enhance motor skills and body awareness. It's particularly effective for children and individuals with developmental or physical challenges, fostering emotional expression and social interaction.

Guided Imagery and Music (GIM): GIM involves using music to guide clients through imagined experiences, helping them relax and process emotions. It's often used to reduce stress and support recovery from trauma.

Instrumental Play: Clients use instruments to express emotions, which can be especially helpful for those who struggle with verbal expression. This method also aids in improving motor skills and sensory integration.

Therapeutic Singing: Singing exercises can help improve respiratory function, vocal strength, and articulation. It also fosters emotional expression and social connections, beneficial for those with speech or language impairments.

Music-Assisted Relaxation: This technique uses soothing music, often combined with deep breathing or visualization exercises, to promote relaxation and reduce stress.

Community Music Therapy: This approach focuses on using music to foster social change and enhance community well-being. It often involves group music-making activities that promote social inclusion, cultural expression, and community cohesion (Gardstrom ch.07).

Cognitive Behavioral Music Therapy (CBMT): CBMT combines cognitive-behavioral therapy principles

with music-based interventions to help change negative thought patterns and behaviors. Activities might include songwriting and improvisation, aimed at improving emotional and cognitive health.

Case study

Music Therapy for Hypertension in a 62-Year-Old Woman

Patient Profile

- Name: Mrs. Vatsala (pseudonym)
- Age: 62
- Medical Condition: Hypertension
- Initial Blood Pressure (BP): 162/90 mmHg
- Therapeutic Intervention: Receptive method. Listening to old Kannada songs by S.P. Balasubramaniam and P.B. Srinivas for 15 minutes daily
- Duration: 8 sessions over 4 weeks

Objective: To evaluate the effect of daily music therapy on Mrs. Vatsala's blood pressure and overall well-being, using her favorite old Kannada songs as a calming intervention.

Intervention Details: Mrs. Vatsala has a lifelong appreciation for the music of S.P. Balasubramaniam and P.B. Srinivas, which brings her joy and comfort. As part of her treatment, she listened to these songs for 15 minutes each day. This practice aimed to reduce her stress and anxiety levels, which are factors that can contribute to elevated blood pressure.

Session Scores

Session Blood Pressure (mmHg) Well-being Score (1-10)

1	162/90	4
2	158/88	5
3	156/86	5
4	150/82	6
5	145/66	7
6	148/78	6
7	142/75	7
8	140/71	8

Outcome: Over the eight sessions, Mrs. Vatsala's blood pressure decreased significantly from 162/90 mmHg to 140/70 mmHg. She also reported feeling progressively better, with her well-being score improving from 4 to 8. She described the music sessions as a soothing ritual

that helped her unwind and feel more at peace, making her days more manageable.

Conclusion: This case study demonstrates the positive effects of music therapy on hypertension. Mrs. Vatsala's consistent engagement with her favorite Kannada songs not only helped lower her blood pressure but also enhanced her overall sense of well-being.

Findings and Discussion

The elements of film songs and the methods used in music therapy intersect in several ways, each offering therapeutic benefits. Here's a comparison and analysis of how these elements and methods work together to support therapy:

1. Lyrics

Film Songs:

- Lyrics in film songs often tell stories or express emotions, making them relatable and resonant with listeners.

Music Therapy Methods

- **Lyric Analysis:** Therapists use lyric analysis to help clients explore and articulate their emotions, thoughts, and experiences. Analyzing lyrics can help in understanding personal issues, fostering self-reflection, and promoting emotional expression.
- **Songwriting:** Clients can use the structure and storytelling nature of lyrics in film songs to write their own lyrics, expressing feelings that might be difficult to verbalize otherwise.

Therapeutic Benefits

- Lyrics provide a way to connect with clients' feelings and experiences, facilitating emotional expression and processing. This can be particularly helpful in dealing with issues such as depression, anxiety, and trauma.

2. Melody

Film Songs

- Melodies in film songs are designed to be memorable and evoke specific emotions, whether it's joy, sorrow, love, or excitement.

Music Therapy Methods

- **Improvisation:** The emotional power of melodies can be harnessed in improvisation sessions, allowing clients to express and explore their emotions non-verbally.

- **Therapeutic Singing:** Singing familiar melodies can help clients with respiratory issues, improve vocal strength, and enhance emotional expression.

Therapeutic Benefits

- Melodies can soothe, energize, or provide comfort, aiding in emotional regulation and mood enhancement. They also promote relaxation, stress reduction, reduce blood pressure, etc. for all male, female and transgender individuals (Gariyali, and Rajkumar 96).

3. Rhythm

Film Songs

- The rhythm in film songs varies widely, from slow and calming to fast and energetic, influencing the listener's mood and physical response.

Music Therapy Methods

- **Music and Movement:** Rhythmic elements can be used in rhythmic improvisation, drum circles to encourage movement, improving motor skills, coordination, and physical fitness.
- **Music-Assisted Relaxation:** Calming rhythms can help in inducing relaxation, reducing anxiety, and managing stress.

Therapeutic Benefits

- Rhythm helps in grounding and organizing sensory input, which can be especially beneficial for individuals with developmental disorders, stroke patients. It also plays a role venting out the pent up emotions like anger, sadness etc. especially in transgender patients (Vakoch, 142)

4. Harmony

Film Songs

- Harmonies add depth and richness to film songs, creating a fuller and more complex sound.

Music Therapy Methods

- **Instrumental Play:** Harmonies can be explored through playing instruments, helping clients understand musical structure and enhancing cognitive and auditory processing.
- **Guided Imagery and Music (GIM):** The layered nature of harmonies can facilitate deep emotional and psychological exploration during guided imagery sessions.

Therapeutic Benefits

- Harmonies can promote a sense of cohesion

and balance, supporting emotional stability and cognitive functioning (Hanser 142). They also encourage teamwork and social interaction in group therapy settings. Works mainly in Palliative care, Gynecology, Oncology departments.

5. Instrumentation

Film Songs

- The use of various instruments, both traditional and modern, gives film songs their distinctive sound and cultural flavor.

Music Therapy Methods

- **Instrumental Play:** Clients can engage with different instruments to express themselves, develop new skills, and explore cultural heritage.
- **Receptive Listening:** Listening to a variety of instruments can evoke different emotions and memories, aiding in emotional processing and cognitive stimulation.

Therapeutic Benefits

- Instrumental play fosters creativity, self-expression, and motor skills. It also helps in cultural expression and connecting with one's heritage, which can be vital for identity and self-esteem (Sundar). Helps in pain management, recovery from surgery, pulmonary rehabilitation, cardiology and psychiatry departments.

6. Genres and Themes

Film Songs

- Indian film songs cover a wide range of genres and themes, from romantic and devotional to patriotic and inspirational.

Music Therapy Methods

- **Receptive Listening:** Different genres can be used to evoke specific emotional responses or to address particular therapeutic goals, such as comfort, inspiration, or emotional release (Anita and Parameshchari 01-16).
- **Community Music Therapy:** Themes in film songs can be used to foster community bonding and social inclusion, particularly in culturally diverse settings.

Therapeutic Benefits

- The diverse genres and themes in film songs provide a versatile tool for addressing a wide range of therapeutic needs, including emotional expression, cultural identity, and social connection.

7. Visual Elements

Film Songs

- While not a direct musical element, the visual representation of film songs (such as choreography, costumes, and settings) adds another layer of engagement.

Music Therapy Methods

- **Music and Movement:** Incorporating visual elements and movement can enhance the therapeutic experience, especially for clients who connect well with visual and kinesthetic stimuli.
- **Guided Imagery and Music (GIM):** The imagery associated with film songs can be used in guided imagery sessions to explore emotions and memories.

Therapeutic Benefits

- Visual elements and movement can aid in emotional expression, body awareness, and sensory integration, enriching the therapeutic process and making it more engaging and enjoyable for clients. Works best with the geriatric patients through reminiscent technique.

Conclusion

The integration of Indian film songs into music therapy highlights their unique therapeutic potential. The emotional depth, cultural resonance, and diverse elements such as lyrics, melody, and rhythm make these songs a valuable tool in addressing various health issues. By engaging clients through methods like improvisation, receptive listening, and songwriting, film songs facilitate emotional expression, cognitive stimulation, and social connection (Koul 303). The rich cultural tapestry of these songs also aids in cultural identity and self-esteem, particularly in a diverse country like India. This research underscores the need for systematic exploration of film songs in therapeutic contexts, paving the way for culturally sensitive practices that enhance the efficacy of music therapy. By leveraging the distinct features of Indian film songs, therapists can offer more personalized and effective interventions, contributing significantly to the well-being of their clients.

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