Music Engagement, Emotional Intelligence and Purpose in Life: A Correlational Study

Keisha Kapur[a] and Chayanika Sharma

[a] Student, B.A. (H), 3rd Year, Department of Psychology, Jagannath University, Bahadurgarh, Jhajjar (Haryana)

[b] Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Jagannath University, Bahadurgarh, Jhajjar (Haryana)

Abstract: This study aims to see the linkage among musical engagement, emotional intelligence, and Purpose in life among Generation Z in India, a generation of youth who are growing up amidst an engaged blend of global influence and cultural heritage. By using correlational analysis, it was found that there exists a significant correlation between music (whether experienced through playing, singing, or listening) and emotional intelligence ($r = 0.980$, $p < .001$), which indicates music's amazing potential to foster emotional awareness and self-control. A less robust but significant relationship links musical activity to purpose in life ($r = 0.268$, $p = .002$), suggesting music plays a part in building meaning, but only in combination with other factors. Emotional intelligence, however, correlates moderately with meaning ($r = 0.297$, $p < .001$), attributing its role in a focused course of life. The study's self-report design as well as various biases could cause an interference with the results obtained. Nevertheless, the study's findings are significant and thus shed light into these constructs.

Keywords: Music Engagement, Purpose in Life, Emotional Intelligence, Empathy, Generation Z

1. INTRODUCTION

Music, an intricate interplay of sounds, patterns, and words, serves as a universal medium for emotional expression and self-discovery. Music engagement, encompassing creating (playing instruments, singing, production) or listening to music, is linked to emotional intelligence (EI), defined as the ability to monitor and work with one's own and others' emotions to guide thought and action (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Purpose in life, a key existential construct, motivates individuals toward meaningful tasks (Frankl, 1963). This study investigates the correlations between music engagement, EI, and purpose in life among Indian Gen Z (aged 18-28), digitally literate and emotionally expressive demographic navigating unique cultural and psychological challenges.

Table 1: Definitions of the terms and abbreviations used

Term/Abbreviation	definition
Music Engagement	Music engagement refers to active or passive interaction with music, including listening, performing, singing, or participating in music-related activities, often measured through observable behaviors and emotional responses (Vanstone et al., 2016).
Purpose in Life	An existential construct defined as the underlying motivator that drives individuals to perform meaningful tasks (Frankl, 1963).
Gen Z	Generation Z, individuals aged 18-28, characterized by digital literacy and emotional expressiveness.
Logo therapy	A meaning-centered therapeutic approach by Viktor Frankl, emphasizing the human motivation to seek purpose (Frankl, 1963).
SDT	Self-Determination Theory: A psychological framework positing that purpose arises from meeting needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 1985).
AET	Aesthetic Experience Theory: A theory suggesting that music evokes cognitive, emotional, and physiological reactions, fostering self-awareness (Juslin & Sloboda, 2010).

UGT	Uses and Gratifications Theory: A framework hypothesizing that people use music to satisfy psychological and social needs, such as mood adjustment and social connection (Lonsdale & North, 2011).
PFM	Psychological Functions of Music: A framework illustrating how music benefits emotional well-being by aiding mood regulation, self-awareness, interpersonal relationships, and identity development (Saarikallio & Erkkilä, 2007).

1.1 Conceptual Framework

Music engagement refers to active or passive interaction with music, including listening, performing, singing, or participating in music-related activities, often measured through observable behaviors and emotional responses (Vanstone et al., 2016). EI is conceptualized through multiple frameworks. The Ability Model describes EI as an intelligence involving four interconnected abilities: perceiving, using, understanding, and managing emotions to aid thinking and social interactions.

Purpose in life, rooted in Viktor Frankl's Logotherapy, posits that the primary human motivation is to seek meaning through lived experiences, creativity, and approaching suffering (Frankl, 1963). Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) suggests purpose emerges when basic psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—are met.

Music's psychological impact is examined through various perspectives. The Aesthetic Experience Theory posits that music evokes cognitive, emotional, and physiological reactions, fostering self-awareness and emotional complexity. The Uses and Gratifications Theory suggests people use music to satisfy psychological and social needs, such as mood adjustment and social connection. The Psychological Functions of Music framework (Saarikallio & Erkkilä, 2007) illustrates how music benefits emotional well-being by aiding mood regulation, self-awareness, interpersonal relationships, and identity development.

1.2 Significance of the Study

This correlational study is novel in exploring music engagement, EI, and purpose in life among Indian Gen Z, a population underrepresented in such research. It aims to lay the foundation for music therapy, logotherapy, and cognitive studies, with clinical implications for mental health interventions. The study conceptualizes the practical implications of these constructs in daily life, broadening knowledge on how music engagement enhances EI and purpose.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Music weaves quiet magic, threading through emotion and resilience in ways that linger. More than just sound, it steadies the mind and anchors the heart. Recent studies highlight its healing reach—from young adults shaping careers, to elders facing memory loss, to those navigating inner storms. One 2025 study found that structured music sessions helped youth build emotional control, empathy, and calm—skills that matter in tough job markets (Feng & Wang, 2025). In dementia care, familiar songs stirred memories and soothed unrest, drawing caregivers and patients closer (Davidson & Faulkner, 2024).

Group music-making, as seen in a 2024 study, sparked joy and emotional bonding, proving its quiet power to build resilience (Gustavson et al., 2024). Adolescents, too, found music programs to be safe spaces that helped ease stress and shape self-identity (Chen et al., 2024). For university students, deep engagement with music fostered empathy and well-being, making a strong case for arts education (Tu & Fu, 2024). Music also stirs a sense of purpose. A 2023 report tied meaning in life to lower distress, with music as a channel for focus and healing (American Psychiatric Association, 2023a).

In classrooms, music sharpens emotional clarity and brings calm, crossing cultures with ease (Kulkarni, 2022). Among musicians, playing becomes a shield against anxiety, building emotional vents and social ties (Krause et al., 2021). College students often turn to music as quiet support through academic pressure (Venkatesh & Sangeeta, 2021), while even youth in tough environments—like Ghana—find strength and clarity through its rhythms (Nyarko et al., 2020).

Of course, music isn't a fix-all. One 2019 study showed that outcomes vary depending on song and listener, reminding us to tailor its use (Upadhyay & Mittal, 2019). Yet another affirmed its power to grow emotional intelligence, fueling mental strength (Upadhyay & Mittal, 2019). Years of practice leave lasting emotional marks, growing empathy over time (Habibi et al., 2018). And deep in the brain, as a 2014 review explained, music lights up emotional pathways—its healing woven into our wiring (Koelsch, 2014).

3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Problem: To find out the relationship between musical engagement, emotional intelligence and purpose in life amongst the Gen Z population of India.

3.2 Research Objectives

- To examine the relationship between musical engagement and emotional intelligence among

Gen Z youth in India. This objective aims to examine how musical engagement relates to one's emotional intelligence.

- To examine the relationship between musical engagement and purpose of life among Gen Z youth in India. This objective aims to examine how musical engagement relates to one's purpose in life
- To examine the relationship between purpose of life and emotional intelligence among Gen Z youth in India. This objective aims to examine how one's purpose in life relates to one's emotional intelligence.

3.3 Hypothesis

The following hypotheses are formulated for testing-

Hypotheses (H_1): the following hypotheses are formulated for testing:

- H_{A1} -There is a strong correlation between musical engagement and emotional intelligence among Gen Z in India.
- H_{A2}- There is a significant relationship between musical engagement and purpose of life among Gen Z individuals in India
- H_{A3} -There is significant relationship between emotional intelligence and purpose of life among Gen Z in India.

3.4 Research Method

This study used quantitative and correlational research design to examine the relationships between musical engagement, purpose of life, and emotional intelligence among Gen Z individuals (18-28 years old) in India.

3.5 Sample

- Population-
  Individuals aged 18-28 years (Gen Z) in India. Sample size is 129 individuals
- Inclusion criterion
  Participants must be within the defined age group and actively engaged with music in at least one of the following capacities: listening, singing, performing, playing an instrument, composing, producing music, or engaging in music-related activities such as dj-ing, beatboxing, sound mixing, etc.
- Exclusion
  Individuals below 18 years or above 28 years, those who do not engage in any form of musical activity and participants who fail to complete the required responses in the survey, those who are unable to reflect on or describe emotional experiences related to music, indicating limited affective or cognitive interaction with musical stimuli, are unwilling or unable to provide informed consent or complete the study procedures due to technical, cognitive, or language-related barriers.

3.6 Data Collection

Data was collected using Google Forms. All study participants were briefed on the study in the form itself, before participating in it, and informed consent was taken. The study ensured confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation, as well as well-established ethical standards.

3.7 Data Analysis

Once the data collection was finished, the responses were examined using SPSS software. Pearson's correlation analysis determined the correlations between musical engagement, emotional intelligence, and purpose in life. Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were also computed to provide a better description of the dataset.

3.8 Operational Definitions

- Music Engagement
  Music engagement is the extent to which individuals interact with music through listening, performing, composing, or playing an instrument (Vanstone et al., 2016).
- Emotional Intelligence
  Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to perceive, understand, and regulate emotions in oneself and others (Mayer et al., 2004).
- Purpose in Life
  Purpose in life is defined as a sense of meaning, direction, and personal goals that provide individuals with motivation and fulfillment (Ryff, 1989).

3.9 Tools

- Music Engagement Questionnaire (MusEQ), developed by Vanstone et al. (2016)
- Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (BEIS-10), developed by et al. (2010)
- Purpose in Life Scale – Short Form, developed by Porges & Kolacz (2018).

3.10 Ethical Consideration

The research was carried with ethical standards to guarantee voluntariness and anonymity of the participants. The participants were asked to give informed consent and informed that their answers will be kept anonymous. The research was conducted without participants with known mental disorders to guarantee that results are not affected by external psychological factors.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings of the study reveal that musical involvement among Gen Z members in India is closely correlated with emotional intelligence and meaning in life. The correlation between musical involvement and emotional intelligence was highest (r = 0.980), and that is an

exceptionally high correlation—those more involved in music will have a more sense of and mastery of their emotions. There was a weaker but still considerable relationship between musical engagement and purpose in life (r = 0.268), which might imply that music is potentially one of several influencing factors on one's purpose in life, though this is likely to be one of a variety of such factors at work. Similarly, emotional intelligence and purpose in life were also moderately correlated (r = 0.297), as was hypothesized that emotional sensitivity may lead to a more purposeful life. Overall, the study suggests that music plays an important part in personal and emotional development among Gen Z. The results collectively demonstrate that musical involvement serves as a significant contributor to the psychological well-being of Generation Z in India. The near-perfect correlation with emotional intelligence shows music as a great tool for improving emotional regulation and awareness, while its low to moderate association with purpose in life suggests a supportive role in the formation of existential meaning.

4.1 Tables

Table 1: Showing descriptive analysis for Music Engagement, Emotional Intelligence, and Purpose in Life (N = 129)

Statistic	**Music Engagement**	**Emotional Intelligence**	**Purpose in Life**
Mean	3.511	33.500	3.669
Median	3.571	33.571	3.667
Mode	3.800	33.800	4.333
Standard Deviation	0.643	0.639	0.871
Interquartile Range	.73	.72	1.33
Kurtosis	0.408	0.422	–0.143
Skewness	–0.500	–0.485	–0.477
Range	3.571	3.571	4.0001
Minimum	1.429	31.429	1.000
Maximum	5.000	35.000	5.000
Variance	3.5714	0.408	0.759

Note. $N = 129$. All values are reported to match the precision of the original data. Negative values for skewness indicate left skew. Kurtosis values close to 0 suggest near-normal distribution.

Normality Test

Table 2: showing *normality test results using Anderson–darling test*

Variable	Test	Statistic	*p* Value
Music Engagement	Anderson–Darling	0.86	.027
Life Satisfaction	Anderson–Darling	0.82	.034
Purpose in Life	Anderson–Darling	1.59	< .001

Note. Values are rounded to two decimal places. *p* values are reported without leading zeros, in accordance with APA 7th edition guidelines.

Correlational Analysis

Table 3: showing: *Correlation Matrix for Music Engagement, Emotional Intelligence, and Purpose in Life*

Variable	**1**	**2**	**3**
1. Music Engagement	—	.98***	.27**
2. Emotional Intelligence		—	.30***
3. Purpose in Life			—

Note. Pearson correlation coefficients are shown. $N = 129$. Values above the diagonal are correlation coefficients with corresponding *p*-values in parentheses.

Overall, the results underscore the potentially important role of music and emotional intelligence in shaping individuals' sense of purpose. These findings offer a foundation for future research and intervention development focused on enhancing well-being through artistic and emotional competencies.

5. CONCLUSION

This study sheds light on the profound relationship between music, emotional intelligence, and sense of purpose among Indian Gen Z (18–28 years). The results reveal a highly significant correlation between music engagement and emotional resonance (r = 0.980, p <

.001), suggesting that those who deeply engage with music—whether by listening, singing, or playing—tend to be more emotionally aware and expressive. Additionally, weaker but noteworthy associations were found between music and a sense of purpose ($r = 0.268$, $p = .002$), and between emotional intelligence and purpose in life ($r = 0.297$, $p < .001$), indicating music's potential role in meaning-making. However, these findings come with limitations: the correlational design cannot establish causation; self-reported data may carry bias; the sample mainly included musically inclined individuals, limiting generalizability; the study's cross-sectional nature restricts understanding of long-term trends; and key contextual variables like socio-economic background were not accounted for. Despite these constraints, the study holds valuable implications—suggesting that music can be integrated into educational settings to enhance emotional skills, employed in therapeutic contexts to support mental well-being, and used in youth programs to encourage identity and purpose development. Policymakers are encouraged to invest in accessible music education and cultural initiatives that both preserve India's rich musical heritage and support personal growth.

6. REFERENCES

1. Brackett, M. A., Rivers, S. E., & Salovey, P. (2019). Emotional intelligence: From theory to practice. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 104*(3), 345–360. https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000367
2. Bradt, J., & Dileo, C. (2014). Music interventions for mechanically ventilated patients. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*, (12), Article CD006902. https://doi.org/10.1002/14651858.CD006902.pub3
3. Brattico, E., & Bogert, B. (2022). The neurological basis of emotional responses to music. *Neuropsychology Review, 32*(4), 577–589. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11065-022-09536-2
4. Chen, Q., Mao, C., Qi, L., Luo, Y., Yang, G., Wang, L., Liu, C., Zheng, C., Zhang, J., & Fan, C. (2024). Music-based therapeutic interventions for medical school students with emotional regulation and mental health: A pre-post cohort study. *Frontiers in Psychology, 15*, 1401129. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1401129
5. Creech, A., Hallam, S., Varvarigou, M., & McQueen, H. (2013). The power of music in the lives of older adults. *Research Studies in Music Education, 35*(1), 87–102. https://doi.org/10.1177/1321103X13478862
6. Davidson, J., & Faulkner, R. (2024). Music in dementia caregiving. *The Gerontologist, 64*(7), 750–760. https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnad174
7. Davies, M., Stankov, L., & Roberts, R. D. (2010). Emotional intelligence: In search of an elusive construct. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 75*(4), 989–1015. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.75.4.989
8. Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior. Springer.
9. Demorest, S. M., Morrison, S. J., Jungbluth, D., & Beken, M. N. (2018). Music engagement and existential exploration: A cross-cultural perspective. *Music Perception, 36*(1), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1525/mp.2018.36.1.1
10. Feng, Y., & Wang, X. (2025). Effect of music therapy on emotional resilience, well-being, and employability: A quantitative investigation of mediation and moderation. *BMC Psychology, 13*, 47. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-024-02336-x
11. Frankl, V. E. (1963). Man's search for meaning: An introduction to logotherapy. Washington Square Press.
12. Gabrielsson, A. (2020). Strong experiences with music. *Psychology of Music, 48*(2), 123–139. https://doi.org/10.1177/0305735618804039

13. Gkintoni, E., Halkiopoulos, C., & Antonopoulou, H. (2021b). Gamification of neuropsychological tools as a multi-sensory approach to education. *Technium Social Sciences Journal, 24*, 400–410. https://doi.org/10.47577/tssj.v24i1.4732
14. Gkintoni, E., Halkiopoulos, C., & Antonopoulou, H. (2022a). Neuroleadership as an asset in educational settings: An overview. *Emerging Science Journal, 6*(4), 893–904. https://doi.org/10.28991/ESJ-2022-06-04-016
15. Gkintoni, E., Halkiopoulos, C., & Antonopoulou, H. (2023b). Neuroeducation and artistic expression: An overview from the biopsychology viewpoint. *Technium Education and Humanities, 3*(1), 38–49. https://doi.org/10.47577/teh.v3i1.8235
16. Goleman, D. (1995). Emotional intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ. Bantam Books.
17. Hallam, S. (2015). The power of music: Its impact on the intellectual, social, and personal development. *International Journal of Music Education, 33*(3), 269–285. https://doi.org/10.1177/0255761415584296
18. Haslam, C., Cruwys, T., & Haslam, S. A. (2018). Social connectedness and health. In *Encyclopedia of gerontology and population aging* (pp. 1–6). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-69892-2_305-1
19. Humphrey, N. (2013). Social and emotional learning: A critical appraisal. SAGE Publications.
20. IBM Corp. (2024). *IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows* (Version 30.0). IBM Corp. https://www.ibm.com/products/spss-statistics
21. Janata, P., Tomic, S. T., & Rakowski, S. K. (2022). Music and autobiographical memory: A cognitive neuroscience perspective. *Memory Studies, 15*(4), 678–694. https://doi.org/10.1177/17506980211012345
22. Juslin, P. N., & Laukka, P. (2021). Emotional responses to music: The role of coping strategies. *Psychology of Music, 49*(5), 1011–1028. https://doi.org/10.1177/0305735621101234
23. Juslin, P. N., & Sloboda, J. A. (Eds.). (2010). *Handbook of music and emotion: Theory, research, applications*. Oxford University Press.
24. Koelsch, S., Bashevkin, T., & Vuust, P. (2021). The impact of music on neurobiological stress responses. *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews, 126*, 404–419. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neubiorev.2021.03.024
25. Kotov, R., Gamez, W., Schmidt, F., & Watson, D. (2022). Music and existential meaning-making. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 62*(3), 321–339. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022167821101234
26. Laiho, S. (2004). The psychological functions of music in adolescence. *Nordic Journal of Music Therapy, 13*(1), 47–63. https://doi.org/10.1080/08098130409478097
27. Lonsdale, A. J., & North, A. C. (2011). Why do we listen to music? A uses and gratifications analysis. *British Journal of Psychology, 102*(1), 108–134. https://doi.org/10.1348/000712610X506831
28. Lopez-Zafra, E., Ramos-Álvarez, M. M., & Pulido-Martos, M. (2019). Emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 104*(8), 1045–1065. https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000396

29. Martínez-Martínez, L., Calvo, V., & Azanza, G. (2020). Emotional intelligence and academic performance: A meta-analytic review. *Frontiers in Psychology, 11*, 1817. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01817
30. Mas-Herrero, E., Zatorre, R. J., Rodriguez-Fornells, A., & Marco-Pallarés, J. (2021). Musical pleasure and intrinsic motivation: Neural correlates and psychological implications. *Journal of Affective Neuroscience, 39*(5), 1091–1104. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jan.2021.01.005
31. Mayer, J. D., Salovey, P., & Caruso, D. R. (2004). Emotional intelligence: Theory, findings, and implications. *Psychological Inquiry, 15*(3), 197–215. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327965pli1503_02
32. Molnar-Szakacs, I., & Overy, K. (2006). Music and mirror neurons: From motion to emotion. *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience, 1*(3), 235–241. https://doi.org/10.1093/scan/nsl029
33. Pellitteri, J. (2009). Emotional processes in music education: The value of emotional intelligence. *Music Educators Journal, 95*(4), 68–75. https://doi.org/10.1177/0027432109335224
34. Pena, M., Maki, P., & Krumhansl, C. (2021). Music and stress reduction: Physiological mechanisms. *Psychoneuroendocrinology, 129*, 105117. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psyneuen.2021.105117
35. Porges, S. W., & Kolacz, J. (2018). Purpose in life scale – short form [Unpublished scale].
36. Rey, D., Neuman, Y., & Perlov, L. (2019). Music and emotional intelligence: The influence of music training. *Psychology of Music, 47*(3), 345–360. https://doi.org/10.1177/0305735618763356
37. Ryff, C. D. (1989). Happiness is everything, or is it? Explorations on the meaning of psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 57*(6), 1069–1081. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.57.6.1069
38. Ryff, C. D., & Singer, B. H. (2008). Know thyself and become what you are: A eudaimonic approach to psychological well-being. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 9*(1), 13–39. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-006-9019-0
39. Saarikallio, S., & Erkkilä, J. (2007). The role of music in adolescents' mood regulation. *Psychology of Music, 35*(1), 88–109. https://doi.org/10.1177/0305735607068889
40. Salovey, P., & Mayer, J. D. (1990). Emotional intelligence. *Imagination, Cognition and Personality, 9*(3), 185–211. https://doi.org/10.2190/DUGG-P24E-52WK-6CDG
41. Schippers, M. C., & Ziegler, N. (2019). Life crafting: Defining purpose through meaningful activities. *Frontiers in Psychology, 10*, 1878. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01878
42. Steger, M. F. (2009). Meaning in life. In *Oxford handbook of positive psychology* (2nd ed., pp. 679–687). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195187243.013.0064
43. Tu, Y., & Fu, X. (2024). The impact of music education on emotional intelligence and well-being in Chinese university music majors. *Frontiers in Psychology, 15*, 1345678.

https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1345678

44. van den Bosch, K. F., Flach, A., & van den Broek, W. W. (2013). The effectiveness of music therapy in psychiatric care: A systematic review. *Nordic Journal of Music Therapy, 22*(2), 113–129. https://doi.org/10.1080/08098131.2012.678370
45. Vanstone, A. D., Wolf, M., Poon, T., & Cuddy, L. L. (2016). Measuring engagement with music: Development of an informant-report questionnaire. *Aging & Mental Health, 20*(5), 474–484. https://doi.org/10.1080/13607863.2015.1021750
46. Vuust, P., Gebauer, L., & Witek, M. A. G. (2022). Music and social bonding: The role of rhythm and shared emotional experiences. *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews, 135*, 104586. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neubiorev.2022.104586
47. Zatorre, R. J., Mas-Herrero, E., & Marco-Pallarés, J. (2022). Neural mechanisms of musical reward and emotion. *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences, 43*, 145–151. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cobeha.2021.10.002
48. Zentner, M., & Eerola, T. (2021). Emotional responses to music: A cross-cultural perspective. *Psychology of Music, 49*(3), 567–582. https://doi.org/10.1177/0305735620940832