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Regional Music Engagement, Mental Well-being, and Social Connectedness among Undergraduate Students: A Psychological Study of Zubeen Garg's Music in Sivasagar District of Assam

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Abstract

Music is widely recognized as an important contributor to emotional health, social relationships, and personal identity. Although a substantial body of research has examined the psychological benefits of music engagement, relatively little attention has been given to the role of regional popular music in influencing the well-being and social experiences of young adults, particularly within culturally distinctive settings. To address this gap, the present study explores how engagement with the music of Zubeen Garg relates to mental well-being, social connectedness, and fan identity among undergraduate students in Sivasagar district, Assam. The study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional survey design. Data were collected from 250 undergraduate students enrolled in twelve colleges through proportionate stratified random sampling. A structured questionnaire was used to measure listening engagement, mental well-being, social connectedness, and fan identity. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha, independent-samples t-test, one-way ANOVA, Pearson's correlation, and multiple regression analysis. The results indicate that students are actively engaged with Zubeen Garg's music and generally perceive it as contributing positively to their emotional well-being, cultural attachment, and social relationships. Significant positive associations were found among listening engagement, mental well-being, social connectedness, and fan identity. Regression analysis further showed that listening engagement, social connectedness, and fan identity were significant predictors of mental well-being, jointly accounting for 66% of the observed variation, with listening engagement emerging as the strongest predictor. Students who listened to his music more frequently also reported higher levels of perceived mental well-being. The findings suggest that regional popular music extends beyond entertainment by serving as a meaningful psychological, social, and cultural resource for young adults. By providing empirical evidence from Assam, the study enriches the literature on music psychology and media psychology and demonstrates the value of culturally rooted musical experiences in fostering student well-being, social connectedness, and cultural belonging.

Keywords: Music engagement; Mental well-being; Social connectedness; Fan identity; Regional music; Assamese youth; Zubeen Garg; Media psychology.

Introduction

Music is a universal form of human expression that plays an important role in emotional, psychological, and social life. Beyond entertainment, it helps individuals regulate emotions, reduce stress, strengthen social relationships, and express their identities. Research has consistently shown that music contributes to psychological well-being by improving mood, supporting emotional regulation, and fostering a sense of belonging. For young adults, particularly university students, music is often an important coping resource for managing academic stress, maintaining emotional balance, and building social connections.

Regional music is especially significant because it reflects the language, culture, and shared experiences of a community. In Assam, Zubeen Garg has established himself as one of the most influential contemporary musicians through his distinctive blend of traditional Assamese music and modern musical styles. His songs explore themes such as love, hope, patriotism, spirituality, friendship, and cultural pride, creating a strong emotional connection with listeners. As a result, his music has become an integral part of the social and cultural lives of many young people in the state.

Although Zubeen Garg enjoys widespread popularity, little empirical research has examined how engagement with his music influences psychological well-being and social relationships. Most previous studies have focused on Western music or mainstream Indian popular music, while the psychological impact of regional popular music has received limited scholarly attention. This gap is particularly evident in Northeast India, where culturally embedded music remains underexplored despite its social significance.

Against this background, the present study investigates the role of Zubeen Garg's music in promoting mental well-being and social connectedness among undergraduate students in Sivasagar district, Assam. By examining the relationships between listening engagement, mental well-being, social connectedness, and fan identity, the study contributes to the growing literature on music psychology and provides empirical evidence on the psychological and social value of regional popular music.

Review of Literature

Music Engagement and Listening Behaviour

Music is a fundamental aspect of human life that influences emotional experiences, cognitive processes, social interaction, and cultural expression. Although traditionally viewed as a form of artistic entertainment, contemporary scholarship increasingly recognises music as a multidimensional phenomenon that shapes how individuals perceive themselves, relate to others, and interpret their surrounding environment (Juslin & Sloboda, 2010; Hallam et al., 2018). This shift in perspective has encouraged researchers to examine music engagement as an active behavioural process rather than a passive act of listening.

Music engagement refers to the diverse ways individuals experience and interact with music in everyday life. It encompasses listening frequency, genre preference, artist attachment, emotional involvement, and participation in music-related activities. Rather than representing a single behaviour, music engagement reflects a continuous interaction between personal preferences, emotional needs, technological accessibility, and socio-cultural influences (Gustavson et al., 2021). Consequently, patterns of music engagement differ across individuals and are shaped by age, personality, cultural background, and life experiences.

The rapid expansion of digital technology has transformed the nature of music engagement worldwide. Streaming platforms, mobile applications, and social networking sites have replaced traditional modes of music consumption by providing immediate access to extensive musical content. This transformation has altered not only how people listen

to music but also how they discover artists, exchange recommendations, and participate in music-centred communities. Baym (2018) argues that digital media have fundamentally reshaped relationships between musicians and audiences by creating more interactive, participatory, and continuous forms of communication. Listeners are no longer passive recipients of musical content; instead, they actively contribute to online discussions, curate playlists, share performances, and sustain virtual fan communities.

Among university students, digital accessibility has further integrated music into everyday routines. Music accompanies a wide range of daily activities, including studying, travelling, exercising, leisure, and social interaction. This integration suggests that listening behaviour is embedded within students' lifestyles rather than occurring as an isolated leisure activity. Consequently, understanding listening behaviour requires consideration of both the frequency of music consumption and the motivations underlying musical choices. Gustavson et al. (2021) emphasise that the significance of music engagement lies not merely in how often individuals listen but also in the personal meaning and emotional value they attribute to those experiences.

Listening behaviour is therefore influenced by multiple interrelated factors. Individual preferences emerge through the interaction of personal experiences, emotional needs, peer influence, cultural familiarity, and technological convenience. Rather than selecting music randomly, listeners frequently choose songs that correspond to specific situations, memories, or personal values. Cross (2001) suggests that music functions as a socially embedded activity through which individuals communicate emotions, establish interpersonal connections, and participate in shared cultural practices. Accordingly, listening behaviour reflects both individual agency and broader social contexts.

An equally important determinant of listening behaviour is cultural environment. Musical preferences are often shaped by language, traditions, collective memories, and shared social experiences. Music performed in familiar cultural settings frequently acquires meanings that extend beyond aesthetic appreciation because it reinforces social identity and cultural continuity. Consequently, regional music occupies a distinctive position within many societies by preserving local heritage while simultaneously adapting to contemporary musical trends.

This cultural dimension is particularly evident in multilingual societies such as India, where regional music contributes significantly to the preservation of linguistic diversity and cultural identity. Assamese music represents an important component of the state's cultural heritage, reflecting historical experiences, social values, and artistic traditions. While influenced by changing musical styles and technological innovations, Assamese music continues to maintain strong connections with community life through festivals, educational institutions, cultural programmes, and digital media. These characteristics enable regional music to remain socially relevant while appealing to younger generations.

Within this cultural context, Zubeen Garg has emerged as one of the most influential figures in contemporary Assamese music. His artistic contributions extend across multiple musical genres while retaining a distinctive regional identity grounded in the Assamese language and culture. The widespread popularity of his music reflects not only artistic versatility but also its ability to resonate with listeners through themes closely connected to everyday experiences and regional values. As a result, his songs occupy a unique position within the musical lives of many young people in Assam.

For undergraduate students, engagement with Zubeen Garg's music represents more than repeated exposure to a popular artist. Their listening behaviour reflects broader patterns of cultural participation, digital media use, and attachment to regional music. Examining these behavioural patterns provides valuable insights into how young adults engage with culturally meaningful music within contemporary digital environments. Such understanding is

particularly important because listening behaviour constitutes the initial stage through which music may subsequently influence psychological experiences, social relationships, and fan identity.

Accordingly, the present study considers listening behaviour as the foundational dimension of music engagement. By examining students' listening frequency, preferred platforms, genre preferences, and patterns of engagement with Zubeen Garg's music, the study seeks to establish an empirical basis for understanding how culturally significant regional music becomes integrated into the everyday lives of undergraduate students in Assam. This perspective provides the conceptual starting point for examining the broader psychological and social outcomes associated with music engagement in the subsequent sections.

Music, Mental Well-being, and Emotional Regulation

Mental well-being is increasingly recognised as a multidimensional construct that encompasses emotional, psychological, and social functioning rather than merely the absence of mental illness. Contemporary health perspectives emphasise that individuals with positive mental well-being are better able to cope with daily stressors, maintain satisfying interpersonal relationships, realise their potential, and contribute meaningfully to society. Reflecting this broader understanding, the World Health Organization (2022) defines mental health as a state in which individuals recognise their abilities, manage the normal pressures of life, work productively, and participate effectively within their communities. This positive orientation has shifted research attention towards identifying everyday experiences that promote psychological flourishing and resilience.

A complementary explanation is offered by Keyes' (2002) Mental Health Continuum, which conceptualises mental health as existing on a continuum ranging from languishing to flourishing. According to this framework, psychological well-being is not simply the opposite of mental illness but represents varying levels of positive functioning across emotional, psychological, and social domains. Individuals who flourish generally demonstrate optimism, life satisfaction, purpose, and effective interpersonal functioning, whereas those experiencing languishing often report diminished motivation, emotional exhaustion, and reduced social participation. This perspective suggests that mental well-being can be strengthened through positive life experiences that encourage adaptive coping, emotional balance, and meaningful engagement.

One theoretical explanation for understanding the relationship between music and mental well-being is provided by Engel's (1977) Biopsychosocial Model. The model proposes that health outcomes emerge through the interaction of biological, psychological, and social processes rather than through biological mechanisms alone. Applied to music, this perspective suggests that musical experiences influence well-being by simultaneously stimulating emotional responses, cognitive appraisal, and interpersonal interaction. Consequently, the psychological benefits associated with music arise not only from its acoustic characteristics but also from the meanings listeners attach to particular songs and the contexts in which listening occurs.

Positive Psychology further strengthens this interpretation by emphasising the importance of experiences that foster positive emotions, resilience, engagement, and personal growth. Seligman (2011) argues that flourishing depends upon positive emotions, meaningful engagement, supportive relationships, accomplishment, and purpose. Music naturally intersects with several of these dimensions because it enables individuals to experience enjoyment, emotional expression, reflection, and psychological restoration. Rather than functioning merely as entertainment, music may therefore represent a positive psychological resource that contributes to everyday well-being.

Among the mechanisms linking music with mental health, emotional regulation has received particular scholarly attention. Emotional regulation refers to the processes through which individuals monitor, modify, and manage their

emotional experiences in response to changing situations. Effective regulation enables individuals to reduce emotional distress, maintain psychological balance, and respond adaptively to environmental demands. Music is especially relevant because listeners frequently select songs that correspond to their emotional needs, whether to relax, regain motivation, process difficult experiences, or enhance positive feelings.

Empirical evidence consistently supports the role of music in facilitating emotional regulation. In a comprehensive systematic review, Vidas et al. (2022) concluded that music listening is widely employed as an intentional strategy for regulating emotions in everyday life. Across diverse populations, individuals reported using music to alleviate stress, improve mood, reduce anxiety, maintain emotional stability, and recover from psychologically demanding experiences. Importantly, the review demonstrated that successful emotional regulation depends less on the amount of music consumed than on the purposeful selection of music that aligns with listeners' emotional objectives.

Expanding upon this perspective, Gustavson et al. (2021) proposed that the relationship between music engagement and mental health is best understood through interconnected emotional, cognitive, and social mechanisms. Their framework argues that psychological outcomes depend on the quality of engagement rather than listening frequency alone. Personal attachment to music, perceived meaning, cultural relevance, and active involvement collectively influence how music contributes to psychological functioning. Consequently, individuals exposed to similar musical experiences may derive different psychological benefits because emotional responses are shaped by personal interpretation and lived experience.

Evidence from university settings further reinforces these theoretical propositions. Wang et al. (2022) reported that regular engagement with music was positively associated with students' psychological adjustment and emotional well-being. Students who incorporated music into their daily routines demonstrated greater emotional stability and more effective adaptation to academic demands. These findings suggest that music may serve as an accessible coping resource during periods characterised by educational pressure, changing social relationships, and uncertainty regarding future careers.

The contribution of music to mental well-being is particularly relevant during emerging adulthood, a developmental period marked by substantial psychological and social transitions. University students frequently negotiate increased academic responsibilities, independent decision-making, career planning, and evolving interpersonal relationships. Such experiences often generate emotional challenges that require adaptive coping strategies. Because music is readily accessible, personally meaningful, and easily integrated into everyday life, it provides a practical means through which students can maintain emotional equilibrium without formal intervention. Nevertheless, the psychological influence of music should not be considered universal, as individual responses remain shaped by personality, previous experiences, cultural background, and the symbolic meanings associated with particular musical works.

Taken together, the available literature indicates that music engagement contributes to mental well-being through processes of emotional regulation, positive psychological functioning, and adaptive coping. Theoretical perspectives offered by Engel (1977), Keyes (2002), and Seligman (2011), together with empirical evidence reported by Gustavson et al. (2021), Vidas et al. (2022), and Wang et al. (2022), collectively suggest that meaningful engagement with music represents an important psychological resource during emerging adulthood. Building upon this understanding, the present study examines whether engagement with Zubeen Garg's music is similarly associated with undergraduate students' perceived mental well-being within the socio-cultural context of Assam.

Music, Social Connectedness, Cultural Identity, and Fan Engagement

Music is not only an individual experience but also a powerful social practice that fosters interaction, belonging, and collective identity. Across cultures, musical participation creates opportunities for individuals to communicate shared emotions, celebrate common traditions, and establish meaningful social relationships. Whether experienced through live performances, cultural festivals, educational institutions, or digital platforms, music provides a common space where individuals negotiate personal identities while strengthening their connections with wider communities (Cross, 2001). Consequently, contemporary scholarship increasingly views music as an important mechanism for promoting social cohesion and cultural continuity.

A central concept in understanding these processes is social connectedness, which refers to an individual's perceived sense of belonging and emotional closeness to others. Unlike the mere existence of social contacts, social connectedness reflects the quality of interpersonal relationships and the extent to which individuals feel accepted and supported within their social environment. Lee and Robbins (1995) describe social connectedness as a stable psychological disposition characterised by feelings of interpersonal intimacy and inclusion. Individuals who experience stronger social connectedness generally demonstrate greater confidence in social relationships, while weaker connectedness is often associated with loneliness and social disengagement.

The broader significance of social relationships has been demonstrated by Holt-Lunstad et al. (2015), whose meta-analysis identified loneliness and social isolation as important risk factors for adverse health outcomes. Their findings highlight that meaningful social relationships are fundamental components of human well-being and should be considered essential resources rather than optional aspects of everyday life. Within this context, shared cultural activities such as music become particularly important because they provide opportunities for interaction, cooperation, and the development of supportive social networks.

Music strengthens social connectedness by creating shared experiences that encourage communication and collective participation. Individuals who appreciate similar artists or musical traditions often develop friendships, exchange recommendations, attend performances together, and participate in discussions centred on their musical interests. Such interactions establish common cultural reference points that facilitate trust, mutual understanding, and a sense of belonging. Cross (2001) argues that music possesses a distinctive capacity to coordinate social behaviour because collective musical experiences encourage emotional synchronisation and cooperation among participants. Through these shared experiences, music becomes an important medium through which interpersonal relationships are initiated and maintained.

The social significance of music is further reinforced by the expansion of digital communication technologies. Contemporary audiences increasingly engage with music through online platforms that enable continuous interaction among listeners as well as between audiences and artists. According to Baym (2018), digital communication has transformed audiences from passive consumers into active participants who contribute to musical communities by sharing content, exchanging opinions, and participating in collaborative discussions. These forms of participation extend musical experiences beyond listening, allowing individuals to maintain on-going relationships with both artists and fellow admirers irrespective of geographical distance.

Beyond facilitating social interaction, music also contributes substantially to identity formation. Identity develops through continuous interaction between personal experiences and social environments, enabling individuals to define who they are and where they belong. During emerging adulthood, this developmental process becomes particularly significant as young people negotiate personal aspirations, cultural affiliations, and social roles. Musical preferences

frequently serve as visible expressions of these identities because they communicate values, lifestyles, emotional experiences, and cultural backgrounds.

The relationship between music and identity has been examined by Tekman and Hortaçsu (2002), who found that individuals associate different musical styles with distinct social meanings and personal characteristics. Musical preferences therefore function not only as expressions of aesthetic taste but also as symbolic indicators of identity that help individuals communicate aspects of themselves to others. Through repeated engagement with preferred artists and genres, music gradually becomes incorporated into individuals' self-concepts, influencing both personal identity and group affiliation.

These processes can be understood more comprehensively through Social Identity Theory proposed by Tajfel and Turner (1979). The theory argues that individuals derive part of their self-concept from membership in meaningful social groups. Such membership provides emotional security, shared norms, and collective identity. Within musical contexts, admiration for particular artists or genres often creates informal communities whose members share common interests, values, and experiences. Participation in these communities reinforces a sense of belonging while simultaneously strengthening both individual and collective identities.

An important manifestation of this process is fan engagement. Contemporary fandom extends far beyond admiration for an artist; it involves active participation, emotional investment, advocacy, and interaction within communities of fellow listeners. Fans attend performances, celebrate artistic achievements, exchange musical content, and contribute to discussions through digital media and face-to-face interactions. These activities create enduring social networks in which shared appreciation of an artist becomes the basis for collective identity. Baym (2018) suggests that such participatory relationships have become increasingly significant in the digital era, where communication technologies enable continuous engagement between artists and audiences.

The relationship between music and identity becomes particularly meaningful within regional cultural contexts. Regional music often reflects local languages, historical experiences, customs, and shared memories that distinguish one community from another. Consequently, engagement with regional music not only preserves cultural heritage but also reinforces collective identity among younger generations. Rather than competing with global popular culture, regional music frequently complements contemporary musical experiences by providing listeners with a sense of cultural continuity and local belonging.

This perspective is especially relevant in Assam, where music occupies a central position in the expression of regional culture. Assamese musical traditions continue to play an important role in festivals, educational activities, community celebrations, and public life, thereby strengthening connections between successive generations. Within this cultural environment, Zubeen Garg has become an influential cultural figure whose music reflects both contemporary artistic expression and enduring Assamese values. His popularity among young audiences illustrates how regional music can function simultaneously as a source of entertainment, cultural representation, and collective identity.

For undergraduate students, engagement with Zubeen Garg's music frequently extends beyond individual listening to include participation in cultural programmes, social media interactions, peer discussions, and community celebrations. These forms of participation illustrate that fan engagement represents a broader process of cultural involvement through which students express shared values, strengthen interpersonal relationships, and affirm their connection with Assamese identity. Accordingly, fan communities surrounding regional artists may contribute not only to cultural preservation but also to the development of supportive social networks among young adults.

Overall, existing literature indicates that music contributes to social connectedness and identity formation by creating opportunities for shared participation, interpersonal interaction, and collective cultural expression. Theoretical perspectives provided by Lee and Robbins (1995) and Tajfel and Turner (1979), together with empirical insights from Cross (2001), Baym (2018), Tekman and Hortaçsu (2002), and Holt-Lunstad et al. (2015), collectively demonstrate that musical engagement extends beyond personal enjoyment to become an important social and cultural experience. These perspectives provide the basis for examining how engagement with Zubeen Garg's music contributes to undergraduate students' social connectedness and fan identity within the distinctive socio-cultural environment of Assam.

Research Gap and Conceptual Framework

Existing literature consistently demonstrates that music contributes to emotional regulation, mental well-being, social interaction, and identity formation (Engel, 1977; Keyes, 2002; Gustavson et al., 2021; Vidas et al., 2022). Although these studies have established the psychological and social significance of music engagement, several important gaps remain.

First, most empirical research has been conducted in North American and European contexts. Given that music is deeply embedded within cultural traditions, language, and social practices, these findings may not fully explain music engagement in culturally diverse regions such as India. Context-specific investigations are therefore necessary to understand how regional music influences young people's psychological and social experiences.

Second, previous studies have largely examined music in relation to individual outcomes such as emotional regulation, stress reduction, mental well-being, social connectedness, or identity. Comparatively few studies have integrated listening behaviour, mental well-being, social connectedness, and fan identity within a single conceptual framework. Examining these dimensions simultaneously provides a more comprehensive understanding of how music engagement shapes students' everyday experiences.

Third, regional popular music remains relatively underexplored in the literature. Most studies focus on globally recognised genres or internationally popular artists, while the psychological and social influence of regional music has received limited empirical attention. This gap is particularly evident in India, where regional music represents an important medium for preserving language, culture, and collective identity.

Within Northeast India, research examining the influence of Assamese popular music on university students is especially scarce. Although Assamese music has been discussed from historical and cultural perspectives, empirical evidence linking regional music engagement with mental well-being, social connectedness, and fan identity remains limited. This lack of evidence highlights the need for systematic investigation within the regional context.

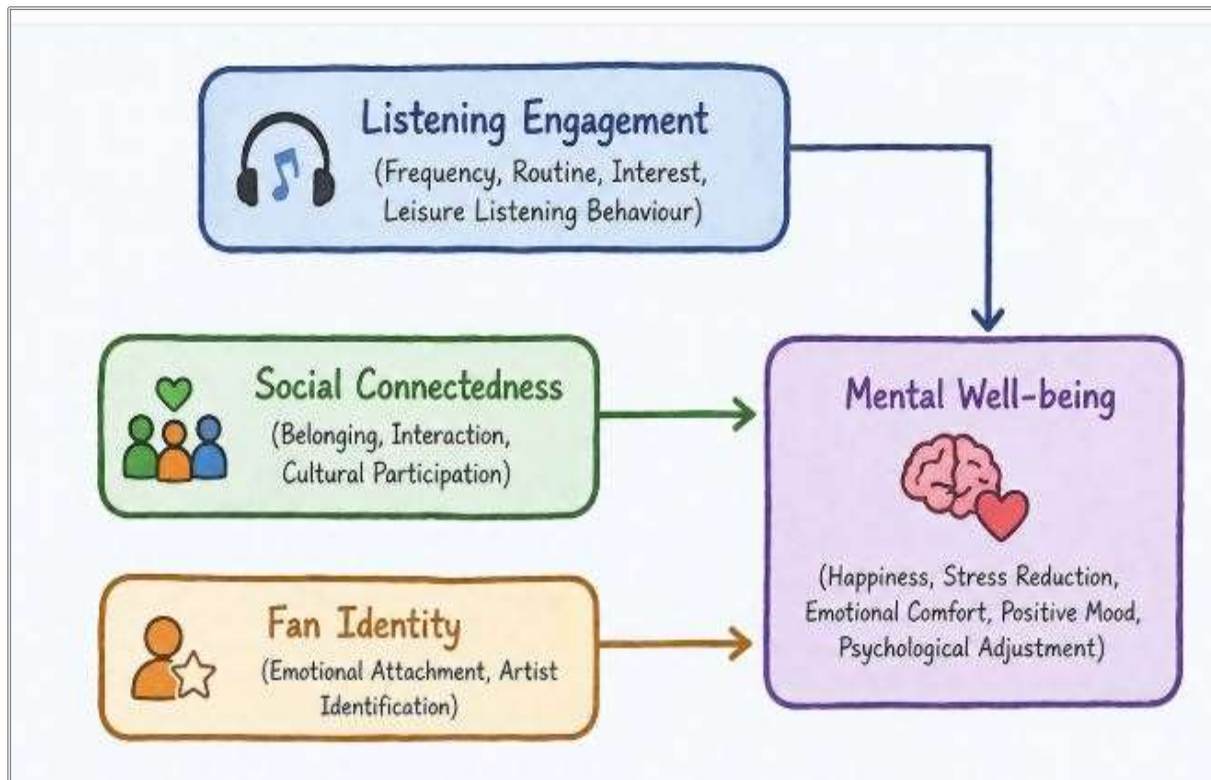
The present study addresses these gaps by examining undergraduate students' engagement with the music of Zubeen Garg, a prominent contemporary Assamese artist whose work reflects both regional cultural identity and modern musical expression. The study proposes a conceptual framework in which music engagement, operationalized through listening behaviour, serves as the independent variable influencing mental well-being, social connectedness, and fan identity. By integrating these constructs within a single empirical model, the study extends existing literature and contributes context-specific evidence on the role of regional music in shaping the psychological and social experiences of undergraduate students in Assam.

Proposed Conceptual Framework

The proposed conceptual framework suggests that engagement with Zubeen Garg's music positively influences undergraduate students' mental well-being through psychological, social, and cultural pathways. Listening

Engagement reflects students' frequency of listening, daily listening habits, interest in the artist, and leisure listening behaviour.

Figure1
Conceptual Framework of Listening Engagement and Mental Well-Being



Source: author compilation

Social Connectedness refers to the extent to which the music fosters interpersonal relationships, cultural participation, and a sense of belonging, while Fan Identity represents students' emotional attachment to and identification with the artist. Guided by Engel's Biopsychosocial Model (1977), Positive Psychology Theory (Seligman, 2011), and Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), the framework proposes that Listening Engagement, Social Connectedness, and Fan Identity each contribute positively to students' Mental Well-being, reflected in greater happiness, reduced stress, emotional comfort, positive mood, and improved psychological adjustment.

Research Questions

The present study is based on the following research question-

- 1.What are the listening habits and preferences of under graduate students regarding Zubeen Garg's music?
- 2.How do under graduate students perceive the influence of his music on their mental well-being?
- 3.In what ways does his music contribute to social connectedness and a sense of belonging among under graduate students?

Objective of the Study

The objectives framed for the present study are-

- 1.To examine the listening patterns and preferences of under graduate students regarding Zubeen Garg's music.
- 2.To explore the perceived role of his music in promoting mental well-being among under graduate students.
- 3.To investigate how his music contributes to social connectedness, cultural identity and a sense of belonging among under graduate students.

Scope of the Study

The present study focuses on undergraduate students enrolled in twelve selected colleges in Sivasagar district, Assam. It examines how students engage with Zubeen Garg's music and explores its relationship with mental well-being, social connectedness, and fan identity. The study is based on participants' self-reported perceptions and experiences rather than clinical assessments of mental health. As the research is limited to selected colleges in one district, the findings should be interpreted within this context and cannot be generalized to all undergraduate students or young people in Assam.

Methodology of the Study

Research Design

The present study employed a descriptive cross-sectional quantitative research design to examine the relationship between engagement with Zubeen Garg's music, mental well-being, social connectedness, and fan identity among undergraduate students in Sivasagar district of Assam. A quantitative approach was considered appropriate as the study aimed to measure students' listening patterns, perceptions, emotional experiences, and social responses through systematically collected numerical data. The descriptive nature of the research enabled the identification of existing trends, associations, and variations among the study variables without introducing any experimental intervention or manipulation of the research setting.

Study Area

The study was conducted in Sivasagar district of Assam, a region known for its historical importance, cultural heritage, and strong tradition of Assamese music and performing arts. Considering the educational diversity of the district, twelve undergraduate colleges were selected to obtain representation from different geographical locations and academic backgrounds. These institutions represent both rural and semi-urban areas of the district and provide undergraduate education across multiple disciplines.

Population of the Study

The population of the study consisted of all undergraduate students enrolled in the selected colleges during the period of investigation. The combined undergraduate enrolment of the twelve selected institutions was approximately 14,503 students, which constituted the sampling frame for the study. This population was considered appropriate for examining the musical preferences, psychological experiences, and social perceptions of undergraduate learners within the regional cultural context.

Sample Size and sample distribution

A total sample of 250 undergraduate students was selected for the study. The sample size was considered adequate for statistical analysis and for obtaining meaningful insights into students' engagement with Zubeen Garg's music. To ensure balanced gender representation and facilitate comparative analysis, the sample consisted of 125 male and 125 female respondents. The respondents were selected through a proportionate stratified sampling procedure. Each college was considered as an individual stratum, and the number of respondents selected from each institution was determined according to its proportion of the total undergraduate enrolment. This approach ensured that colleges with larger student populations received appropriate representation while maintaining the overall sample size. After determining the college-wise allocation, respondents were selected using random selection procedures.

Sampling Technique

The study adopted a proportionate stratified random sampling technique. The selected colleges served as different strata, and respondents were allocated proportionately based on institutional enrolment size. This method was adopted

to enhance the representativeness of the sample by ensuring participation from students across different colleges rather than relying on respondents from a single institution or location. Within each stratum, students were selected randomly while maintaining equal participation of male and female respondents.

Research Instrument

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed through an extensive review of existing literature related to music psychology, media psychology, youth behaviour, and audience engagement studies. The questionnaire consisted of five sections: demographic information, listening behaviour, mental well-being, social connectedness, and fan identity. The instrument contained 35 items designed to measure respondents' musical engagement, perceived psychological benefits, social experiences, and emotional attachment to Zubeen Garg's music. Items related to psychological and social dimensions were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). This scaling approach enabled systematic measurement of respondents' perceptions and attitudes.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

The validity of the research instrument was established through expert evaluation. The questionnaire was reviewed by scholars and experts from relevant academic areas, including media studies and psychology, to assess the clarity, relevance, and suitability of the items. Based on expert feedback, necessary modifications were incorporated before final data collection. A pilot study was conducted prior to the main survey to examine the reliability and effectiveness of the instrument. Internal consistency of the measurement scales was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. A value of 0.70 or above was considered acceptable, indicating satisfactory reliability of the scales used in the study.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was carried out after obtaining necessary permission from the authorities of the selected colleges. The purpose and objectives of the study were explained clearly to the participants before administering the questionnaire. Respondents were informed that participation was voluntary and that their responses would be used only for academic research purposes. The questionnaires were distributed and collected during scheduled visits to the selected institutions. Participants were provided sufficient time to complete the questionnaire, and anonymity was maintained throughout the data collection process. The completed questionnaires were carefully examined for completeness before coding and statistical analysis.

Data Analysis

The collected data were coded and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistical techniques, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, were applied to summarise demographic characteristics, listening patterns, and respondents' perceptions.

The reliability of the measurement scales was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. Pearson's correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships among listening engagement, mental well-being, social connectedness, and fan identity. Independent-samples t-test and one-way ANOVA were used to identify differences across demographic and behavioural categories. Multiple regression analysis was further employed to determine the predictive contribution of listening engagement, social connectedness, and fan identity towards mental well-being. The findings were presented through tables and interpreted in relation to the objectives and theoretical framework of the study.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The collected data were analyzed using appropriate descriptive and inferential statistical techniques to address the objectives of the study. For ease of presentation, the findings are organized according to each research objective.

Objective 1: To examine the listening patterns and preferences of undergraduate students regarding Zubeen Garg's music.

The analysis begins with an overview of respondents' demographic characteristics and listening behaviour, including listening frequency, preferred genres, listening platforms, and duration of engagement with Zubeen Garg's music.

Table 1
Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 250)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	125	50
	Female	125	50
	Total	250	100
Place of Residence	Rural	154	61.6
	Urban	96	38.4
	Total	250	100
Colleges	Gargaon College	62	24.8
	Sibsagar Girls' College	19	7.6
	Sibsagar Commerce College	16	6.4
	Amguri College	26	10.4
	Nazira College	17	6.8
	Demow College	16	6.4
	JHS College	15	6.0
	HCDG College	16	6.4
	Dikhowmukh College	11	4.4
	S P P College	14	5.6
	B L B College	23	9.2
	S M D College	15	6.0
	Total	250	100

Source: Compiled by the researcher based on primary survey data

The sample consisted of an equal number of male and female students, ensuring balanced gender representation. Most respondents were from rural areas (61.6%), and participants were drawn from twelve colleges across Sivasagar district, providing a diverse institutional representation.

Table 2
Frequency of Listening to Zubeen Garg's Music (N = 250)

Listening Frequency	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage (%)
Daily	88	35.2	35.2
Several times a week	73	29.2	64.4
Once a week	50	20	84.4
Occasionally	28	11.2	95.6
Rarely	11	4.4	100
Total	250	100	

Source: Compiled by the researcher based on primary survey data

The majority of students listened to Zubeen Garg's music either daily (35.2%) or several time a week (29.2%), indicating a consistently high level of engagement with his music among undergraduate students.

Table 3
Preferred Genre of Zubeen Garg's Songs

Genre	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Rank
Romantic	78	31.2	1
Folk	54	21.6	2
Modern Assamese	38	15.2	3
Patriotic	27	10.8	4
Motivational	26	10.4	5
Devotional	19	7.6	6
Bollywood	6	2.4	7
Others	2	0.8	8
Total	250	100	-

Source: Compiled by the researcher based on primary survey data

Romantic songs were the most preferred genre (31.2%), followed by Folk (21.6%) and Modern Assamese songs (15.2%). Bollywood songs were the least preferred (2.4%).

Table 4
Preferred Platform for Listening

Platform	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Rank
YouTube	111	44.4	1
Spotify	46	18.4	2
JioSaavn	39	15.6	3
Gaana	28	11.2	4
Personal Collection	11	4.4	5

Television	9	3.6	6
Others	4	1.6	7
Radio	2	0.8	8
Total	250	100	-

Source: Compiled by the researcher based on primary survey data

YouTube emerged as the dominant listening platform (44.4%), followed by Spotify (18.4%) and JioSaavn (15.6%), highlighting the importance of digital streaming services.

Table 5
Duration of Listening to Zubeen Garg's Music

Duration	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage (%)
Less than 1 year	21	8.4	8.4
1–3 years	53	21.2	29.6
4–6 years	74	29.6	59.2
More than 6 years	102	40.8	100
Total	250	100	

Source: Compiled by the researcher based on primary survey data

Nearly two-fifths (40.8%) had been listening to Zubeen Garg's music for more than six years, indicating long-term familiarity and sustained engagement.

Objective 2: To explore the perceived role of Zubeen Garg's music in promoting mental well-being among undergraduate students.

This section examines students' perceptions of the influence of Zubeen Garg's music on their mental well-being. It also presents the reliability of the measurement scales and the results of the t-test and one-way ANOVA.

Table 6
Reliability Analysis of the Study Variables

Construct	No. of Items	Cronbach's α
Listening Engagement	4	0.836
Mental Well-being	10	0.903
Social Connectedness	7	0.882
Fan Identity	6	0.869
Overall Scale	27	0.891

Source: Compiled by the researcher based on primary survey data

All study constructs demonstrated good to excellent internal consistency ($\alpha=.836-.903$), confirming that the questionnaire was highly reliable for measuring the intended variables.

Table 7
Listening Engagement among Undergraduate Students (N = 250)

Code	Statement	Mean	SD
LE1	I listen to Zubeen Garg's music regularly.	4.31	0.73
LE2	Listening to his songs is part of my daily routine.	4.27	0.76
LE3	I actively search for his new songs.	4.14	0.82
LE4	I enjoy spending my leisure time listening to his music.	4.22	0.79
OVERALL	Listening Engagement	4.22	0.78
Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree			

Source: Compiled by the researcher based on primary survey data

Students reported a high level of listening engagement ($M = 4.22$), suggesting that listening to Zubeen Garg's music forms an important part of their daily routine and leisure activities.

Table 8
Mental Well-being of Respondents (N = 250)

Code	Statement	Mean	SD
MW1	Listening to Zubeen Garg's music makes me feel happy.	4.48	0.65
MW2	His songs help me reduce stress.	4.35	0.72
MW3	His music improves my mood.	4.39	0.70
MW4	His songs help me cope with emotional difficulties.	4.16	0.81
MW5	I feel relaxed after listening to his music.	4.37	0.71
MW6	Listening to his music gives me emotional comfort.	4.21	0.77
MW7	His songs motivate me during difficult times.	4.26	0.75
MW8	His music helps me maintain a positive attitude.	4.33	0.73
MW9	His songs reduce my feelings of loneliness.	4.41	0.69
MW10	Overall, his music contributes to my mental well-being.	4.46	0.67
Overall Mean		4.34	0.72

Source: Compiled by the researcher based on primary survey data

Students strongly agreed that Zubeen Garg's music contributes positively to their emotional well-being ($M=4.34$), particularly by improving happiness, reducing stress, and providing emotional comfort.

Table 9
Overall Level of Mental Well-being

Mental Well-being Level	Score Range	Frequency	Percentage
High	3.68–5.00	168	67.2
Moderate	2.34–3.67	64	25.6
Low	1.00–2.33	18	7.2

Total		250	100.0
Mean = 4.34 SD = 0.72			

Source: Compiled by the researcher based on primary survey data

More than two-thirds (67.2%) of respondents reported high mental well-being associated with listening to Zubeen Garg's music, whereas only 7.2% reported low well-being.

Table 10

Independent Samples t-test Showing Gender Differences in Mental Well-being (N = 250)

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Mean Difference	95% CI of Mean Difference	t	df	p	Cohen's d
Male	125	4.28	0.51						
Female	125	4.40	0.47	0.12	0.002 to 0.238	2.01	248	0.046	0.24

Source: Compiled by the researcher based on primary survey data

Female students reported significantly higher mental well-being than males ($t=2.01$, $p=.046$), although the effect size ($d=.24$) indicates that the practical difference was small.

Table 11

One-way ANOVA Showing Differences in Mental Well-being Based on Listening Frequency (N = 250)

(a) Group Statistics

Listening Frequency	N	Mean	SD
Daily	88	4.56	0.39
Several times a week	73	4.38	0.44
Once a week	50	4.21	0.48
Occasionally	28	4.02	0.52
Rarely	11	3.88	0.61

Source: Compiled by the researcher based on primary survey data

(b) ANOVA Summary

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P	η^2
Between Groups	8.31	4	2.08	5.42	0.001	0.08
Within Groups	94.18	245	0.38			
Total	102.49	249				

Source: Compiled by the researcher based on primary survey data

(c) Tukey HSD Post Hoc Comparisons for Mental Well-being by Listening Frequency (N = 250)

Comparison	Mean Difference (I-J)	95% CI	p	Interpretation
Daily vs. Several times a week	0.18	-0.01, 0.37	.071	Not Significant
Daily vs. Once a week	0.35	0.14, 0.56	.002	Significant
Daily vs. Occasionally	0.54	0.30, 0.78	<.001	Significant

Daily vs. Rarely	0.68	0.31, 1.05	<.001	Significant
Several times a week vs. Once a week	0.17	-0.04, 0.38	.168	Not Significant
Several times a week vs. Occasionally	0.36	0.12, 0.60	.004	Significant
Several times a week vs. Rarely	0.50	0.13, 0.87	.008	Significant
Once a week vs. Occasionally	0.19	-0.06, 0.44	.202	Not Significant
Once a week vs. Rarely	0.33	-0.06, 0.72	.107	Not Significant
Occasionally vs. Rarely	0.14	-0.29, 0.57	.883	Not Significant

Source: Compiled by the researcher based on primary survey data

Mental well-being differed significantly across listening-frequency groups ($F = 5.42$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .08$). Students who listened daily reported significantly higher well-being than those who listened once a week, occasionally, or rarely. The post hoc analysis indicates that more frequent engagement is associated with higher perceived well-being.

Objective 3: To investigate how Zubeen Garg's music contributes to social connectedness and fan identity among undergraduate students.

This section presents the findings on social connectedness and fan identity, followed by correlation and multiple regression analyses to examine the relationships among the study variables and identify the predictors of mental well-being.

Table 12
Social Connectedness among Undergraduate Students (N = 250)

Code	Statement	Mean	SD
SC1	Strengthens my emotional connection with Assamese culture.	4.58	0.60
SC2	Creates a sense of belonging among listeners.	4.37	0.69
SC3	I often discuss his songs with my friends.	4.23	0.77
SC4	Encourages me to participate in cultural programmes.	4.30	0.74
SC5	Makes me feel connected with Assamese society.	4.51	0.64
SC6	Improves my relationships with others.	4.17	0.81
SC7	Motivates me to engage in community activities.	4.02	0.86
Overall	Social Connectedness	4.31	0.73

Source: Compiled by the researcher based on primary survey data

Respondents reported high levels of social connectedness ($M=4.31$) and fan identity ($M=4.26$), indicating that Zubeen Garg's music strengthens cultural belonging and emotional attachment among undergraduate students.

Table 13
Overall Level of Social Connectedness

Level	Score Range	Frequency	Percentage
High	3.68-5.00	174	69.6
Moderate	2.34-3.67	58	23.2
Low	1.00-2.33	18	7.2
Total		250	100.0
Overall Mean = 4.31 SD = 0.73			

Source: Compiled by the researcher based on primary survey data

Nearly 70% of respondents demonstrated a high level of social connectedness, suggesting that engagement with Zubeen Garg's music contributes to feelings of belonging and community participation.

Table 14

Fan Identity among Undergraduate Students

Code	Statement	Mean	SD
FI1	I consider myself a fan	4.42	0.69
FI2	I regularly follow his musical activities	4.15	0.80
FI3	His music reflects my personality	4.19	0.79
FI4	I recommend his songs to others	4.31	0.73
FI5	His music has influenced my outlook on life	4.10	0.84
FI6	I feel emotionally connected to his music	4.38	0.71
Overall	Fan Identity	4.26	0.76

Source: Compiled by the researcher based on primary survey data

Respondents expressed a strong fan identity ($M = 4.26$), especially regarding emotional attachment to the artist and willingness to recommend his music to others.

Table 15

Overall Level of Fan Identity

Level	Score Range	Frequency	Percentage
High	3.68-5.00	170	68
Moderate	2.34-3.67	61	24.4
Low	1.00-2.33	19	7.6
Total		250	100.0
Overall Mean = 4.26 SD = 0.76			

Source: Compiled by the researcher based on primary survey data

Most respondents (68%) exhibited a high level of fan identity, indicating that admiration for Zubeen Garg extends beyond casual listening to a deeper emotional and cultural connection.

Table 16

Pearson Correlation

Variable	LE	MW	SC	FI
Listening Engagement (LE)	1			
Mental Well-being (MW)	0.71	1		
Social Connectedness (SC)	0.69	0.76	1	
Fan Identity (FI)	0.74	0.72	0.82	1
N=250, $p < .001$				

Source: Compiled by the researcher based on primary survey data

Listening Engagement, Mental Well-being, Social Connectedness, and Fan Identity were all strongly and positively correlated. The strongest relationship was observed between Social Connectedness and Fan Identity ($r=.82$), indicating that greater social bonding through music is associated with stronger fan identification.

Table 17

Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Mental Well-being (N = 250)

Dependent Variable: Mental Well-being

Predictor	B	SE(B)	β	t	p	95% CI for B	Tolerance	VIF
Constant	1.284	0.214	-	5.99	<0.001	0.863, 1.705	—	-
Listening Engagement	0.34	0.053	0.36	6.41	<0.001	0.236,0.444	0.54	1.84
Social Connectedness	0.29	0.052	0.31	5.56	<0.001	0.188, 0.392	0.47	2.12
Fan Identity	0.18	0.046	0.21	3.89	<0.001	0.090, 0.270	0.51	1.95
Model Summary								
Statistic					Value			
R					0.812			
R ²					0.660			
Adjusted R ²					0.656			
Standard Error of the Estimate					0.620			
F					157.82			
df					(3,246)			
p					<0.001			
B = unstandardized regression coefficient; SE = standard error; β = standardized regression coefficient; CI = confidence interval; VIF = variance inflation factor.								

Source: Compiled by the researcher based on primary survey data

Multiple regression analysis revealed that the overall model was statistically significant, $F(3, 246) = 157.82$, $p < .001$, explaining 66.0% of the variance in mental well-being ($R^2 = .660$, Adjusted $R^2 = .656$). Listening Engagement emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = .36$, $p < .001$), followed by Social Connectedness ($\beta = .31$, $p < .001$) and Fan Identity ($\beta = .21$, $p < .001$). All predictors had positive and statistically significant effects, indicating that higher levels of engagement with Zubeen Garg's music, stronger social connectedness, and greater fan identity were associated with better mental well-being. The tolerance values (0.47–0.54) and VIF values (1.84–2.12) were within acceptable limits, confirming that multicollinearity was not a concern.

Table 18

Regression Assumption Tests

Assumption	Test Statistic	Criterion	Decision
Normality	Shapiro–Wilk = 0.992, $p = 0.086$	$p > .05$	Satisfied
Skewness	-0.34	± 2.00	Acceptable

Kurtosis	0.41	± 7.00	Acceptable
Linearity	Visual inspection of scatter plot	Linear relationship observed	Satisfied
Homoscedasticity	Visual inspection of standardized residual plot	Constant variance of residuals	Satisfied
Multicollinearity	VIF = 1.84–2.12	<5.00	No Multicollinearity
Tolerance	0.47–0.54	>0.20	Acceptable
Independence of Errors	Durbin–Watson = 1.94	1.5–2.5	No Autocorrelation

Source: Compiled by the researcher based on primary survey data

All major assumptions for multiple regressions were satisfied. The data showed acceptable normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, independence of errors, and no evidence of multicollinearity, supporting the validity and robustness of the regression results.

Findings and Discussion

The study demonstrates that Zubeen Garg's music has become an integral part of the everyday experiences of undergraduate students in Sivasagar district. Regular listening patterns and long-term engagement indicate that students do not view his music merely as leisure activity; instead, they integrate it into their daily routines and personal lives. The popularity of romantic and folk songs further suggests that student's value music that reflects both emotional expression and regional cultural identity. The dominance of digital streaming platforms, particularly YouTube, also illustrates how technological accessibility has expanded the reach of Assamese regional music among younger audiences.

The psychological dimension of the findings is equally significant. Students consistently perceived the music as a source of emotional stability, reporting greater happiness, relaxation, optimism, and relief from stress. These perceptions indicate that music functions as a readily available emotional resource during the demands of university life. Rather than relying solely on external support systems, students appear to use familiar musical experiences as a means of maintaining emotional balance.

The analysis further revealed that students who listened more frequently reported better mental well-being than less frequent listeners. Although the research design does not permit causal inference, the pattern suggests that sustained engagement with personally meaningful music is associated with more positive psychological experiences. Gender differences were statistically significant but practically small, indicating that the perceived benefits of music are broadly shared by male and female students.

Beyond its emotional influence, the findings emphasize the social significance of regional music. Students reported that Zubeen Garg's songs strengthen their connection with Assamese culture, encourage interaction with peers, and foster participation in cultural activities. These outcomes illustrate that music serves as a shared cultural experience capable of reinforcing interpersonal relationships and collective belonging.

Fan identity emerged as another important outcome of music engagement. Emotional attachment to the artist was accompanied by a willingness to follow his work, recommend his songs, and identify with the values represented through his music. The strong relationship between fan identity and social connectedness suggests that admiration for the artist develops within a broader process of cultural participation rather than individual preference alone.

The regression model further confirms that listening engagement, social connectedness, and fan identity each contribute independently to students' mental well-being, with listening engagement exerting the strongest influence. Collectively, these findings reinforce the view that regional music promotes psychological well-being through multiple pathways, combining emotional experience, cultural attachment, and social interaction. In this respect, the study extends existing music psychology research by demonstrating that culturally embedded regional music can play a meaningful role in enhancing students' quality of life.

Conclusion

This study provides empirical evidence that engagement with Zubeen Garg's music is positively associated with undergraduate students' psychological and social well-being. Regular listening, stronger cultural attachment, and greater identification with the artist were all linked with more favourable well-being outcomes, highlighting the multidimensional influence of regional music on young adults.

The research contributes to music psychology by shifting attention from globally dominant musical contexts to a culturally specific setting in Northeast India. It demonstrates that regional popular music should be understood not only as a form of artistic expression but also as a cultural resource that supports emotional resilience and social belonging. By integrating listening engagement, fan identity, and social connectedness within a single analytical framework, the study offers a broader understanding of how music contributes to student well-being.

Given that the research was conducted among undergraduate students in selected colleges of Sivasagar district using a cross-sectional survey, the findings should be interpreted within this context. Future investigations may employ longitudinal, qualitative, or comparative approaches to examine whether similar patterns emerge across different regions, age groups, and musical traditions.

Practical Implications

The findings suggest that regional music can be used as a meaningful resource to support student well-being and cultural engagement. Higher education institutions may integrate regional music into campus events and cultural activities to strengthen students' sense of belonging and participation. Counseling and wellness centres can also consider culturally familiar music as a supportive tool for promoting relaxation and emotional well-being. In addition, cultural organizations and policymakers can encourage regional music initiatives that preserve local heritage while fostering youth engagement. Overall, the study highlights that regional music can contribute not only to cultural preservation but also to the emotional and social development of young people.

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