Music, Aggression and Vicarious Release: Interrogating the possibility of a relationship between music and aggressive behaviour

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ABSTRACT

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Music is considered to be one of the most engaging and emotive human experiences. It is believed that early music training can develop areas in the brain which are associated with reasoning and learning (Rauscher & Shaw, 1993). A number of studies also suggest that music influences behaviour. For example, Anderson and Bushman (2002) hold that exposure to violent song-texts and aggressive musical tones create aggressive personalities. On the other hand, such musical forms have also been associated with "vicarious release", that is, the depletion of anger through listening or creating music (Arnett, 1991).

Taking the above into account, this study aims at exploring whether there is a link between music and aggressive behaviour. It takes a look at how emotions such as anger, anxiety and angst can motivate music producers to write their own music which will ultimately promote their personal feelings. Moreover it observes how listening to different genres of music help in achieving a certain state of being. It explores the lifestyles related to these genres and how negative emotions such as anger or aggression are released through these styles of music.

A qualitative research approach, employing face-to-face semi-structured interviews was used for this study. This helped to achieve valuable data from the eleven research participants who were interviewed. Some of the results achieved sustained the literature whereas others contradicted it. For example, it was revealed that participants with a preference for heavy metal (a musical form associated with aggression, anti-social behaviour and even poor academic performance as claimed by Rubin, West and Mitchell 2001) do not feel isolated from society and perceive their preferred musical genre as creating bonds of brotherhood and friendship and impacting their lives positively. On a more general level, all the research participants claimed that music has a cathartic effect in their lives and helps to express a variety of emotions, including anger (often in a controlled way) and sadness. Participants claimed to listen to music that reflects their moods and which helps them to cope with life's challenges and situations they are being confronted with.

B.A (Hons) in Criminology degree
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DECLARATION

This work has not been presented previously either wholly or in part for any other degree and is not being currently submitted for any other degree.

Signed ———————————————— Signed ————————————————
          Student   *Tutor*

Date ———————————————— Date ————————————————

STATEMENT 1

This dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by in text citations giving explicit reference. A bibliography is appended.

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Dedicated to St.Monica School Birkirkara

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 Background and Research Agenda

This dissertation seeks to analyse the possibility of a relationship between music and aggression. A number of studies focus on how this medium can actually influence behaviour (Sloboda, O'Neil & Ivaldi, 2001; North, Hargreaves & Hargreaves, 2004). In other words, it addresses whether listening to music as well as paying attention to the lyrics might generate or spread aggressive thoughts or attitudes. This concept is referred to as 'vicarious release'. This terminology was studied by various researchers such as Arnett (1991) and Bell (2009).The latter explains the cathartic effect that music may have in releasing an individual from feelings of anger and aggression.

This study also focuses on whether anger or aggression related feelings can be the source of motivation for music producers to write their own music. In fact, it seeks to discuss the role that anger and aggression might have in both the creation and production of music. This dissertation focuses on different genres of music ranging from classical, hip-hop, dance to heavy metal music.

For many, music is generally used simply as background while accomplishing daily tasks but for a section of the population, music means much more than the latter. For a number of artists who are directly involved in music, it is the source of their contentment and a way of releasing their anxieties (Chlan, 2011). Further to this, some artists clearly state that music is just like the air they breathe; they cannot live without it. It is the medium through which they release their joys, sorrows, pain or anger (Bushman, 2002).

The participants involved in this study do not listen to music casually. They are individuals who are directly involved with music. Music is a constant part of their lives. This study seeks to understand whether different genres of music can have different effects on an individual. Correlation studies proposed a link between music genre and the different maladaptive behaviours and attitudes (Rubin, West & Mitchell, 2001). The participants chosen for this study pertained to different music backgrounds so that this area of study could be thoroughly examined.

1.2 Scope of Study and Motivations

The aim of this study is to examine whether music can trigger aggressive thoughts and behaviour and whether such behaviour can drive a person to write, compose or perform aggressive music. I find this research to be important because music is generally known as

being a medium which injects positive energy and which in fact is able to heal traumas as well as disabilities (Aigen, 1990). Having said that however, music has also been correlated to aggression (Bushman, 2002) as well as violence (Smitherman, 1997). Therefore the scope of this study is to determine what role music plays in the lives of the participants along these two contradicting lines mentioned earlier.

I am personally involved within the local music scene since I am a vocalist who aspires to achieve success as an artist within the music scene. Music is therefore an integral part of my life with a passion for soul music. As a researcher, I wanted to link a vital factor in my life which is music with my area of study being Criminology.

1.3 Methods

The approach which best suited my research questions was the qualitative approach. This research approach helped me in explaining 'why?' certain behaviour takes place as well as 'how?'. Moreover the qualitative approach aimed at amplifying the knowledge about why things are the way they are in our societies and why people behave the way they do (Atkinson, 1997). The instrument I used to gather information was by conducting semi-structured interviews to the participants which were purposively chosen. These one-to-one interviews helped me in obtaining first-hand experiences as well as views regarding music and its potential link to anger or aggression. While carrying out these interviews, I had access to the participants' feelings, emotions as well as motivations which drive them to create, produce, and perform music. An interview guide was also used while conducting the interviews.

Once all the interviews were finalised and all the necessary data was gathered, thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) was applied to elicit the themes which emerged from the interviews. Once these themes were established, it was helpful to discuss the findings derived from the interviews conducted to the participants. This approach helped me in reviewing, identifying as well as coding repeating themes which was found in the data given by the participants.

1.4 Organisation of work

Therefore, Chapter 1 of this study defines and presents the aims of the dissertation as well as the research questions that shall be examined. Chapter 2 includes the literature review which is structured in various parts. The first part of this review gives a general explanation about media aggression theory and how music forms part of this evolving

theory. It then shifts in explaining how music influences people and information is also given about the difference between anger and aggression which are two of the most important emotions which were studied in this dissertation. Further, the literature review delves into music preference and how different styles of music affect behaviour. Finally, a closer look is given to the term 'vicarious release' and how such release is related to music.

Chapter 3 explains the research approach and method used in this study. This chapter also provides extensive detail on research procedure that may aid other researchers who would wish to replicate this study in the future as recommended by Dooley (1995). The penultimate chapter presents an interpretation of the findings which were obtained from the interviews. The final chapter analyses the salient points of this study and offers reflections on the implications and recommendations for future related studies.

1.5 Conclusion

This dissertation shall hopefully bring some interesting insights on certain factors which were scarcely studied. This study is not without its limitations nonetheless, the researcher hopes to give a contribution to the criminological world by looking at how such a medium as music is related to aggressive and hostile behaviour. By addressing this research topic, the author also hopes to encourage other researchers to explore further relationships between music and other vital issues.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

This chapter provides a literature review of the role and importance of music and how this role can influence certain behaviour. Moreover, it reviews the term 'vicarious release' as well as the Catharsis Theory originally used by Aristotle to define tragedy in the Poetics. It focuses on the term 'aggression' and how this is related to music. Further on, this review will take a look at lyrical content and how this might affect behaviour.

2.1 Media Aggression

The power of television, films, the Internet as well as music in everyone's lives is abundant and in recent years, media and government authorities expressed their concern about the great amount of aggression, violence, and antagonism our minds are absorbing from our television sets, computers and iPods. The effect of exposure to aggression transmitted by media has a harmful effect on humans. The Internet has provided access to violent content that in the past was not easily available such as snuff movies. A number of researchers point to the fact that aggression in media has become a social problem. Media aggression has become a very important element of our entertainment. Sociologists have also shown that there are several links between media aggression and aggression happening in our lives (Anderson,Berkowitz, Donnerstein, Huesmann, Johnson, Linz, Malamuth, and Wartella, 2003).

An interest about the negative effects of exposing oneself to violence in television programmes materialized after broadcasting commenced in 1946. A few years later, the U.S. Surgeon General stated that violent programmes may impact the behaviour of certain individuals within society (Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behaviour, 1972). Recently, six established professional bodies in the United States, such as the American Psychological Association, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and the American Medical Association concluded that "the data point overwhelmingly to a causal connection between media and violence and aggressive behaviour in some children". (American Academy of Paediatrics, 2000, pp.1). Moreover, Johnson and his colleagues presented a report saying that there is enough evidence which shows that lengthy television viewing amongst adolescents as well as young adults can indeed trigger aggressive actions. (Johnson, Cohen, Smailes, Kasen, Brook, 2002).

With the establishment of the Parents' Music Resource Centre as well as the action of putting a label on music products which contain violent citations shows, that society is

accepting or acknowledging the idea that aggressive media can in some way influence its followers. This hypothesis is supported by a scientific research conducted by various aggressive researchers using a triangulation strategy (Bushman & Anderson, 2002).

2.2 Music and its influence

"Music may communicate meanings which refer to the extra musical world of concepts, actions, emotional states and character" (Meyer, 1956).

Music is a strong socialization authority which defines and illustrates people's lives especially the lives of the younger generation (Bennett, 2001). This type of medium suggests authentic and appropriate responses to every day decisions, complications and opportunities which society at large face. As seen through the eyes of many, music helps in giving a definition to life, behavioural norms, values, as well as attitudes and social and gender roles (Sciberras, 2010).

North, Hargreaves and Hargreaves (2004) as well as Sloboda, O'Neil and Ivaldi (2001) came up with quantitative evidence which suggested that people listen to music to reach certain goals in their lives. Music is used during recreational activities or simply to pass the time, but others give a higher meaning to music. Their use of music is based on achieving a certain mood or state of being or to amplify their interpersonal interactions. These are the reasons why psychologists have found the need to study the applied psychology of music. (North & Hargreaves, 2009)

Many of the arguments regarding the effects that media has on society especially on youth, twists around television but in reality this debate can be revolved around music since it is so present in everyone's lives. Roberts and Henriksen (1990) carried out a survey asking junior and senior students attending high school in northern California to choose a type of media which they would take if they were to be left stranded on a desert island. The media choices that they had to choose from were books, video games, a television set, computer, newspapers, videotapes, radio, magazines and music recordings. They could list three preferences from these choices. When the results of the survey were compared, music media being radio and recordings were listed as first preference above television which placed second. The preference towards music media increased with age reaching an 80 percent of the total by eleventh grade. (Roberts, Christenson & Gentile, 2003)

Music's importance to society can also be measured by taking a look at the hours spent listening to it. With the fast growing industry of technology, music can be accessed

anytime, anywhere therefore it makes it easier to spend a number of hours listening to it. In a study about media and its effects on youths, it was found that 600 eighth and ninth graders attending private or public schools in Minnesota, listened to approximately 21 hours of music per week. This was compared to the 25 hours of television per week. (Gentile, Lynch, Linder, & Walsh, 2004). It may be the case that such studies underestimate the amount of time people spend listening to music. This might be because music is often used in the background while studying, driving, eating and reading. With this in mind, one might conclude that exposure to music is even higher to that of television (Roberts et al., 2003).

With researchers suggesting that the average adolescent absorbs more than 10,000 hours listening to music (Christenson & Roberts, 1998), one might discuss whether all this consumption of music has its effects. Popular music research has outlined the effects on "schoolwork, social interactions, mood and affect, and particularly behaviour" (Council on Communications and Media, 2009, pp.1488).

Lyrical content is becoming increasingly explicit with direct references to alcohol, drugs, sex as well as violence and aggression. These references are more noticeable in certain types of genres. According to the Council on Communications and Media 2009, research has stated that such assailing and crude portrayals in today's music can actually have a direct effect on the listeners especially young followers. Other studies have argued that it is not the music which makes them react differently but it is their psychological tendencies which attract them towards such musical content (Roberts et al., 2003). This will be further discussed at a later stage.

2.3 Anger and Aggression

There have been a number of attempts to try and give the term 'aggression' one meaning. By 1983, more than 250 definitions were found in the psychological literature according to Harré and Lamb (1983). After such attempts, psychologists have reached a consensus regarding its definition.

"Human aggression is behaviour performed by one person (the aggressor) with the intent of harming another person (the victim) who is believed by the aggressor to be motivated to avoid that harm. 'Harm' includes direct physical harm (e.g., a punch to the jaw), direct psychological harm (e.g., verbal insults), and indirect harm (e.g., destroying the victim's property)" (Anderson, 2000, pp.163).

Many have tried to understand the reasons behind the causes of aggression. These causes have been divided into two different levels being the Proximate Causes and the Distal Causes. The former causes reflect the ways in which people react differently towards situations. Some people are found to be more readily aggressive than others and this attitude depends on various factors. One of the main factors causing such behaviour is the attitudes and beliefs which people hold. Some people actually believe that the only solution to change the circumstances is by being aggressive. Others may be more easily provoked and therefore opt to aggression. Gender also plays an important role within proximate causes. Males tend to act in a more hostile and aggressive manner than females. Hormones, the level of testosterone and other biological conditions also have a direct effect towards aggressive behaviour. According to Eysenck and Gudjonsson (1989), those individuals who have a nervous system which is insensitive to low levels of environment stimulation, tend to look for high-risk activities in order to accumulate their arousal. Such activities can also include criminal actions. Alcohol and drugs as well as heat also contribute to such offensive behaviour. Studies have shown that cities which have higher temperature than others have higher crime rates than cities with cooler temperatures (Anderson, 2000).

Aggression is commonly thought to be a behavioural strategy that usually harms or hurts others involved. Having said that, however, aggression can differ in a number of ways since it relies on the intentions of the aggressor and the occasion which triggers an aggressive reaction. "Aggression is commonly viewed as being proactive or reactive; overt or covert; or physical, verbal, or relational" (Werner & Crick, 2004, pp. 15). Proactive and reactive kinds of aggression are the ones which generate most attention. Proactive aggression is when aggressive behaviour is used to achieve a particular goal. The goals can either be materialistic goals or social goals. Contrary to proactive, reactive aggression is when a person reacts negatively to a threat and becomes easily bothered and irritated (Lochman, Powell, Clanton, & McElroy, 2006).

Aggression cues can also trigger aggressive behaviour. These cues have to do with any event or object which can be associated with aggression which in turn triggers aggression-related thoughts and feelings. An example can be given by using the image of a gun. This object is directly associated with aggression therefore by seeing a picture of a weapon he or she might be provoked to act in an aggressive manner. Leonard Berkowitz and Anthony Lepage (1967) were the first to report the "weapons effect". Recent studies about this effect have also concluded that by having a mere look at a weapon or reading a weapon word, it instantly prompts aggressive reasoning (Anderson, 2000).

Distal Causes is the other category in which aggression is divided. In this case, learning is the most important factor which contributes to such behaviour. This is linked to Albert Bandura's social learning theory of aggression (1973) in which he discusses that "learning processes determine how people perceive, interpret, judge and respond to events in their lives." (Anderson, 2000, pp. 166)

Literature by Leonard Berkowitz (1993) and Russell Geen (1991) suggest that cognitive psychology has been pivotal in the understanding of aggressive behaviour. Researchers such as Patterson, De Baryshe and Ramsey (1990) gave an analytical report about the poor social learning processes which take place in families of aggressive children. "Among the problems is parental use of poor disciplinary measures and inadequate monitoring of their children's activities" (Peterson, Gable, Doyle, & Ewugman, 1997, pp.274).

Distal causes also include the environment in which a person is grown into. Certain social environments may support aggressive personalities. Realities such as poverty, violent neighbourhoods, exposure to media violence and absence of social support can all contribute to increased violent behaviour. Child abuse can also form part of the causes of later aggression. Children who are abused by their parents might grow to become abusive parents themselves (Anderson, 2000).

What has been discussed until now can be linked to aggression in media. In September 2000, in a report conducted by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) affirmed that "the movie, video game, and music industries aggressively market to underage youths violent products that carry adult ratings" (pp.2). This statement may sound outrageous to some but it is no secret that the intensity and amount of aggression in today's media has expanded. Social psychologist Leonard Eron (1994) testified before a U.S. Senate subcommittee that a typical American child would have viewed 8,000 murders and more than 100,000 different acts of aggression or brutality by the end of their primary education.

The question which has raised awareness is whether watching aggressive acts on television at an early age, would result in later aggression – related problems. In other words, is media violence long term? One study which took 22 years to complete shows that eight-year-old boys who were exposed to aggressive media portrayed aggressive behaviour at age thirty. This behaviour included self-reported aggression as well as criminal arrests. This was independent of intelligence, social class and parenting variables (Huesmann, & Eron, 1984; Huesmann, 1994).

In 1986, Rowell Huesmann and Leonard Eron conducted a thorough cross-cultural study. They worked with different researchers around the world to take a deeper look at the relationship between televised violence and aggressive behaviour amongst children. This study examined five countries being Australia, Israel, Finland, Portland and the United States. Evidence of a relation between early exposure to media violence and later aggression was found in the last three countries which were mentioned and in urban areas in Israel. No such relationship was detected in children living on kibbutzim in Israel and in Australia. According to the researchers, the reason behind not finding any link is because these children watch very little to none violent television. If they do watch such media, this is likely to be followed by a discussion about the connotations of aggression and violence (Brehm & Kassin, 1993).

According to Lazarus (1991), anger is when an individual responds to a threat or an apprehension of a threat against a person or a group of persons. The threats being referred to in this section which bring about an anger response range from physical to psychological threats. An anger response can also be triggered when a person's dignity or ego is threatened. Hostility and cynicism are factors that could cause anger. Such cognitive elements can be derived from the recognition of certain justices (Martin, Watson, & Wan, 2000). Anger occurs when an individual is provoked and his cognitive awareness reaches its peak therefore this triggers him/her to take action against his/her threat (Goleman, 1995). The emotion of anger is quite hard to control since it is a deep psychological reaction which serves as a response to the action which triggers it. It involves a fight or flight response. The former type of response is one which is generated naturally by the body to safeguard itself from the intense occurrence (Lazarus, 1991). When the anger response gets out of control it is usually linked with aggression since it involves the externalizing of behaviour issues (Lochman et al., 2006). Dr. Robert Sternberg's theory of anger is constituted of three components. Anger is first triggered by avoiding people whom we don't like therefore this leads us in having lack of communication to be able to understand the other person. Without the ability to communicate with our enemies, we wouldn't have the possibility to fully understand their actions. The second part of the anger theory according to Sternberg is the frantic anger and disrespect towards the enemy. Such feelings are "conditioned responses which our brain doesn't check for accuracy" (Tucker-Ladd, 2004, pp.43). The final part is a belief system which triggers anger even further and it justifies our actions of avoiding, condemning and ruining our enemy.

2.4 Anger and aggression in music

Long term or short term aggression can also be detected within the music sphere. GAM (General Aggression Model) shows that exposure to aggressive music or music with aggressive lyrics can have short term or long term effects in aggressive behaviour. "In both contexts, violent lyrics are more likely to operate through both the affect and cognition routes, influencing appraisals of the situation and emotional state and (eventually) the behavioural decision" (Anderson, Carnagey & Eubanks, 2003, pp.969).

Aggressive songs can influence on-going social interactions and relationships since they are handled with an aggressive tone. Such behaviour can therefore provoke an aggressive response which could be either verbal or physical. In the case of long term effects, they are handled in much the same way "except that the proximate source of the high accessibility of aggressive cognitions and affects is the chronic state of the individual rather than a very recently heard violent song" (Anderson et al. 2003, pp.969).
An on-going exposure to violent song texts or aggressive tones may provide a path towards an aggressive lifestyle (Anderson & Bushman, 2002).

There may also be indirect effects. Short term effects caused by aggressive music, not only influences the person itself but they influence the social environment as well. People who are close to the person such as friends, family or peers are affected by this personality therefore they start to back away. These relationships start to slowly decay leaving the person alone. " In other words, repeated short-term media violence effects (lyrics, TV, movies, video games) can indirectly create a more hostile social environment, which further promotes the development of chronic hostility biases in the person's internal makeup-their perceptual and social script and schemata and related knowledge structure-in short, their personality" (Anderson et al. 2003, pp.969).

Music impacts people in different ways. One of the biggest differences between popular music and other types of media is that music has the competence to build up or alter mood. Roe (1985) studied the reasons why adolescents listen to music. He gave Swedish adolescents a few possible factors for listening to music and they had to mark which one applied to them. Three general tendencies were affirmed with the factor analyses. These were 'atmosphere creation and mood control ', 'silence-filling and passing time and 'attention to lyrics' (Roberts et al., 2003, pp. 156). Of these three reasons, 'atmosphere creation and mood control' came out to be as the most significant. In order to summarize this study, Christenson & Roberts (1998, p.48) proposed a principle they named 'the

primacy of affect'. The drive to listen to music comes from the need to control mood and enhance an emotional state. The ability that music has to transfer emotion and mood has been widely observed. It has been studied that even infants and pre-schoolers are capable to make a distinction between 'happy' and 'sad' music (Gentile, Pick, Flam & Campos, 1994; Sullivan, Gentile, & Pick, 1998).

"Because of the affective efficacy of music, when adolescents want to be in a certain mood, when they seek reinforcement for a certain mood, when they feel lonely, or when they seek distraction from their troubles, music tends to be the medium of choice to accomplish the task" (Roberts et al., 2003 pp. 156).

Correlation studies proposed a link between the music genre people follow and the different unsocial behaviours. It was found that students from college who had a major preference for heavy metal and rap music were seen to display more hostile and alien behaviour than those students who listened to other kinds of music such as alternative rock, dance, country or soul music (Rubin, West & Mitchell; 2001). Heavy metal music listeners portrayed more hostility towards women and listeners to rap music were found to be more cynical (Anderson et al. 2003).

On a similar note, Took and Weiss (1994) discovered a link between rap and heavy metal music and poor school performance, use of drugs, sexual activity and behaviour problems at school. In her dissertation about 'A profile of the influence of rock music on today's Maltese youth culture', Vassallo (2004) asked her participants whether they thought that different music genres had different impacts. Most of her participants argued that the impact or influence of the music industry varied according to the type of genre. Different genres of music portrayed different vibes and meanings. Some of the participants believed that rock is linked with socio-political problems. Rock music as well as rap were seen to be as the kind of music which enables a person to speak his mind. In contrast to this, dance music was associated with fun and pleasure. This genre helped in exerting energy.

It is good to note that most of the studies which tackle the relationship between music and aggressive behaviour place a particular emphasis on heavy metal and hard rock music. This is not only due to the on-going public controversy about the possible effects these genres have on behaviour, but also because these kinds of music have a high-sensation quality which distinguishes them from other kinds (Arnett, 1992). The major characteristics of heavy metal and hard rock music rely on the heavily wry sound coming from electric guitars, striking rhythms and screaming vocals. The difference between these two types of

genres relies on the themes. Hard rock music is usually sexual and hedonistic and heavy metal portrays a sense of despair (Arnett, 1991).

Correlation studies have reported a direct relationship between listening to heavy and hard rock music and a mixture of problematic behaviour. School problems are included in such behaviour because heavy music fans are reported to have more conflicts with school authorities and their academic performance is very weak (Christenson & van Nouhuys, 1995; Hakanen & Wells, 1993). According to Martin, Clarke and Pearce (1993), such fans tend to grow distant from their families and go through a lot of tension with their parents. Those parents who let their children have it their own way, are those who describe their relationship with their children as satisfactory (Arnett, 1991).

Having said that, there is no sufficient evidence that shows that followers of both heavy metal and hard rock music perceive themselves as being isolated from society. They are pleased with their peer relationships as much as nonfans of such music are (Arnett, 1991). In association to this, researchers discovered that people prefer tougher forms of music to come to terms with their values, emotions, conflicts as well as developmental issues (Took and Weiss, 1994).

Jeffrey Arnett introduced a theory regarding reckless behaviour within youths in which sensation seeking is of paramount importance (Arnett, 1991). The hunt for high sensation and adrenaline is considered to be one of the main reasons why these young people exhibit such behaviour and attitudes (Levine & Kozak, 1979). Situations which involve high sensations might frighten or alarm adults but such experiences attract and appeal many of the youths (Zuckerman, Eysenck, & Eysenck, 1978).

When such statements are associated with heavy music, it is expected that followers of such genres of music undergo greater levels of sensation seeking and perform risky behaviour when compared to other people who prefer other types of music (Arnett, 1992). Some theories suggest that there's a positive link between listening to heavy music and reckless behaviour but other theories state that such music does not cause irresponsible behaviour "because high sensation is part of the allure of both hard rock/heavy metal music and reckless behaviour" (Arnett, 1992, pp.315).

Arnett studied and tested the hypothesis of whether there is a direct link between a type of music preference and reckless behaviour. He studied 248 10th and 12th grade students in a southern metropolitan area in the Unites States. They were given a questionnaire on musical preference and a survey to fill out. The results obtained were quite clear. Those

students who preferred heavy metal or hard rock had a higher tendency of engaging in reckless behaviour such as driving under the influence of alcohol, unprotected sex and drug use. When heavy metal fans were compared to hard rock followers it was found that the former were involved in higher rates of shoplifting and promiscuity (Arnett, 1992).

Research other than that of Arnett also found a relationship between risky behaviour and heavy music (Martin, Clarke & Pearce, 1993). According to Wass, Miller & Reditt (1991), youths who are found in juvenile detention centres were three times as likely to be heavy music fans when they were still attending high school.

Does all this suggest that there is a direct positive link between listening to heavy metal or hard rock music and reckless behaviour? According to Arnett (1992), the results concluded from his study propose that those who prefer listening to hard rock or heavy metal music tend to be linked with careless behaviour. He adds that even though the conclusions are quite clear, this does not mean that listening to such music will cause people to engage in such behaviour. He continued by saying that reckless behaviour as well as heavy music are found to be appealing to those who are inclined towards sensation seeking.

Arnett (1992, pp.327) supports his theory by saying that "the relation between reckless behaviour and preferences for hard rock or heavy metal music is mediated by sensation seeking".
According to the Sensation Seeking Scale which Arnett used in his study, those who preferred hard rock or heavy metal music experienced higher levels of sensation seeking. Sensation seeking was linked to unprotected sex, driving under the influence of alcohol, drug use, vandalism and theft from shops. This link was reached in the regression analyses.

Other studies suggest that there is no such thing as a "heavy metal syndrome" but more of a "troubled youth syndrome". Exposure to such music doesn't gather all the risk factors with which this genre is associated. "The best way to phrase the relation is to say that white adolescents who are troubled or at risk gravitate strongly toward the style of music that provides the most support for their view of the world and meets their particular needs: namely, heavy metal" (Roberts et al. 2003, pp.162).

The majority of the young generation are not drug addicts, they are not in juvenile detention centres or in jails, they succeed in school and do not suffer from depression. If

we look at this statement from an opposite angle, if we have a fifteen year old white male who takes drugs and doesn't abide by the law, then the probability is that his choice of music is hard rock or heavy metal (Roberts et al. 2003).

This study also suggests that even though no such thing as a "heavy metal syndrome" exists, we still have to think that this type of music plays a very deep and important role in the lives of its followers. It is known that fans of heavy metal are very devoted and committed to their music (Roberts et al. 2003).

Those who form part of the heavy metal scene live a certain lifestyle which is affected by the music they listen to (Wass, Miller, & Stevenson, 1989). Heavy metal followers have a tendency to identify themselves with their favourite performer as well as express lyrics which are essential to their lives. Moreover, they look deeper into the lyrics than followers of different genres (Roberts et al. 2003).

The most important question might not be whether there is a direct relationship between heavy music and reckless behaviour but "whether music with antisocial themes affects children who are already at risk for antisocial behaviours" (Roberts et al. 2003, pp.162). We do not have to evaluate the idea of whether or not music started the cycle towards an irresponsible lifestyle, but we should focus on whether the themes found within the music aid such a career. This means that the music may strengthen aggressive and unruly behaviour as well as thoughts and feelings. Heavy metal and hard rock music or any other kinds of music with aggressive tonality and violent lyrical content may be seen as a risk factor clearly influencing those who are already at risk.

2.5 Vicarious Release and Catharsis

'Catharsis' is obtained from Greek literature. It is interpreted as 'purification' or 'cleansing'. Definitions which are given to catharsis highlight two important factors. These mainly focus on the emotional form and the cognitive aspect of catharsis. The former component of catharsis deals with poignant emotional expression and processing whereas the latter component deals with the understanding of new realizations and the unconsciousness becoming consciousness. If catharsis is seen from this perspective then it is quite a positive approach but some studies prove otherwise. This will be discussed further.

This concept was first defined by Aristotle and he explained catharsis by saying that it is the "purging of the spirit of morbid and base ideas or emotions by witnessing the playing out of such emotions or ideas on stage" (Aristotle, 2001, pp.1458). Schultz and Schultz (2004, pp.506) defined catharsis from a psychodynamic point of view and described it as "the process of reducing or eliminating a complex by recalling it to conscious awareness and allowing it to be expressed". In conjunction to this, the American Psychological Association (2007, pp.153) has also identified catharsis through the psychodynamic theory. It states that catharsis is "the discharge of affects connected to traumatic events that had previously been repressed by bringing these events back into consciousness and re-experiencing them".

Aristotle explained catharsis theory through the medical and psychological domain. In his dramatic theory "Poetics", he defined catharsis as an emotional relief and purification that the spectators sense while they are watching and after they have watched a tragedy. This, he explains, has a therapeutic influence (Aristotle, 2001). He also emphasised that cathartic influence on people can occur through music as well. In his work of political philosophy called "Politics" he stated that: "All experience a certain purge [catharsis] and pleasant relief…cathartic melodies give innocent joy to men" (Aristotle, 2001, pp. 1131).

Moral and ethical reasoning is highlighted in Aristotle's definition of catharsis theory. He affirms that catharsis helps in soothing out passions and extreme emotions which in turn leads the individual to balance his or her heart. This theory brought about solace from agitation such as angst. Moreover, Aristotle believed that the purging of emotions while observing a tragedy helped to re-establish peace within and it therefore created a prudent man (Aristotle, 2001).

If we had to take a look at the importance catharsis theory has nowadays we find that the idea of venting anger has become popular in our world. People are inspired to shake off their anger and 'let off their steam' through different media sources such as films, articles on magazines as well as on billboards. An example of this can be seen in the film 'Analyze This'. A psychiatrist played by Billy Crystal tells his New York gangster patient, "You know what I do when I'm angry? I hit a pillow. Try that." The patient pulls out a gun from his pockets and fires several bullets into the pillow which was placed on the couch. After, the psychiatrist asks him "Feel better?" and he replies "Yeah, I do." (Bushman, 2002, pp.724)

It is not necessarily the case that we grab a gun and fire some shots into a pillow to release our anger but some people do have their own ways which helps them in letting go of their repulsive feelings. An example might be that some people tend to listen to certain type of music with specific sounds or a song which has a particular meaning in its lyrics. They associate their feelings with the song and therefore vent their feelings in this manner until they find a type of balance. This type of reasoning doesn't mean that it is completely correct (Bushman, 2002).

Reasoning such as that of Aristotle (2001), Freud and Breuer (1974) suggest that by releasing the anger within one's system it will automatically decrease aggressive behaviour since people feel less angry. Scientific tests of catharsis theory carried out by a number of psychological researchers concluded otherwise. In 1959, Hornberger conducted an experiment on this subject. This was one of the earliest experiments being conducted on catharsis theory. His participants were first insulted by a confederate. Half of the participants pounded nails for ten minutes after they had received the insult. This exercise resembled a type of 'venting' procedure. The other half didn't pound nails. After this activity, all the participants had to criticize the confederate who affronted them. The participants who were pounding nails were much more adverse towards the confederate than those who did nothing. If catharsis theory is true, the results would have been shifted (Bushman, 2002).

Psychological researchers Geen and Quanty (1977) concluded that catharsis doesn't really work. They stated that there is no such thing as feeling better after releasing anger but one actually feels much more aggressive after such release. Recent studies by Bushman, Baumeister & Stack (1999) also came to the same conclusion.

In relation to this theory, cognitive neo-association theory (Berkowitz, 1993) suggests that aggressive thinking is associated directly to memory. In this case, an associative network is formed. It continues by explaining that "Once an aggressive thought is processed or stimulated, activation spreads out along the network links and primes or activates associated thoughts as well" (Bushman, 2002, pp.725).
So these negative thoughts are not only linked to memory but they correspond with the emotional reactions and action customs (Bower, 1981; Lang, 1979). In simple terms this means that once aggressive thoughts are triggered, these thoughts give rise to associations such as aggressive actions, ideas and violent emotions.

This theory emphasizes the opposite of what catharsis theory believes. Cognitive neoassociation theory concludes that venting anger doesn't decrease aggressive behaviour but it increases it rapidly. This statement is supported by the fact that releasing hostile feelings involve behaving in an aggressive way such as hitting objects, kicking trash bins, screaming and swearing as well as listening to aggressive music. These activities instigate aggressive thoughts and therefore venting doesn't remove such feelings but it keeps them alive in our memory (Bushman, 2002).

These theories and ideas can be linked to music. Researchers such as Arnett (1991) examined that those youths who choose heavy metal as their music preference tend to listen to it when they feel most angry. Such music can have a soothing and calming effect and it helps in depleting their anger. This is a type of vicarious release since the person is transferring its feelings and emotions into a medium. In this case, the medium is music itself. When comparing to other genres of music, heavy metal or hard rock are found to be the best type of music which helps in purging out anger due to its aggressive and angry sound (Arnett, 1991).

Studies have also shown that adolescents use specified regulatory strategies which adjust to their moods as well as their current emotions. They do this by listening to "mood-congruent music" which helps them in finding their "solace and comfort". When it comes to aggressive feelings and anger, adolescents opt to listen to angry and aggressive music as previously discussed. On the other hand young individuals listen to happy music when they want to sustain a positive atmosphere or when they wish to divert their thoughts from trouble (Behne, 1997).

Neuroscientists believe that when an individual constantly dwells on his/her feelings, those feelings are deepened. Instead of lifting one's emotional state, it digs it deeper (Goleman, 1995). It isn't a good idea to listen to depressing and futile music because by doing so, one would immerse him/herself in a desperate state of being (Roberts et al. 2003).

Therefore is it a misconception to think that listening to aggressive music while feeling angry will help you calm down and control your moods? If we look at it from perspective of the catharsis theory one might agree but if we look at it from the cognitive neoassociation theory perspective, then we might think otherwise.

2.6 Music Lyrics

It is a known fact that lyrical content has become much more direct and explicit over time. Constant reference is being made to sex, drugs as well as violence and aggression (Knobloch-Westerwick, Musto, Shaw, 1993). In 1999, the National Institute on Media carried out a content analysis of the top 10 CDs and it was found that these CDs had at least one song with sexual song text. Heavy metal, rock, and rap are overloaded with lyrics relating to death, homicide, suicide, drugs as well as promiscuity. For example rap music has been associated with topics such as aggression, violence, racism, homophobia and aggression towards women. The use of drugs, tobacco and alcohol are recurring themes found in the lyrics of such music (Reddick, Beresin, 2002).

Lyrical content has not been given that much attention. Some studies suggest that lyrics can effect aggression in a direct way but others concluded that there is no such relationship. It has been discussed that music is used entertainment activities therefore minor attention is given to the lyrics. Some have also stated that "understanding tends to be limited and related to the experiences lived by the listener" (Sousou, 1997, pp.33). One study suggested that 17% of male adolescents and 25% of female youths like songs which have lyrics reflecting how they are feeling at the moment. In the same study it was concluded that the greater the importance given to music, the greater the attention is given to the lyrics (Christenson & Roberts, 1998). In conjunction, Knobloch-Westerwick et al (1993) said that even though many listeners do not fully understand the details being discussed in the song, they still understand enough to get a general picture of what kind of message the song is giving.

According to Ballard & Coates (1995), there are no aggression-related effects caused by lyrical content. This statement has been concluded from their study where their participants heard songs differing in genre and lyrical content. The lyrics had no effect on the participants' mood or anger measurements. In contrast to this study, Wester, Crown, Quatman, and Heesacker (1997) declared having mixed results at the end of their study. The participants who were male listened to songs with "(a) sexually violent music and lyrics, (b) the same music without lyrics, (c) sexually violent lyrics without music, or (d) no music or lyrics" (Anderson & Carnagey, 2003, pp. 961) . Those participants who listened to violent lyrics portrayed hostile feelings towards their relationships with women.

A number of studies discussed that people in general do not listen to music because of the lyrics. They like music because of its "sound" and not because they like the themes of the songs. However, Roe (1985) stated that lyrics are very relevant to the listener. They are the source of primary gratification to most of the adolescents and a secondary gratification to people in general. Rouner (1990) conducted a study where he asked students attending high school to rate music against other basis of moral advice. These sources included the family, teachers and peers. Sixteen percent of the students ranked music amongst the top three. This gives an indication that "lyrics are often attended to, processed, discussed, memorized, and even taken to heart" (Roberts et al. 2003, pp.159).

Studies referring to heavy metal and rap music in particular have found that fans of such genres show a higher interest level in the lyrics than followers of other music genres (Arnett, 1991; Kuwahara, 1992). As it was previously discussed, these genres are heavily loaded with antisocial themes. Research carried out by Arnett in 1992 shows that girls who have a preference for heavy metal music suffer from more low self-esteem than other girls. A link might be present with such results and the lyrics found in such music. Hard rock and heavy metal songs discuss themes such as sexual exploitation of women, violence and denigration. It isn't wise to say that the music 'caused' the girls to suffer from low self-esteem but girls with low self-esteem are much more allured towards this kind of music. From such studies, two important issues are derived. The first issue is related to the fact that the more important music is to the listener, the more attention is given to lyrics and the second issue is that fans of controversial music such as heavy metal give an even higher importance to the words. "In other words, the more defiant, alienated, and threatening to the mainstream a music type is, the more closely its fans follow the words" (Christenson & Roberts, 1998, pp.48).

In 1991 St.Lawrence and Joyner carried a study which stated that music can have its subtle effects. They tested whether sexually violent music such as heavy metal would increase acceptance of sexually violent behaviour or recognition of gender-role stereotypes. The participants who were undergraduate males were exposed to "(a) sexually violent heavy metal rock, (b) Christian heavy metal rock or (c) classical music" (Tropeano, 2006, pp.31). The participants carried out a questionnaire a month before the study and another one immediately after they had heard the songs. This questionnaire measured gender-role stereotyping, hostile sexual beliefs, interpersonal violence, acceptance of rape and self-reported sexual arousal. The results were surprising. Listening to sexually violent music or

Christian heavy metal didn't make a difference. The music produced a more hostile behaviour towards women when related to classical music. This means that the lyrics didn't make an actual effect but the type of music did. "While this is reason to wonder whether the students really "heard" the lyrics, the larger issue may be that the sound of the music carries a great deal of information independent of lyrical content" (Roberts et al, 2003, pp.163).

2.7 Conclusion

The majority of the people believe or assume that the effects produced by the media and music are equivalent with the concept of "massive and uniform" effects (Roberts et al, 2003, pp.160). This means that if the media is truly effective, this would be observed by showing that the media projects the same influence on a large number of people. Having said that, the academic literature does not wholly support this idea. Yes, the mass media and music are influential but they do not influence people in the same way. In this literature review, studies have suggested that people relate, interpret and respond to music and specific music genres in different ways. Music does not have a "massive and uniform" effect on people. This is also evident from local studies that have looked at the relationship between music and specific music genre preference and their impact on music fans and producers (such as Bell, 1994, 2009, 2011; Bonnici, 2008; Cauchi, 2012). In these studies the impact of music was varied and reflected the different role of research participants in their respective music scenes and their specific music preferences.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This dissertation sought to examine the potential links between music and aggression. More specifically it sought to address whether listening to music (including song texts) triggers or diffuses aggressive thoughts or behaviour. The latter is referred to as 'vicarious release', a term studied by researchers such as Arnett (1991), Villeneuve (2001) and Bell (2009), which suggests that music has a cathartic effect and can release a person from antagonistic feelings. It also focused on whether emotions and feelings related to aggression such as anger, anxiety or angst can motivate music producers to write music which ultimately reflects their feelings. This study in fact attempts to assess what role aggression and anger may have in the creation and production of music in its different forms including classical music, dance, hip-hop and heavy metal. I find this research to be important because throughout the ages, music has been referred to as a positive energy which is able to treat and heal traumas, disabilities and neuro-physical disorders (Aigen, 1990). On the other hand it has also been linked to aggression and in some instances violence (Smitherman, 1997). This study seeks to understand what role music actually plays in my research participants' lives along the continuum between these two parallels.

In this chapter, I describe all the measures I took in order to address my research question. Its aim is to produce an understandable description of the measures that needed to be taken and followed. It is quite important to give a detailed account of all the steps I had to take so that it would help other researchers who would want to reproduce or build upon my study. When choosing the research approach to carry out my study, I had to keep in mind which approach was most suited to tackle the study's research questions.

3.2 Research Approach

There are mainly two approaches in data collection for research purposes. These are referred to as quantitative research and qualitative research. The former approach was derived from the natural sciences such as biology, chemistry, physics and geology. These sciences are interested in observing and measuring data in some way. Quantitative research is ideal for eliciting measures about social behaviour, which can be done in an objective, systematic, standardised and uniform manner that can also be reproduced or repeated by other scholars (Hancock, 1998; Sapsford and Jupp, 1996; Schutt, 1999; Byrne, 2002; Clark and Bell 2012). According to Clark and Bell (2012, pp.115), for example "Quantitative research methodologies are often dictated by the strict canons of science, those of objectivity, controllability and replicability".

Qualitative research developed as a reaction to the quantitative approach and drew significantly from classic anthropology with an emphasis on subjectivity, flexibility and immersion in the social world of research participants (Schutt, 1999). These scientists were concerned with studying the human nature, its behaviour as well as how the world is shaped by the social action. It was quite difficult for these researchers to use quantitative measures to understand human behaviour. Berg (2004 pp.318) explains that "although questionnaires and quantification procedures are probably the most extensively used techniques in the social sciences, they have tended to become inhuman and reductionistic". Measurements are about quantity; about how many individuals behave in a certain manner but it doesn't really explain 'why?' This was why qualitative research was adopted by a number of researchers. This kind of approach aims at enhancing our knowledge about why things are the way they are in our societies and why people behave in a certain way (Atkinson, 1997). Qualitative research helps to study naturally occurring data and to find patterns in the studied behaviour. This helps in understanding the essential and naturally occurring characteristics of the phenomenon in question (Atkinson, Coffey, & Delamont, 2003). This is the reason why I opted for a qualitative approach in my dissertation. It helped me in identifying why people act the way they do and how opinions and attitudes about the phenomena I tried to address were formed. This approach helped in unveiling the experiences and feelings of the persons I have interviewed.

Qualitative methods helped me in answering how are people affected by music and in what way? If I had to use a quantitative approach, my study would have been concerned about 'how much' and 'how many' and that is not what my research questions were about. The type of research method I used sought to look at this psycho- social phenomenon in its natural occurrence. An inductive approach was used to develop theory since the data gathered helped in expanding concepts and theories which help in the understanding of the research questions of this study. This is another reason why the quantitative approach was not used in my dissertation since such an approach normally tests established theories rather than building them. The data for this study was collected through in-depth interviews with different individuals. This type of data collection requires a considerable amount of time therefore the number of participants is limited. The strategy and procedures used for these one to one encounters will be discussed further on in this chapter. It was vital to meet the people, ask direct questions and dig further into certain important issues regarding my research topic.

3.3 Sampling and recruitment

Qualitative sampling is interested with information-richness (Kuzel, 1992). Two major characteristics being appropriateness and adequacy should give a direct indication of how sampling in qualitative studies is carried out (Morse and Field, 1995). In simpler terms, qualitative sampling needs establishment of suitable participants. One such technique involves selecting research participants "based on a specific purpose rather than randomly" (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003, pp. 713). This is referred to as purposive sampling (Patton, 1990; Schutt, 1999) or what Berg (2004, pp.36) also call "judgemental sampling". Participants are chosen keeping in mind those who would best fit and inform the study in question. It also needs suitable information on the social context being investigation (the people, events and situations that form part of it). This aids in addressing the research inquiry as well as to build a complete description of the phenomenon being researched (Popay, Rogers and Williams, 1998). Unlike other sampling strategies, the main scope of purposive sampling is not to select randomly a group of people from a population to come up with a sample with the aim of accomplishing generalisations of statistical inferences. Purposive sampling is used to centre on specific characteristics of a group of individuals who will truly help in answering the research question.

To improve the effectiveness of qualitative studies and the relevance of the data collected, diverse non-probability sampling strategies can be used (Patton, 1990). Qualitative sampling can either be purposive or theoretical. The former's goal, as explained, is to select adequate sources of information so that meanings can be analysed. Theoretical sampling is when its goal is to select people, settings or processes on a theoretical basis to investigate growing ideas and construct theory as data analysis develops (Rice and Ezzy, 1999). In both types, sampling is carried out throughout the research and it is closely linked with the resulting nature of the process of research. For this study purposive sampling was used as my goal was to recruit and interview various individuals who are passionate about music in different ways and thus could reflect on this study's research questions.

The main characteristic in common to all my eleven research participants is daily contact with music in different ways ranging from music production and creativity (including vocal coaching, song-writing and musical performance) to music mediation (such as DJing and event organisation). All research participants listen to and consume music on a day-to-day basis. More specifically, to this end I interviewed six vocalists (these included a theatre singer, a singer/song-writer, an opera singer and vocal coach, a heavy metal

vocalist, a commercial music singer and a singer in an alternative rock band), a hip-hop music choreographer, a heavy metal/rock music DJ, a song-writer/music composer, a music producer/song-writer and a heavy metal music event organiser. In most cases these participants were known to me and part of my own social circle. The participants I recruited who form part of the heavy metal scene in Malta were referred to me by my tutor who is also part of the heavy metal scene and has an academic interest in the subject. Through the interviews carried out I explored emerging ideas and built a theory around the data I gathered. The type of data generated took a narrative form as is typical of semi-structured interviews (Teddie and Yu, 2007).

Sampling within my research had to continue until themes deriving from the literature were developed. This means that I kept on meeting with participants and interviewing them until all the issues were fully explored and further interviews would have been excessive. In this case, repetitive patters were being explored therefore no fresh data was being gathered. This can be referred to as 'saturation' (MacDougall and Fudge, 2001).

3.4 Instrumentation and Research Procedure

Interviewing participants, organising focus groups and participant observation are amongst the common methods of collecting qualitative data. In my dissertation, I used semi-structured, one-to-one interviews with my participants to elicit first-hand experiences and views regarding music and its potential links to aggression and anger. Through these interviews I managed to gain access to the feelings, emotions and motivations these artists experience when producing, performing or writing music.

I used an interview guide (see Appendix 1) consisting of a set of four questions and prompts which helped me in guiding the interview in a direct but flexible way. Even though I had prepared a set of a questions, as Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, Alexander (1990) recommend, the interviews were still carried out in a conversational manner therefore my participants felt quite relaxed and at ease to talk about anything which has to do with their artistic career. Some of the questions had to be altered from one participant to the other depending on their interest and role in music. The questions were perceived as tools to get the participant to reflect on his or her experiences and the significance these experiences had on his or her life. I used probing techniques to make sure that I elicit all the important information and to go into detail where the information seemed blurry or vague. While carrying out my interviews I could observe as Picardi and Masick (2013) state that the participants were composing meanings out of their life experiences and I learnt to appreciate how I must patiently listen and carefully invite more stories. This was

done by using open-ended questions as well as follow-up interventions. One of the interviews, however, was carried out via e-mail since the person concerned lives abroad. In this case I sent the questions along with the information sheet and she sent back her answers. All the other interviews lasted between 30 to 45 minutes and they took place at different venues according to the participant's preference. A number of interviews took place on campus at University whereas other interviews were carried out in a public garden or at the interviewees' work place. I also ensured that the chosen venues didn't distract the participants as well as myself so that we both kept our focus on the interview. This was also dictated by Berg (2004) who suggests that the interview should take place in an appropriate place both for the interviewer and participant. If the participant is concerned about being overheard, there's a big probability that the interview would be unsuccessful.

Before the interviews were carried out, the participants received an information sheet (see Appendix 2). This sheet consisted of all the necessary information regarding the topic and what the participants' role in the study is. Furthermore, before the interview commenced, the participants had to read and sign a consent form indicating that they agree to the terms and conditions of the interview (see Appendix 3). Throughout the data collection, I didn't use a recording device to record the interviews. I met the participant and I wrote down the important points on my tablet. I took down word-for-word notes of the salient aspects of the interview. One might give the recommendation of recording the interviews rather than using a pen and paper but I felt that by recording the interviews, the participants wouldn't have felt at ease as much as they felt as when I simply wrote down the points. According to Fenno (1978 pp. 280), it is better to "converse casually, pursuing targets of opportunity without the presence of a recording instrument other than [the interviewer]". In fact, the participants felt much more relaxed knowing that they are not being recorded word by word therefore they cooperated even more and the data was gathered in a flowing manner.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Any kind of research has ethical concerns. Research may create a sort of pressure between the scope of the research to make observations for the benefits of knowledge and science, and the rights of the individual participating to conserve his or her privacy. Ethical standards must be ensured to avoid doing harm to research participants. In other words, the protection of the participants in any kid of research is indispensable (Orb, Eisenhauer & Wynaden, 2000).

According to Batchelor and Briggs (1994), researchers fail to fully address ethical considerations due to the fact that the same researchers wouldn't be well-prepared to

handle certain unpredictable factors which might take place while conducting a qualitative study. "Qualitative researchers focus their research on exploring, examining, and describing people and their natural environments (Orb *et al*., 2000 pp.93). The creation of a relationship between the researcher and the participant is a concept which is ingrained within qualitative research. The wish for an individual to participate in a study depends on how willing and how driven the person is to share and express his or her experiences, thoughts and events (Ramos, 1989).

My main intention while I was conducting my research was to listen to what my participants had to say and to observe them in their own, comfortable environment. I would then interpret the experiences and thoughts mentioned by the participant and describe it in the light of the phenomenon being studied. This is referred to as an emic perspective (Field & Morse, 1992). In simpler terms, the researcher identifies that the participants are independent individuals who are willing to share their personal information. I made sure that my participants were well protected during the interview and that they were properly informed about privacy issues. Before the interviews were carried out, the participants received an information sheet. I also informed my participants that they are free to stop the interview at any time and that they can choose not to answer any question they wouldn't wish to reply to. Furthermore, before the interview commenced, the participants had to read and sign a consent form so that they agree to the terms and conditions of the interview.

3.6 Data Analysis

There are a number of analytical strategies which could be used but all procedures can be classified into content, findings and meaning (Tesch, 1990). The accuracy of an analytical procedure is related to competency and clarity. Data analysis within a qualitative research revolves around a process of analysing, combining and defining the data collected to clarify and demonstrate the phenomena being studied. One such method to this effect is what Braun and Clarke (2006) refer to as thematic analysis.

The analytical process in thematic analysis revolves around two main procedures. The first procedure deals with reviewing, identifying and coding repeating themes found in the data given by the participants. The second step is to label common themes and areas which branch across participants. Once these two steps are completed, the major themes are brought together therefore a narrative of the main aspects of the data is developed (Davidson, Stayner, Lambert, Smith & Sledge, 1997).

This is the approach I used to analyse the data I collected through the interviews. This type of analysis helped in organising and in developing rich data content. It also helped in interpreting different elements of the research question (Boyatzis, 1998).

3.7 Conclusion

The methodology I used is oriented towards developing knowledge regarding my research topic. It allowed for the understanding of how music is experienced in the participants' lives and what emotions are related to it and how these are released into music. According to Fossey *et al* (2002, pp.730), "the ways in which qualitative research questions are posed, methods are chosen to address these questions, and qualitative research is conducted are each visibly informed by their underlying research paradigm". In this dissertation my aim was to create coherence between the paradigm and theoretical framework that informed the research question and the methods I used to carry out my study. In this study, the strengths of qualitative research as well as ethical principles were also combined so that the subjective meanings and experiences of those being interviewed are reflected in the research findings that shall be presented and analysed in the following chapter.

Chapter 4 – Discussion of Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results gathered from the data analysis as well as the findings of the research. Further to this, this chapter will show how the descriptive analysis of the data which have been collected has been altered into meaningful information (Dooley, 1995). A brief introduction and discussion of the interviewees' personal information is given in the first part of this chapter. Such information includes the interviewee's gender, age, employment and profession within the music industry. All the data was acquired through open-ended questions which were part of the semi-structured interviews. The names of the participants were coded therefore all the names mentioned in this chapter are pseudonyms.

4.2 Demographic data

The researcher's interview guide was planned to address brief information about the participants' lives. This data was kept to a limit, however, enough information was obtained to classify and categorize the information acquired. The four main categories in which this information was classified were age, gender, employment and their relationship to music. The sampling strategy used was purposive. The author did not have any limitations on age range or gender. The participants were purposively recruited on the basis of their different involvement with music.

As it was discussed in Chapter 3, eleven participants were interviewed. The age of the participants ranged from 19 to 47 years. Out of the 11 participants, 6 were females and 5 were males. This resulted in a higher percentage of female participation.

The participants interviewed in this study have different jobs and occupational status. The eldest participant, Vanessa, works as a PSD and guidance teacher at a girls' school whereas Amy works as a family, insurance and civil lawyer. Michael is a travel agent and Gilbert works as a project officer within a government agency. Three of the participants being, Catherine, Clara and Sara are students studying law, accounting and communications respectively at the University of Malta. Nicholas works as a support worker whereas Louis occupies the job of a senior telecommunication technician. The last two participants being Cedric and Gayle are the only two participants who work full-time within the music business. Cedric is a full-time hip-hop choreographer whereas Gayle is a full-time vocal coach.

The research participants consisted of individuals who experience daily contact with music. Vanessa is a song writer as well as a composer and Amy is a theatre singer. As previously mentioned, Cedric is a full-time choreographer and Michael is both a

commercial singer and song writer. Catherine writes lyrics for songs and is also involved in music production whereas Clara is a vocalist for an alternative rock band. The other student Sara is also a commercial singer. A part from being a vocal coach, Gayle is also an opera singer. The last three male participants are all involved within the local heavy metal scene. Gilbert is an event organiser for heavy metal bands whereas Nicholas hosts a rock and heavy metal radio show. Louis is a heavy metal vocalist within a local heavy metal band. It was important that the selected sample chosen by the author had to be involved in different areas of the music industry so that data is gathered from different aspects.

4.3 Relationship with music

The second part of the interview focused on the importance of music to the interviewee and how music is related to their lives. All participants highlighted the fact that music is present in their everyday lives. Most of the participants started by stating: *"music is my life"* or *"we have quite a strong relationship"*. The author observed that most of the interviewees were very keen on expressing what music really means to them. Vanessa said that:

> "Since *I don't know how to express my thoughts through words, I express my deepest feelings through music"*. I believe that if God gives you a talent you need to express that talent to bring happiness to others as well as to cure yourself".

There was a common argument between the participants that music was inseparable from them in fact one of the participants expressed that music runs through her body just like blood does. Since the chosen participants were extensively involved within the music world, they pointed out that they try and include music in whatever they do. Even if they find time to relax or wind up, they opt for music. This was further discussed in Chapter 2 where the literature states that those individuals who give a higher meaning to music, reach a state of being which helps them in amplifying their interpersonal interactions (North et al.,2009). In conjunction, some participants expressed that with music being a vital part of their lives, they felt more at peace with themselves as well as with others. It is important to point out that the chosen participants came from different music backgrounds being classical music, commercial as well as heavy metal but despite such differences, they still agreed that music helps them in reaching a state of satisfaction.

The author observed that the participants personified music as a human being; as someone who understands what they are going through. More than one interviewer confessed that people do not understand their feelings but music does therefore they felt better confiding their emotions such as happiness, anger, sadness as well as aggression with music rather than people. They felt that music was 'someone' which was always there for them when needed most. Michael said that: *"music is the one thing that never lets me down…never! It has always been there for me somehow"*. Catherine, who is also a song writer, shared the idea that: *"it is quite difficult to explain what music really means since it is such a personal emotion. Only people who are part of this world understand what it feels like to fall in love with music"*.

Clara linked music with her personal experiences. She mentioned that music always helped her cope through difficult times such as the experience of losing a friend or having trouble at home. She continued by saying that: *"music was always there to give me comfort and make me feel better. When everything else failed, I found solace in my own music therefore no matter what I had been through, music never abandoned me"*. The vocalist perceived music as being her own religion since it gave her such strong emotions and influenced her in so many aspects of her life. This reasoning was argued in the literature where it stated that music is a strong socialization authority which defines and depicts people's lives (Muller, 1994). Moreover, music is seen as a medium which responds to everyday situations involving decisions as well as complications. In the eyes of these artists, music helps in giving meaning to life as well as attitudes and values (Sciberras, 2010).

The researcher noticed that Gilbert's relationship with music was much deeper than any of the other participants. Even though he is considered to be a mediator between music production and music consumption, he still described his passion for music in a very vivid manner. Gilbert started by describing how his passion for music had evolved through the years. When he was younger he was a normal teenager who used to enjoy going to parties and clubs with his friends but he confessed that:

> *"I never felt as if I belonged within the party scene. It was later on in my adult life that I was introduced to doom metal and it became so important to my life that there wasn't a day that I didn't dedicate time to this music".* He continued by stating that this genre of music affected his life in so many ways: *"It affected the places I visit on weekends, the choice of friends as well as the choice of girlfriend".*

The second part of the interview revealed a number of common factors between all participants. They all tried to express their great passion towards music and that it is the only source which helped them come to terms with what they have been through. Moreover, all participants seemed to personify music as a human being; as an invisible person who walks with them throughout their life and is ready to listen to all their troubles, worries, joys and experiences. For example Michael claimed that *"music is my companion, my best friend"*. Sara similarly stated: *"Music walks with me through all my life experiences whether good or bad. It never abandons me"*.

Bell (2009, pp.161-164) similarly observed such processes in relation to heavy metal in Malta and the impact of this genre on Maltese "headbangers". His findings demonstrated how followers of the music find metal as an "emotionally concretising" experience that is they listen to music in attempt to overcome or heighten emotional states.

4.4 Music genre preference

The literature suggested that different genres of music can be associated with different moods, attitudes and behaviour. What was considerable in this study was that the sample which was studied had different music tastes therefore the researcher could observe how each individual related to his or her preferred music and how this affected if it did, the interviewee's moods or lifestyle. In the third part of the interview, the participants were allowed to express which style they were more confident to listen to or to work with.

A number of participants agreed on the fact that their choice of music depended on their current mood. This reflects what Christenson and Roberts (1998) proposed. They argued that the drive to listen to a certain type of music depends on the need to control mood or to reinforce an emotional state. They referred to this phenomenon as 'the primacy of affect'. This reflects the capability that music has to transmit emotion and mood. In relation to this, Cedric clearly stated that his choice of music relied on his current attitudes and feelings. He emphasised the idea that: *"the music I listen to is affected by my current mood"*. When he felt frustrated he would listen to relaxing music since it helped him calm down. In contrast: *"when I feel angry, I listen to aggressive Hip Hop…I tend to listen to fast music when I'm angry but the song always has to have a special meaning or message so that I can relate to it"*.

It was a common argument that of relating the message of a song to one's feelings. Some of the participants discussed that if they had an argument with their partner, they would listen to a song which relates to that feeling or if they would be angry at someone they

would listen to another song which projects a similar message. Amy stated: *"I feel that each song relates to me in a different way. You just have to find the right song which really addresses your current feelings and emotions"*. Michael preferred listening to empowering songs instead of listening or writing depressing songs when he wasn't in a good mood. He explained that: *"when I listen to such strong music, it gives me the strength to wake up and do something about the situation rather than sit back and feel sorry for myself"*. He added that when he feels really angry he prefers listening to aggressive Rnb such as Hip Hop. The choice of listening to aggressive Hip Hop might be because as studies have shown, this genre is seen to be as the kind of music which enables a person to speak his or her mind. This contrasts to dance music which is linked with fun and pleasure (Vassallo, 2004).

Gayle said:

> *"The music I listen to at home for relaxation purposes is very mood related. I normally listen to classical music but my mood determines what composer or genre I listen to. There are times when I would want to listen to something calming and other times I prefer to listen to something more dramatic or agitated. Before a performance I tend to listen to something rousing to get my adrenaline going".*

Clara discussed that her mood influenced what kind of music she listened to. She extended her discussion by saying that a song didn't affect her directly but her mood affected what kind of music she listened to or chooses to sing. She added that: *"when I was younger I used to feel angry and nervous all the time so I used to listen to heavy metal and hard rock music"*. She explained how this got her into a lot of trouble with her parents and teachers at school. The singer said that *"once the school headmistress gave me a CD with Beethoven's music because she believed that it was a possible way to calm me down"*. This can be linked to the correlation studies which proposed a connection between the genre of music and the different maladaptive behaviours people engage in. According to Rubin, West and Mitchell (2001), students who had a preference for heavy metal music displayed more aggressive behaviour than those who listened to other kinds of genres such as alternative or dance music. Took and Weiss (1994) also proposed a similar relationship between heavy metal and school problems. Other studies have also suggested that heavy metal followers suffer from a very weak academic performance (Christensin & Van Nouhuys, 1995), but this can be contrasted to what Gilbert has achieved since he is graduated in Sociology. Further to this, even though Clara had trouble at school, she is now a student at the University of Malta studying Accounting. This is again proof that not all those who engage in heavier forms of music establish a week performance in education.

The author observed that being involved within the heavy metal scene proved to have no affect on academic performance but other issues such as relations and family can be affected. Clara discussed that she also had problems at home:

> *"There was a lot of tension with my parents and I used to constantly argue with my mum. My style of music at the time affected my behaviour towards my parents and it isolated me from the ones who truly love me".*

This can be linked to what Martin, Clarke and Pearce (1993) implied that heavy metal followers tend to grow distant from their families and go through a lot of high tension with their parents.

Gilbert shed important light on how a heavy metal follower follows a certain lifestyle. Even though he isn't directly involved in a band, he is still extremely involved in this music scene. He pointed out that since heavy metal is a genre for the minority, one tends to communicate with those people who have the same ideas. He said that *"heavy metal is not just music, it is something you have to live; a way of life… It is not just background music therefore I had to look for it and work for it"*. This genre had an impact on his image, on how he behaved and on his choice of friends. He outlined the fact that he cannot have a relationship with a partner who doesn't accept his kind of style because it wouldn't work out.

Gilbert, Nicholas and Louis who are the three participants involved in heavy metal expressed how important the sense of brotherhood is within the heavy metal community. They stated that the most important factor within underground music is that of creating an atmosphere of friendship and a sense of brotherhood. According to Nicholas, the relationship they have within this community isn't similar to a boy band relationship but it is something deeper and richer: *"we are always looking forward in making new friends and getting to know different people even if they are foreign"*. This suggests that heavy metal followers are not at all isolated from society. They are pleased with their peer relationships as much as nonfans of such music are (Arnett, 1991).

The author identified that in general the participants listen to certain genres of music to relate to their current mood. Studies have also identified such a procedure since they listen to "mood-congruent music" which helps them in finding their "solace and comfort". When they feel angry or aggressive they listen to music which adapts to their emotions whereas if

they feel content they sustain that positive energy by listening to happy songs (Behne, 1997). A part from discussing how important music is to relate to a certain mood or emotion, the researcher observed that music is also used to release those emotions and to express them in a significant way. This term is known as vicarious release and it will be the theme which the author will tackle in the next section.

4.5 Vicarious release

As the title of this dissertation implies, vicarious release was an important phenomenon which was assessed. It's interesting to note that the author made no intent to question the participants directly about how they release their emotions through music. The participants weren't aware that they were discussing their ways of venting emotions but it was a recurring theme in all the interviews conducted.

Vicarious release or catharsis as explained in the literature review implies purification or cleansing. The participants' ways of expressing their emotions were different from one another but they all expressed their need to overcome negative emotions through music.

Vanessa stated that in general, music is a mode of expression but it isn't the same as writing a simple letter. It is much deeper since the person's spirit lives in one's music. She explained:

> *"My anger is transformed into sadness and that sadness triggers me to go to my room hit the base booster and create a powerful piece of music. The kind of music I play when I'm in such a state is usually very strong and the rhythm is rough".*

She added that when she's angry she doesn't like to listen to other artists' music but she prefers to create her own. The participant believed that if she didn't express her sadness in this manner, there would be a big chance that she would end up blaming other people for her anger. Vanessa concluded that this is her own kind of release and it helps her relax. Louis also stated that his genre of music being heavy metal helped him cope with the pain of separation since he used to release all his fears and anxieties in his music.

While interviewing Amy, she indicated that when she feels really angry she listens to heavy music which has a tendency of exposing the human nature. She continued by saying that: *"heavy metal music helps me release my inner feelings and once it calms me down, I shift to mellow and softer music".* When she was asked about how this genre helps her in

releasing her emotions, she said that when she listens to such music, she usually cries and screams a lot. The singer expressed that:

> *"Heavy music helps me belt out all the aggression compiled inside therefore it has a soothing affect. I don't opt to other aggressive behaviour such as punching pillows or slamming doors but I prefer to listen to this genre and everything falls into place".*

This shows that even though her music profession is classical singing, she prefers listening to harder music such as metal to let go of her agitations. This can be compared to what Arnett (1991) suggested that heavy metal is usually listened to when a person feels most angry. Such music can have a soothing and calming effect on the person and it helps in depleting the anger.

Both Amy and Vanessa reaffirmed catharsis theory. This theory revolves around bringing about solace from agitation caused by anger or aggression. This was acknowledged by both participants as well as most of the other interviewees. Cedric expressed that he uses and listens to music to release all his feelings into dancing. He argued that listening to music alone doesn't help since he has to dance to that music to release all the tensions and worries. He added:

> *"When I listen to a song I don't focus on the meaning of the song or on how beautiful the voice of the singer is. Instead, I would be thinking about all the possible moves I can perform to express that song. While listening to a song, I would be imagining a whole choreography. A singer might explain the song by the words or her gestures, but I explain a song with my body. When I dance I feel as if I am talking all the time".*

Michael mentioned that the best way of detaching himself from all emotions such as sadness or anger is to go to his piano and let it all out. Instead of yelling at someone or sending messages which would later be regretted, he prefers to shout at the piano because he believes that the piano or the music he would be playing understands what he is going through:

> *"I don't necessarily need to play a masterpiece or a melody which musically makes sense, but I would just let go of everything through the notes I would be playing. It is the best form of therapy because my questions are answered through music. I actually feel sorry for those people who do not know how to let go of their emotions through music because it is such an easy way of handling your emotions without hurting someone or making anyone feel bad".*

Since he is a song writer he feels that he can release his emotions through writing lyrics. He prefers to write the lyrics of a song when he's down because he feels most vulnerable so it is easier to write about it during this period. He believes that when he's down, *"there's a lower risk of writing about feelings without the words being too cheesy or poetic. The words are straight to the point and focused".*

An interesting issue was derived out of one of the interviews. Clara discussed how she had stopped listening to hostile music whenever she felt depressed. She felt that instead of helping her, such music made her feel worse because it wasn't wise to ponder about the pain and negative emotions. She believed that: *"one shouldn't listen to sad songs which can be related to one's current feelings because they won't help instead they would make a person feel worse".* This issue can be linked to what the literature discussed. A part from having theories which prove that vicarious release can have positive results, other studies suggested that venting out anger can make a person feel more belligerent. According to Bower (1981), once negative emotions are triggered, these thoughts give rise to associations such as aggressive actions, ideas and violent emotions.

Gilbert discussed that head banging is an integral part of heavy metal music. It is used when a person feels so overwhelmed by the music that his emotions are released through aggressive movements of the head. He continued to explain that:

> *"heavy metal music is also expressed through aggressive movements of the body. It's a way of releasing frustration and stress and whenever I listen to a song which sends an adrenaline rush, I release my negative experiences or troubles through such movements".*

He also added that he now understands why certain guitarists smash their guitar when they're on stage; *"it's the guitarist's way of expressing his gratitude and emotions when he sees that his audience is appreciating his music".*

4.6 Anger and aggression

Another issue which was tackled was how anger or aggression is reflected in music producers' creations and music listener's preferences for music genres. Most of the participants agreed that they release their anger through music and that it helps them calm their anxieties down. Other interviewees argued that aggressive music can directly affect one's behaviour whereas others agreed that aggressive music can help in accompanying one's aggressive behaviour but this doesn't mean that music is the main cause. Mixed opinions were derived from this section just like studies in Chapter 2 had different conclusions.

Vanessa discussed that extreme emotions are involved within music production. Her anger is changed into sadness and it is that sadness which drives her to write deep and profound music. She expressed that: *"aggressive music is not part of my nature but melancholic music is therefore I express my sadness which is derived from my anger"*. Since she works as a full time youth councillor she had cases where she directly observed music affecting a student negatively. She mentioned that she knew a girl who set an example to all other students;

> *"She was an ideal student who used to attend prayer meetings and was also part of a Christian band. Her peers were well-behaved and she had no trouble at home. This young girl changed drastically over night. According to her parents, she started listening to heavy metal and hard rock music and she got influenced by the lyrics which exposed her to uncontrolled sex, drugs and alcohol. She literally got lost".*

She referred to another similar case where a student lost her dad when she was only eleven years old and after this tragedy, she started following heavy metal music. Nowadays she is in a mental hospital due to the ways this genre influenced her. The participant therefore strongly believes that music can affect a person instantaneously. She ended the interview by stating that *"music is like medicine, drugs taken in a good dose can help you get cured, but if you take an overdose it can help you in getting killed"*.

Some might think that this participant has over reacted to think that music can influence in such a direct way but certain literature has stated that an ongoing exposure to songs with violent lyrics or aggressive tones may provide a path towards an aggressive lifestyle (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). This argument contrasts with what a number of other participants discussed that aggressive music such as heavy metal helps them in releasing

their anger and therefore calm down. Amy explained how she listens to heavy metal music so that she calms down her anger and anxieties. She argued that: *"when clients at work make me angry or when I have an argument with my parents, I go to my room, listen to metal songs and it sooths me down"*. This contrasts with what was explained earlier.

Cedric also tends to transfer negative energy into dancing. He stated that anger or aggression affects his style of dancing since he opts to dance 'KRUMP' which is an aggressive Hip Hop style. It stands for 'Kingdom Radically Up-lifting Mighty Praise' which revolves around gathering all the negative energy and releasing all that energy through dance. It has some religious connotations since all the negative mishaps are offered to God in order to extract positivity out of negativity. This positivity is linked to the relief one feels after dancing KRUMP. Some of the participants such as the choreographer perceive aggression as being something positive which can truly help them in releasing their frustrations therefore they feel free. This is what Michael does whenever he feels threatened or disturbed. He explained that:

> *"if someone tells me that I'm not capable of achieving something, I transfer that anger into aggression so that I can spill that aggression on stage. That aggression is therefore turned into a positive element since it challenges my enemies".*

He experiences the same feelings when he writes a song. He argued that when he writes a song, the words of an emotional song rarely come from a good place in life; *"they are derived from a deep place where there are memories of being bullied, hurt or betrayed. These songs always turn up to be the best songs which I write"*.

The youngest participant talked about her own personal experience regarding music and aggressive behaviour. Clara spoke about how passionate she was about heavy metal music when she was younger but it didn't help her in pursuing the right path;

> *"My younger sister is disabled therefore I always felt angry towards life not being fair. I used to listen to aggressive music such as heavy metal but instead of calming down I used to feel provoked. There is no healing process in such music".*

She spoke about her attitude when she used to listen to heavy metal music. She explained that the negative attitude she had back then wasn't affected by music alone but heavy metal helped in shaping and building that negativity even further. She used to be rude to her parents and with school authorities. This is linked with the literature which states that aggressive songs can influence on-going social interactions and relationships since they are handled in an aggressive way (Anderson et al., 2003). When she changed the style of

music, her attitude was also changed. It was at this point that she realised that the genre she was attached to had a great impact on her. She added that:

> "A part from adopting an unattractive attitude, I also started engaging in self-harm. I used to cut my hands with a syringe because I believed that if I carved the title of a song on my hands I would manage to play the guitar even better… I know it's stupid, but it was something I truly believed in at the time".

According to the General Aggression Model (GAM), exposure to aggressive music can have short term or long term effects in aggressive behaviour (Anderson, Carnagey & Eubanks, 2003). In this case, the participant suffered from short-term effects since she no longer engages in such behaviour. When she was asked whether she still follows heavy metal she affirmed that she still listens to it but not like she used to. She listens to metal which is not too heavy, vulgar or aggressive. Nowadays, she listens to music which lifts her up and encourages her to move on.

Clara believed that she didn't engage into such behaviour only because she used to listen to heavy metal. She confessed that she was going through a rough time therefore she expressed her frustrations in the wrong way. This was also discussed in chapter 2. According to Roberts et al. (2003), music with antisocial themes affects people who are already at risk for antisocial behaviour. This shows that music might empower aggressive behaviour. Studies show that there is no such thing as the 'heavy metal syndrome' but more of a trouble youth syndrome. The best way to explain this issue is that troubled youths tend to listen to an aggressive style which supports them and meets their current needs. Gilbert talked about "head banging" and "moshing" being quite aggressive acts. These movements take place during live gigs and they are a way of expressing one's emotions towards music. The participant engaged in head banging but he doesn't like moshing since there's a great chance of someone getting hurt. Moshing is a sort of ritual where the crowd moves around and hits each other aggressively. He thinks that this is quite violent especially when they perform the 'Wall of Death'. Here, the audience is divided into two large groups and at one point they rush towards each other. According to Nicholas, *"there was a person who got killed during the 'Wall of Death' but I still don't believe that such actions are violent since it is a tradition and it is done to show appreciation towards the music".*

The general idea is that heavy metal music is linked with aggressive behaviour. The researcher noticed that the three heavy metal participants never talked about violent aggression. This might be because heavy metal is divided into many styles which vary in the type of aggression. Gilbert said that when he's at a gig he might act aggressively when he listens to a song which he really likes; *"this doesn't mean that I am aggressive in the sense that I would want to hurt somebody but I would be willing to express my emotions through movements of the body".* All participants who are involved in this genre talked about the importance of getting an adrenaline rush while listening to a song or while being at a gig, "it is this rush which makes me move around and perform head banging or even moshing" affirmed Louis. Gilbert, Nicholas and Louis commented about the fact that they had never experienced any kind of violent aggression. This could be because the people involved within this genre are of an elder age and it is a community with a strong sense of brotherhood.

When Nicholas was asked whether aggressive music can affect people, he answered that:

> *"I have a lot of friends who either form part of a heavy metal band or are dedicated fans but they were never affected. I believe that aggression is a phase which eventually grows out of a person. When I was younger I used to play heavy metal music in a local bar in Paceville and it was the only bar without security and there never was a single brawl".*

This was also a point which Gilbert mentioned since his events never involved security and he never experienced any trouble.

4.7 Lyrical content

According to the Council on Communications and Media (2009), research stated that crude lyrics can actually have a direct effect on the listeners. Other studies have argued that it is not the lyrics which affect behaviour but the psychological tendencies attract a person towards such aggressive content (Roberts et al., 2003). These theories were also derived from the interviews which were conducted. Some participants strongly believed that aggressive lyrical content can have a direct effect on an individual but others suggested that it might not have such an affect and it might not influence a person in any way.

Vanessa argued that music lyrics can have a great impact on a person. She discussed that:

> *"Artists nowadays are catering for those people who are already at risk. Society is now experiencing the lack of family backbone and role models. People have too much pressure coming from education, consumerism and status and youths are suffering from an emerging adulthood which makes it even harder for them to cope".*

She continued by stating that all these factor are relieved through music and music lyrics can help such people release their pressures through negativity. Sara believes that artists who want to gain loads of money choose topics such as self-harm, drugs, alcohol and promiscuity because they know that people tend to download such music therefore there's more consumption and consumption brings money. Cedric shared similar ideas on how today's music is being formulated. He discussed that certain hip hop songs do reflect negativity since their content revolves around drugs, gangsters and alcohol; *"The music producers producing such songs remove the element of giving a better meaning to music and instead they look at how much money they can make from such songs".* This issue was also mentioned in Chapter 2 since in today's music, constant reference is being made to sex, drugs as well as violence and aggression (Knoblock-Westerwick, Musto, Shaw, 1993). According to Reddick and Beresin (2002), genres such as heavy metal, rock, and rap are overloaded with lyrics relating to death, homicide, suicide, drugs as well as promiscuity.

Cedric believed that it is the melody of the music and the tempo of a song which might affect a person rather than the lyrics themselves;

> *"if the music is up-tempo or has a great beat to dance to, people won't care what the song is about. If a song has a fast rhythm, it is quite difficult to understand what the lyrics are about. The lyrics of a song can affect a person when the music is slow tempo".*

This statement was also reflected in a number of studies which discussed that in general, people do not listen to music because of its lyrics but they like music because of its 'sound'. However, other studies stated that lyrics are very relevant to the listener and they are the primary source of gratification to most of the adolescents and a secondary gratification to people in general (Roe, 1985).

In one of the interviews, Michael proved that the lyrics of a song do affect him. Even though they don't affect him in a negative way, it still can be used as a proof that the lyrics

of a song might actually have an impact on a person. The singer and song writer explained that when he feels angry he likes to listen to strong singers such as Mary J Blige. He added that:

> *"She's been through so much that I can relate to her songs. Her lyrics reflect her rough experiences and how she has managed to get over her troubles therefore once I listen to her empowering songs, I get the message that if she got through it, I can get through it too".*

The song writer said that he had written a song about drinking and he doesn't feel proud of it because he knows that people especially the younger generation can relate to it and they can get influenced in a negative way.

He added that:

> *"when you're a mainstream artist, you have to be really careful about your image, what songs your write and what lyrics you sing because you have to keep in mind that you would probably be influencing the young generation".*

When Catherine was asked whether she would write a song about drugs or alcohol she strongly stated that she wouldn't. She would write a song to raise awareness but she wouldn't write lyrics to promote such negative factors. She argued that:

> *"A good song is about promoting something which is good, valuable and worth listening such as themes of love, relationships and friendship. Songs are about exploring new, valuable things therefore I don't want to explore things which are so negative".*

Heavy metal followers have a tendency of paying particular attention to the lyrics. This was also developed from the interviews. Clara who had previously stated that heavy metal music encouraged her to engage in self-harm stated that she used to pay particular attention to the lyrics therefore the more she used to listen to a heavy metal song, the more the words started affecting her directly; *"If something happened to me, I would immediately associate the event with the lyrics I had in mind".* Studies referring to heavy metal music have found that fans of such genre show a higher interest in the lyrics than fans of other kinds of music (Arnett, 1991; Kuwahar, 1992). Self-harm might also be linked to low self-

esteem and according to Arnett (1992), girls who prefer heavy metal music reported to suffer from low self-esteem more than girls who follow other kinds of music. Certain heavy metal music styles discuss themes of sexual exploitation of women, violence and denigration. It isn't appropriate to say that music 'caused' the girls to suffer from low self-esteem but girls with low self-esteem might be attracted to this kind of music.

Both Louis and Gilbert claimed that lyrics in heavy metal music are very important. Various themes are covered within heavy metal and some might influence people's choices. When they were asked to expand their argument, Gilbert stated that:

> *"Certain heavy metal themes go against Catholicism therefore a younger person might be influenced and might also choose to go against religion too. The approach within this genre is usually shocking since minorities need to shock in order to be heard. This is therefore achieved through the choice of words and themes".*

Louis believed that lyrics can directly affect a person but he added that this doesn't happen only with heavy metal songs. He explained that there are certain cases where people take it to the extreme. He mentioned an example where in Norway there were cases of church burnings caused by the heavy metal communities since their lyrics are anti-catholic.

4.8 Conclusion

The main goal of this chapter was to analyse, discuss and interpret the results which were obtained through the semi-structured interviews which were conducted to music professionals. The author was able to conduct these interviews personally rather than through other sources and this can be considered one of the major strengths of this study. The findings which were obtained were sub-divided into six categories each discussing the data related to each section. Some of the results which were obtained supported the literature discussed in chapter 2 whereas other data contradicted what was reviewed earlier. However, the results have assisted the researcher in addressing the research question as well as the aims and objectives of this research. The conclusions which were reached through these findings will be discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion

5.1 Summary of Findings

The findings derived from the interviews proved to be quite interesting. Some of the data supported the literature discussed in Chapter Two whereas other aspects challenged it. Eleven participants were interviewed; all music enthusiasts but playing different roles within the world of music and possessing specific genre preferences. They all had their own opinions, shared their own experiences and they all agreed on certain aspects.

The most common argument amongst the participants was that music is a constant part of their lives and that they include music in whatever they do. They were all very keen on expressing how important music is to them. To this effect a number of participants started off their interviews by stating *"music is my life"* or *"I am nothing without music!"*. It was impossible not to notice the urge by the interviewees to personify music as a human being. They described music as being someone who never lets them down. It walks with them throughout their lives. Such statements are important because they imply that these participants are truly passionate about their music and do not have a casual relationship with it.

The findings also explored the different music preferences of participants and the relationship of such preferences to the topics at stake, including how specific genre preference is related to the individual's style, lifestyle and attitude. All participants claimed that the choice of music depends on their mood; *"the music I listen to is affected by my current mood"*. This is referred to as mood-congruent music where the choice of music depends on what listeners go through. For example if they have an argument with their partner, they choose a song which relates to that particular emotion and which implies a similar meaning to that emotion. One of the participants said that when she was younger she used to listen to heavy metal whenever she felt angry or aggressive. This got her into trouble with both her family and school authorities. In contrast, another participant claimed that she listened to heavy metal when she felt angry because it helped her in calming her down.

There is the general tendency in the literature to associate heavy metal music with negativity and with behavioural issues. This was also reflected in a number of studies discussed in Chapter Two (Martin, Clarke and Pearce, 1993; Christensin & Van Nouhuys, 1995). This literature also links poor academic performance and lack of social interaction with those who follow heavy metal music. This was certainly not the case with the participants who were into heavy metal music. These participants claimed to have had sound school performances in spite of their lifelong preference for heavy metal and that

they socialise with everyone. They described the heavy metal scene as characterised by a strong sense of brotherhood and the feeling of forming part of a united family.

All participants discussed their ways of releasing their most negative emotions through music. This is a term referred to as vicarious release. Some participants preferred creating their own piece of music instead of listening to other artists' music whenever they felt angry. Their own release is found in their singing, writing, producing or performing music. Most of the interviewees argued that letting go of their negative feelings through music helped them relax. Anger and aggression were two of the strongest emotions which were discussed during the interviews. The participants agreed that they release such feelings through music. The participants involved in heavy metal explained 'head-banging' and 'moshing' as ways of expressing oneself aggressively while releasing emotions through the aggressive movements of the body typical to such modes of expression.

5.2 Implications

The implications derived out of these findings are diverse. Different opinions were expressed by respondents on the relationship between music, anger and aggression reflecting the diversity of standpoints on the subject that can also be found in the expert literature. Generally speaking, all participants use music according to their mood and they associate the type of music with what they have been through or what they are going through – or what Bell (2009) refers to as "emotional concretisation". All interviewees use music to release their negative emotions in different ways.

Anger and aggression are also released through music because the participants argued that they felt better releasing such negative emotions through such a medium instead of using other sources. In fact some interviewees expressed that they felt sorry for those who do not know how to express their negative feelings through music because it is such a cheap and comfortable form of therapy. It is good to mention that it was observed that the participants involved in the heavy metal scene talked in a much more passionate way regarding their music than any other participant. This might be because heavy metal music is a way of life and it influences their lifestyle.

The general idea on heavy metal music is that it provokes aggressive and violent behaviour, effecting social relationships and academic performance. Such ideas were contradicted in this study because the participants had healthy relationships, did not engage in violent behaviour and possessed a sound background of schooling, including, in some instances a tertiary level of education.

5.3 Limitations

Even though this research was carefully planned and it reached its aims, a number of limitations impinged on this work. The fact that it is a small scale study made it impossible to study the correlations between different variables. This would have required a quantitative, large-scale study. Moreover, the results of this small-scale study lack generalizability. Generalizable results normally require larger numbers of research participants selected through non-probability sampling methods that allow equal chance within a given population to participate in the study. As this study was driven by a qualitative approach, the latter was not possible. Moreover, since I did not use a recording device to record the interviews, some ideas and thoughts that were expressed by the respondents during the interviews may have been omitted from my interview notes and thus were not considered during the analytical process. At the same time however one has to keep in mind that the use of recording devices might have inhibited participants from expressing themselves as openly as they did while knowing that they were not being recorded. Thus perhaps in this regard not recording the interviews might have acted to the study's advantage rather than against it.

5.4 Recommendations for future research

As mentioned earlier, future researchers may consider undertaking a quantitative study on the topic that was investigated so that the findings are much more generalizable. Moreover, it would be interesting to conduct a study focusing on listeners/mediators and producers of specific genres of music and examine how aggression and anger configure in such genres. The present dissertation took into account various genre preferences in an attempt to provide an exploratory overview of the issues at stake. A similar study which is more genres specific would be intriguing to undertake.

5.5 Conclusion

Wherever humans have been, music has been present too. Music definitely has important significance for people. The value of music is specifically seen in those individuals who give their direct contribution to music either in its production, creation or performance and its consumption. The value of music is difficult to explain as some of the interviewees had mentioned. Understanding the importance of music and the need for music might help us in learning something enriching about humanity itself. We know that every individual needs nourishment, clothes, a safe haven, language, relationships as well as faith. These help in giving meaning to humanity but music also plays a role in doing so.

As it was discussed, music is there to accompany an individual through times of hardship, pain, loss as well as happiness and contentment. It's an important medium where a person might find him or herself and where answers are given. As this study implied, music might also act as a safety valve for anger and aggression to be expressed, but it is still debatable whether music instigates such behaviour. It all revolves around how the person chooses to use that melody or song text. Therefore music can be seen as a source which guides you to experience the world and it offers a way of exercising creativity and knowledge. It is an instrument for change, power as well as an intense force for self-expression.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Interview Topic Guide

Date _____

1. Biography.

- Age

- Occupation

- Hobbies

2. Relationship with music.

- How does music form part of your life?

3. Motivation for music production.

- Why is it important for you to sing/create/write/perform music?

- What motivates or inspires you?

4. The link between anger/aggression and music production.

- What kind of emotions forms part of your singing/writing/performing?

- Does anger or aggression play a role in your music?

5. Music lyrics

- What do you think of music lyrics in today's music?

- Do you think that they can directly affect a person who follows music with aggressive lyrics content?

Appendix 2

Information Letter

Dear participant,

I am a criminology student from the University of Malta working on my dissertation. By taking part in this interview, you will be helping me in gathering information about music and vicarious release; how music facilitates you in expressing yourself, what role it has in your life and what kind of factors motivate you to produce music.

The interview will last about 35 to 45 minutes and no recording will be made. You should be aware that you are free to abjure from the interview at any time and are free to decline from answering any questions without giving a reason for your accord. Any information that you will give during the interview will be used in my dissertation as support to the literature I have read as well as to answer my research questions. All information will be kept in strict confidence.

Should you wish a copy of the finished dissertation please do not hesitate to contact me via email: _____

Thank you for your participation and your time,

Kristen Camilleri
15/02/2013

Appendix 3

Consent Form

Name of researcher: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Statement of purpose of the study: _____

Methods of data collection: _____

Use made of information: _____

Guarantees:

I will abide by the following conditions:

I.   Your real name will not be used for this study.

II. Only the supervisor and examiner will have access to the data.

III. You will remain free to quit the study at any point and for whatever reason. In the case that you withdraw, all the records and information collected will be destroyed.

IV. Deception in the data collection process will not be used.

V.   Communications from the research will be communicated to you, either verbally or by writing.

I agree to these conditions.

Name of Participant: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

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