

# Discussing the Impact of Pop Music on Adolescents

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**Abstract:** Pop music, to be precise, is "commercial music" created with profit as the main goal and artistic value as secondary, possessing a vast audience. Adolescents, as a significant consumer group, are characterized by their youthfulness, individuality, and trendiness. Pop music, with its accessible content, simple form, and easy spread, is highly favored by the youth. The intense commercialization of pop music, while having positive effects on adolescents, also carries negative impacts. As music educators, it is essential to guide adolescents correctly to develop the right value orientation.

**Keywords:** Pop Music; Adolescents; Pros and Cons; Impact

## 1. Introduction

The precise concept of pop music should be "commercial music," which is profit-driven. Its content is relatable, accessible, and emotionally rich; in form, it is concise, lively, and easy to disseminate, embodying the characteristics of urban popularization. The audience for pop music spans music enthusiasts from various cultural and age demographics, with the adolescent group being a significant part. The catchy and entertaining nature of pop music aligns with the youthful, individualistic, and trendy traits of the adolescent group; hence, it is highly favored by young people.

In various public spaces, it's common to see teenagers with earphones, singing along and swaying to the music, and even in classrooms, during lessons, they are listening to pop music. Concert tickets often sell out quickly; at packed concert venues, teenagers are the majority, and it's not uncommon to see them queuing overnight just for an autograph from a star or a signed souvenir. This illustrates the profound impact of pop music on teenagers.

Currently, pop music serves as an excellent outlet for emotional expression and communication, a release for mental stress, a liberation of thought, and a means to break with tradition. However, as a commercial form of entertainment, the strong commercial nature of pop music dilutes its artistic integrity; thus, the impact of pop music on teenagers should be approached dialectically, recognizing both its benefits and drawbacks.

## 2. The Reasons Why Adolescents Favor Pop Music

### 2.1. The Psychological Needs of Adolescents

#### 2.1.1. *Experiencing Immaturity in Physical and Psychological Development During Adolescence*

Adolescents are in a stage of puberty where their physical and psychological development is not yet mature, and they lack the ability to perceive and judge the external environment rationally. They have not yet developed a mature set of life, value, and world views. Adolescents transition from naive children to the curious and enthusiastic phase of adolescence, eager to explore and pursue new experiences. They find traditional music to be outdated and dull, not stimulating enough to hold their interest, while pop music offers the exact opposite. The accessibility, mass appeal, spontaneity, and entertainment value of pop music perfectly cater to the adolescents' desire to chase trends, express their individuality, and enjoy imitation.

#### 2.1.2. *Needing to Release from Long-Term High-Pressure Conditions*

Today's adolescents are in a fiercely competitive society, facing significant pressures from academic advancement such as moving from elementary to middle school, from middle to high school, and university entrance exams. They are not only overwhelmed by their schoolwork but also have their free time occupied by various tutoring sessions, leaving them with very little time for themselves. Students in this prolonged state become increasingly fatigued and unable to bear the burden. With parents having high expectations for their children, coupled with their gradually maturing thoughts, they start to develop a rebellious mindset. As a result, adolescents seek to release stress and look for ways to vent. Pop music, characterized by its genuine emotions, lively form, and relatability to life, naturally resonates with them and becomes one of the methods for adolescents to vent emotions and relieve stress, allowing them to relax both physically and mentally through pop music

## **2.2. The Inherent Characteristics of Pop Music**

### *2.2.1. Pop Music Has Commercial Characteristics*

Pop music, as a form of entertainment with commercial attributes, is destined to have the nature of a consumer good, and therefore it inevitably possesses the characteristics of rapid replacement, mass production, and constant innovation. Its goal is to cater to the evolving consumption needs of consumers. The characteristic of being up-to-date endows pop music with a sense of the times, fulfilling the fickle and fluctuating demands of adolescents, while also more easily achieving a better emotional connection with them.

### *2.2.2. Pop Music Possesses Popularity and Accessibility*

The commonality of the content in pop music, the lively and brief form, and the catchy and easy-to-sing melodies make it widely shared among people. Some melodies are relaxed and cheerful, while others are soft and somber. During performances, some artists even engage in spontaneous improvisation, which is the most creative aspect of pop music. The characteristics of content, form, and melody in pop music, along with the element of improvisation, resonate with the hearts of many. People are captivated by pop music, humming along, releasing emotions, and gaining a sense of inner fulfillment, which is highly participatory.

For teenagers, pop music can effectively express a range of emotions such as the beautiful fantasies in their hearts, curiosity, and the desire for love, allowing them to articulate their true feelings. It is this emotional and spiritual connection that makes pop music an emotional support for teenagers, providing them with the emotional experiences they seek.

### *2.2.3. Pop Music Has Trendiness*

The fashion-forward and novel aspects of pop music are also what make it uniquely appealing. Pop music evolves with the times, adapting to the changes of the era and advancements in technology, as well as the evolution of musical instruments, which continuously inject new elements into pop music. These new elements render pop music more stylish and captivating to listeners. Pop music also mirrors the characteristics of contemporary social development, marking its clear sense of the times. The novelty of pop music greatly fulfills the curiosity and satisfaction of adolescents

### *2.2.4. Pop Music Has Popularity*

Pop music is primarily characterized by its popularity, and the increasingly advanced technology for spreading music has made it even more widespread. The emergence of CDs, DVDs, karaoke, MP3s, MP4s, and KTV has greatly enhanced the popularity of pop music, allowing it to be widely disseminated. Electronic sound synthesis technologies have endowed pop music with a richer expressiveness, and the advanced dissemination of pop music has enabled young people to be more extensively exposed to it.

## **2.3. Conformity psychology triggers non-initiative pursuit**

Another reason why teenagers favor pop music is due to the psychology of conformity. In other words, some teenagers pursue pop music fervently, not actively, but driven by others. The reason for this is that pop music is seen by many as a sign of keeping up with the times. Liking pop music is considered avant-garde, fashionable, and in step with the times; on the contrary, disliking pop music is seen as being outdated, having an old mindset, and not keeping up with the pace of the times. For adults, the aging process is

inevitable, but a youthful mindset is always sought after, and maintaining youthfulness is something most people want to preserve. Moreover, for the adolescent group whose body and mind are not yet fully developed, it is easier to blindly follow the crowd. When they see their classmates fervently pursuing pop music and crazily chasing stars, they are bound to feel psychological pressure and burden, thinking that if they do not like pop music, they will lack topics for conversation with others, and they do not want to be seen as conservative and old-fashioned. They want to fit in with the people around them, so they can only choose to like pop music along with everyone else.

### **3. The positive impact of pop music on teenagers**

#### **3.1. Pop music helps teenagers to relieve mental stress**

Adolescents in puberty are often filled with confusion about the future and society; at the same time, pressures from academics and family make them feel overwhelmed. During this period, teenagers need to find a way to vent and a breakthrough. Among them, the frenzied and even hysterical rock music can fully express the rebellious psychology of teenagers and the desire to vent the psychological pressure they have been under for a long time.

The popularity and entertainment nature of pop music continuously bring forth new ideas and keep pace with the times, reflecting the characteristics of the era. Therefore, its freshness and accessibility can resonate with teenagers. In their spare time after school, teenagers can actively use excellent pop music to release stress, alleviate fatigue, and also enhance their motivation to learn.

#### **3.2. Pop music has enriched the lives of teenagers**

Pop music originated in the United States and has developed a localization in China, but it still retains its European and American characteristics. It has a variety of styles, rich forms, and is easy to understand and sincere in emotion. At the same time, the advanced dissemination of pop music has made it widely spread, omnipresent, and deeply integrated into the lives of teenagers. In their spare time after class, teenagers can participate in interesting music practice activities organized by the school, such as collective singing, campus music broadcasts, and campus singing competitions. These activities not only improve the musical literacy of teenagers but also play an entertaining role in their leisure life, enriching their lives.

#### **3.3. Pop music provides a stage for teenagers to showcase themselves**

Adolescents possess curiosity, imitateness, and a psychological desire to be recognized. During this period of growth and development, teenagers are more eager to express themselves, and pop music provides an excellent platform for them to do so. The accessibility of pop music in terms of form and content, as well as the simplicity of its melodies, allows teenagers to participate more easily and to imitate and even create on the basis of imitation. Some pop song contests enable teenagers to find confidence on stage and to receive praise from teachers or parents, which not only satisfies their psychological desire to be recognized but also enhances their initiative.

#### **3.4. Pop music has stimulated the creativity of teenagers**

The widespread popularity of pop music can inspire the creative desires of teenagers. Teenagers are quick to accept new things and have a strong curiosity, which makes them curious about the creation of pop music. Additionally, the teenage group possesses a strong sense of innovation and creativity. The lyrics of pop music are close to life, easy to understand, and the melodies are relatively simple. These characteristics encourage the creation of teenagers. Many online pop singers are teenagers who, in the process of being curious about pop music, try to practice and create their own songs, eventually producing pop music with their own unique style.

### **4. The negative impact of pop music on teenagers**

While pop music indeed has certain positive effects on teenagers, we must not overlook the negative impacts it may have on them. As music educators, we should view the negative aspects that pop music brings to teenagers dialectically and identify the causes of these issues.

#### 4.1. The vulgar appeal of pop music

Pop music often uses lyrics to express the entangled love between men and women or the hysterical anger towards certain social phenomena or figures, as well as the psychology of rebellion. Objectively speaking, this is a social phenomenon. These pop music works have a certain vulgar appeal, with lyrics that are vulgar and negative. In recent years, with the rise of online music, the vulgarity of pop music lyrics has become more widespread. Adolescents are in their puberty, lacking judgment and cognitive abilities towards external things. Such vulgar, negative, or even pornographic pop music brings many unstable factors to the emotions and feelings of adolescents, which can greatly mislead the immature physical and mental development of adolescents, making them prone to extreme behavior, unable to face life and society positively and healthily, and also causing a wrong understanding of society.

The vulgar appeal of pop music is mainly due to its strong commercial nature, with artistic nature being secondary. On the one hand, pop music must essentially take commercial goals as its value orientation. Pop music mainly relies on various media to package and promote it extensively, which can be described as over-packaging and over-promotion. This factor also leads people to blindly pursue immediate benefits, neglecting the artistic nature of pop music itself, and gradually weakening the spiritual value of its musical art. Therefore, pop music has a rapid turnover, but the quality is greatly reduced. On the other hand, the audience of pop music includes music lovers from different cultural and age groups; therefore, different audiences have different appreciation and understanding abilities for a song. The commercial nature of pop music determines its focus on market effects; therefore, to cater to the psychological needs of low-level audiences of pop music, vulgar appeal is inevitable. In addition, the rise of online music, through the medium of the internet, allows many people to create a few songs that can become popular, which is the grassroots nature of online music. Such online singers mostly aim for fame and neglect the artistry and value that pop music should have. The prevalence of online music also allows the vulgar appeal of pop music to gradually permeate into the lives of the audience.

#### 4.2. The prevalence of pop music leads to teenagers' crazy idol chasing

The prevalence of pop music has led to teenagers' crazy idol chasing. Various "typhoon styles" and "Korean waves" have become the pop music styles that teenagers are crazy about, and a large number of young students are infatuated, even forgetting themselves. Teenagers are increasingly lacking a sense of social responsibility, which stems from the fact that pop music, under the media hype and packaging, can more easily attract the attention of teenagers. Pop music has a strong entertainment value but is not of high moral value. Many teenagers blindly follow trends, and some even do not know the names of the stars they idolize, just blindly worshipping because their friends and classmates like them.

We can hear at any time and place those songs with low taste and full of affectation from the mouths of school students. The sketch "Chasing Stars" by Zhao Lirong, Cai Ming, and Guo Da depicts such a family where three generations are together, and the granddaughter has a dispute with her father and grandmother for wanting to watch a concert. From the little girl in this sketch, we can reflect the blind worship of modern teenagers towards singers. In order to listen to a concert, she argues with her family, turns a deaf ear to her father's earnest advice, her academic performance declines, and even confuses well-known historical events in ancient China with Hong Kong and Taiwan singers, losing herself, neglecting her studies, and with just one sentence "I like it" representing everything. The little girl's love for the star has reached a state of obsession, and there is no reserve at all, which is completely inconsistent with the character traits of teenagers of the same age. Some teenagers are not satisfied with seeing the stars through television media, newspapers, and advertisements, and wait for a long time outside the concert venue in order to see the true face of the star they pursue, regardless of the wind and rain, and the scorching sun; some teenagers pay attention to the stars' personal quirks and believe in the gossip. Teenagers are too addicted to the entertainment industry, focusing their attention on pop music and stars, which will cause distortion of their outlook on life, worldview, and values, lack of responsibility, and from a long-term perspective, is not conducive to the growth of teenagers, nor to the progress and development of the entire nation. Some singers have not received professional training at all, but have benefited from hype, and have become popular among teenagers for a while, but they have not paid attention to their words and deeds because they have

become the focus, but have become more indulgent, leading teenagers who are easily influenced or in need of emotional venting astray.

Teenagers' blind idol chasing is also a reflection of the process of teenagers' physical and mental development. From the transition from ignorant children to adolescence, this period is a golden stage of rapid physical development, strong desire for knowledge, and great ambitions and ideals. They are in confusion about the future, wanting to get rid of childishness and want to be mature. It is these confused and contradictory psychological characteristics, coupled with the strong curiosity and desire for knowledge during the development period of teenagers, that make them show a strong ability to accept new things.

#### **4.3. The vocal style of rock music in pop is imitated unscientifically by teenagers**

Pop music is rich in form and diverse in style, with rock music being particularly known for its strong and heavy rhythm, aimed at venting inner emotions and releasing internal pressure. It is highly favored by teenagers who are under great pressure from studying, competition, and the pressure of entering higher education. The wild singing of rock music, combined with large movements of the body, resembles a kind of hysterical performance that easily attracts teenagers who need to vent their emotions, release internal pressure, and find ways to relax from mental stress. However, this kind of rock music vocal style, which is almost hysterical shouting, can easily damage the vocal cords of teenagers who are in their puberty and growth period. At this time, teenagers are in the voice change period, and vocal cord damage can cause irreparable physiological damage.

The reason why the rock vocal style of pop music, imitated unscientifically by teenagers, may cause harm to their vocal cords lies in: on the one hand, with the continuous development of pop music and the development of new electronic instruments, the expressiveness of pop music has become richer. These new elements have injected new vitality into pop music and greatly enhanced the attractiveness of pop music, even rock music, to teenagers. On the other hand, teenagers have enthusiasm for new things, a liking for adventure and curiosity, and a strong ability to imitate, most importantly, they lack the ability to judge and think rationally about problems, leading teenagers to be unable to correctly distinguish which type or kind of pop music is suitable for them to sing, and which type or kind of pop music is not suitable for them in their puberty and growth period. Many teenagers blindly pursue novelty and excitement, blindly learning rock music. In their hearts, hysterical shouting can bring pleasure, but if they cannot sing scientifically, it is very likely to cause damage to the vocal cords of teenagers.

### **5. How to deal with the negative impact of pop music on teenagers**

In response to the negative factors arising from the impact of pop music on teenagers, as music educators, we should guide them in a positive direction, take the right countermeasures, maximize the positive effects of pop music on teenagers, and correctly guide teenagers to establish the correct outlook on life and values, and minimize the negative effects of pop music on teenagers. Guide teenagers to correctly understand pop music and learn it properly.

#### **5.1. Guide teenagers to improve their discernment abilities**

Regarding the issue of vulgar appeal in pop music, although pop music is extremely commercialized, and due to its commercial nature, some songs have lyrics that are vulgar, negative, and of low taste. However, there are also pop songs with positive content and melodious styles. Although pop music is accurately referred to as "commercial music," some songs with higher ideological and artistic value do not belong to commercial music. These types of music not only have the characteristics of their own nation but also have a sense of the times. Therefore, we must educate and guide young students to improve their discernment abilities, correctly recognizing and distinguishing between vulgar pop music and excellent pop music.

This requires us to delve into the inner world of young students, understand their thoughts and views on pop music, and what kind of pop music they like. Based on the actual problems of young students, correctly guide them to learn and sing excellent pop music with ideological and artistic value, thereby strengthening the youth's own sense of social responsibility and learning to be grateful.

In response to the psychological characteristics of teenagers' desire to grow up and their curiosity, schools should pay more attention and guidance, such as organizing collective singing, campus singing

competitions, and other practical activities. These not only provide a stage for teenagers to showcase themselves and enrich campus cultural life but also improve teenagers' ability to discern excellent pop songs.

### **5.2. View the phenomenon of teenagers chasing stars dialectically**

On the issue of teenagers blindly chasing stars, we should view it dialectically. In fact, everyone needs to set an example to guide themselves during the growth process, and the blind worship of idols by teenagers also stems from the fact that their mentality is not fully mature in the early stages of growth. The existence of this phenomenon also reflects an important psychological growth process in the growth of teenagers. Star chasing is actually an objective fact that exists and cannot be changed. We should correctly and dialectically view the issue of chasing stars. We should objectively analyze the main reasons for the problem of teenagers chasing stars, understand the psychological changes and needs of teenagers, so as to guide them reasonably and effectively. In response to the current different perceptions of pop music among teenagers, we should not forcibly stop them, but should correctly guide teenagers to have the correct understanding of pop music. As music educators, we should strengthen and improve music education. Schools, as places where teenagers grow up, are bases for learning knowledge and culture and cultivating social and moral concepts. We should guide students to reject the negative impact of the bad culture brought by pop music and correctly identify the excellent cultural elements of pop music. On the other hand, idol worship also has its positive significance to a certain extent, which is conducive to the good behavior shaping of teenagers.

### **5.3. Guide teenagers to master scientific vocal techniques**

Regarding the issue that the imitation of rock vocal styles in pop music by teenagers may cause damage to their vocal cords, we should pay particular attention to teenagers who are in their puberty and growth period. We should not blindly restrict their freedom to develop an interest in pop music; instead, we should correctly guide them to use reasonable, scientific, and suitable singing techniques and methods. Teenagers are in a critical growth period, and we should guide them not to imitate pop music casually, especially some peculiar and special singing methods, especially those with strong explosiveness like rock music. If teenagers do not use scientific vocal techniques, they can easily cause significant damage to their vocal cords. At the same time, we must fully understand the characteristics of the physical and mental development changes during the voice change period of teenagers, and combine the laws of vocal changes during their voice change period to guide teenagers to learn and master scientific vocal techniques.

Encourage teenagers to learn and sing excellent folk or popular pop music. Popularize these excellent songs in school music classes so that they can be sung among students. This can not only improve the level of teenagers' music appreciation but also, since this type of singing is gentle and does not have strong explosiveness, it can protect the vocal cords of teenagers in the voice change period from damage, and at the same time, promote traditional Chinese culture.

In summary, with its widespread dissemination and advanced communication, pop music has gradually integrated into the daily life of teenagers and has become a part of their lives.

## **6. Conclusion**

The impact of pop music on teenagers has both advantages and disadvantages. We should not negate the positive aspects of pop music for teenagers just because there are some negative factors. We should view the positive and negative impacts of pop music on teenagers dialectically and rationally: on the one hand, we should encourage artistic, valuable, and excellent pop music, allowing teenagers who are under great pressure from studying, competition, and the pursuit of higher education to have a good space to relax, to pursue their own musical dreams, and to improve their musical literacy at the same time. On the other hand, we should correctly guide teenagers to establish the correct aesthetic view, cultivate their appreciation ability for pop music, enhance their level of musical appreciation, stay away from vulgar tastes, and maximize the positive factors of pop music for teenagers.

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