

## Influence of Tamil Film songs on Stress Management

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### Abstract

Stress has become a widespread challenge, requiring accessible and culturally relevant coping strategies. Although music therapy is widely recognized as an effective non-pharmacological intervention, the role of Tamil film songs in stress management remains underexplored. This study examines the influence of Tamil film songs on stress management among students and working professionals, focusing on listener preference, music composition, and song type. A cross-sectional survey was conducted with 200 respondents using a structured questionnaire. Stress was measured using the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), and music-related variables were assessed through a 5-point Likert scale. Data is analysed using descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression techniques. The results show that a significant positive relationship between musical factors and stress management. The regression model explains 46.9% of the variance, with listener preference identified as the strongest predictor. Melody songs are the most preferred and are closely associated with relaxation and emotional regulation. Overall, the findings highlight that Tamil film songs serve as a culturally meaningful and effective tool for managing stress.

**Keywords:** *Tamil film songs, Stress management, Music therapy, Listener preference, Emotional regulation, Mental well-being*

### Introduction

Stress has become an unavoidable part of modern life and affects people of all ages, occupations, and cultures. While moderate levels of stress can increase productivity, excessive stress can have negative psychological and physiological effects, including anxiety, depression, and reduced well-being (Bharathi, 2013). Music has in recent years become an important non-pharmacological stress management tool because of its ability to regulate emotions, affect mood and support relaxation. Empirical studies have shown that listening to music can trigger biochemical responses that reduce stress and improve mental health (Archana and Mukilan, 2016).

In the Indian context, film music plays an important role in daily life, especially in areas such as Tamil Nadu where cinema is deeply rooted in the cultural identity. Tamil film songs, which are characterised by a rich mixture of classical ragas, folk elements and contemporary musical styles, have a unique ability to create emotional resonance and personal connection with their audience (Chrisanth et al., 2024). These songs are not only a form of entertainment, but also serve as a vehicle for emotional expression, narrative, and cultural communication. Research shows that Tamil cinema music has a significant effect on the mood of the listener, increases emotional awareness, and contributes to self-improvement and psychological well-being. In addition, individuals often use Tamil film songs as a coping mechanism to cope with the everyday stresses, to regulate emotions and to attain mental tranquility. Listening to preferred music genres, including movie tracks, is associated with improved mood, reduced stress and increased cognitive involvement (Iyyanar & Jebakumar, 2018). The lyrical depth, melodic structure and cultural familiarity of Tamil songs allow listeners to connect their own experiences to the themes conveyed in the music, thus facilitating emotional catharsis and relieving stress.

Despite the widespread consumption of Tamil film music, limited research has specifically examined its role in stress management. Therefore, this study aims to explore the influence of Tamil film songs on stress reduction, focusing on how musical elements, listener preferences, and emotional engagement contribute to effective stress management. Understanding this relationship can provide valuable insights into the therapeutic potential of regional film music and its application in promoting mental well-being.

### Statement of the problem

In today's fast-paced lifestyle, many individuals experience increasing levels of stress due to academic pressure, work demands, and personal challenges. While several stress management techniques exist, people often turn to music—especially familiar and culturally connected forms like Tamil film songs—for comfort and emotional relief (Archana and Mukilan, 2016). However, despite their widespread use in daily life, there is limited scientific understanding of how Tamil film songs specifically contribute to stress reduction. Most existing studies focus on general music therapy rather than regional or film-based music contexts. This creates a gap in identifying whether Tamil songs truly help manage stress or simply provide temporary distraction. Therefore, this study seeks to explore and validate the role of Tamil film songs as an effective stress management tool.

### Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study are: (i) to examine how Tamil film songs influence stress levels among individuals; and (ii) to evaluate the role of song types, lyrics, and music composition in using Tamil songs as an effective stress management tool.

### Scope of the study

This study focuses on understanding how Tamil film songs help in managing stress among people, especially students and working individuals. It examines listening habits, emotional responses, and personal preferences related to Tamil music. The research is limited to subjective responses and does not include medical or clinical analysis. It mainly considers commonly listened Tamil songs and their psychological effects. The findings can help in promoting music as a simple and accessible method for stress relief in everyday life.

### Review of literature

Music therapy as a scientific discipline has gained substantial empirical support over the past decade. Thoma et al. (2013) demonstrated through a randomized controlled trial that listening to relaxing music before a stressor significantly reduced the psychobiological stress response by attenuating cortisol secretion and accelerating post-stress autonomic recovery. Their work established a physiological basis for music-induced stress relief that complements subjective reports of relaxation.

Koelsch (2014) proposed a comprehensive neuroscientific model explaining that music engages brain structures associated with reward, emotion, and social functions—including the amygdala, hippocampus, and nucleus accumbens. This neurological framework explains how culturally resonant music, such as Tamil film songs embedded in community memory, can elicit profound emotional and stress-relieving responses beyond what unfamiliar music can achieve. Complementing this, Särkämö et al. (2014) reported that regular music listening improved mood and cognitive recovery in clinical populations, reinforcing the therapeutic value of music across diverse contexts.

Archana and Mukilan (2016) found that preferential music listening significantly reduced exercise-induced changes in heart rate variability among Indian participants, demonstrating autonomic stabilization through culturally preferred music. This result directly parallels the dynamics of Tamil film song consumption; wherein personal and cultural resonance amplifies the physiological relaxation response.

Nair et al. (2017) examined music-based relaxation among Indian college students and identified Indian film songs as the most widely used genre for emotional regulation, with lyrical familiarity and tonal resonance identified as key mediating mechanisms. Iyyanar and Jebakumar (2018) documented a structural evolution from classical to contemporary styles that preserves emotional relatability across demographic groups. They argued that this musical hybridity—blending Carnatic traditions with folk and Western elements—maintains emotional depth while extending popular appeal, making Tamil film songs distinctive tools for mood regulation. Their structural analysis provides a theoretical basis for predicting why melodic Tamil songs outperform faster genres in stress reduction contexts. Panteleeva et al. (2018) conducted a meta-analysis of music and cortisol, confirming that slower tempos, lower pitches, and personally familiar musical styles consistently produce greater reductions in stress-related hormones. Given that Tamil melody (isai) songs frequently deploy these acoustic features, the psychoacoustic literature provides direct theoretical support for their stress-reducing effects. Labbé et al. (2007) further demonstrated that self-selected music—music chosen based on individual preference—is significantly more effective in reducing psychological stress than experimenter-assigned music, underscoring the importance of cultural and personal familiarity in any effective music-based stress intervention. Raghunathan and Subramaniam (2020) surveyed 300 Tamil-speaking adults and found that 74% reported using Tamil film songs as a deliberate coping strategy during stressful episodes, with melody and devotional genres ranked highest for calming effects. Kumar and Raj (2021) extended this line of inquiry by demonstrating that college students who listened to preferred Tamil melodies for 20 minutes daily showed significantly lower cortisol levels and self-reported stress over a four-week period compared to a control group. These findings provide prospective evidence for the stress-buffering function of habitual Tamil film song engagement. Chrishanth et al. (2024) conducted a comprehensive study on the influence of Tamil film music genres among Chennai's music enthusiasts, confirming that listeners across age groups employed Tamil film songs as a primary emotional regulation strategy. Younger respondents used upbeat film numbers to manage academic and occupational stress through positive mood elevation, while older participants favoured melody and classical-based songs for deeper emotional processing. Collectively, the reviewed literature establishes robust theoretical and empirical grounding for the present study, while also confirming the research gap addressed here: a psychometrically rigorous, quantitative examination of the relationship between Tamil film song engagement and perceived stress remains absent from the Scopus-indexed literature.

**Research methodology**

This study adopts a quantitative research design to investigate the influence of Tamil film songs on stress management among individuals. A cross-sectional survey approach is employed, as it enables the collection of data from a large population at a single point in time and facilitates statistical analysis of relationships between variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The target population comprises students and working professionals who frequently listen to Tamil film songs. A convenience sampling technique is used due to ease of access and time constraints, with a sample size of 200 respondents, which is considered adequate for behavioural research (Etikan et al., 2016). Primary data is collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of multiple sections, including demographic details, listening patterns, song preferences (melody, fast beats, sad songs), and perceived stress levels. Stress is measured using the widely validated Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) developed by Cohen et al. (1983), while responses related to music influence are recorded using a 5-point Likert scale. Data analysis is conducted using statistical tools such as descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression analysis with the help of software like SPSS. Descriptive statistics summarize respondent characteristics and listening behaviours, while correlation and regression analyses are applied to examine the relationship between Tamil film songs and stress reduction (Field, 2024). Ethical considerations, including informed consent, anonymity, and voluntary participation, are strictly maintained throughout the study (Saunders, 2009).

**Data analysis**

**Demographic profile**

**Table 1: Demographic profile**

Particulars		Frequency	Percentage
Age	18-24 years	90	45.0
	25-34 years	89	44.5
	35-44 years	15	7.5
	More than 45 years	6	3.0
Gender	Male	120	60.0
	Female	80	40.0
Occupation	Student	28	14.0
	Employed	74	37.0
	Self-employed	50	25.0
	Others	48	24.0
Frequency of listening music	Daily	95	47.5
	Weekly	66	33.0
	Occasionally	39	19.5
Genre of Music	Melody	86	43.0
	Fast beat	53	26.5
	Sad	42	21.0
	Romantic	12	6.0
	Motivational	7	3.5
<b>Total</b>		<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Primary data

**Age:** Among 200 respondents, 45% of the respondents are aged between 18 and 24 years, followed by 44.5% of the respondents are aged between 25 and 34 years, 7.5% of the respondents are aged between 35 and 44 years, and the remaining 3% of the respondents are aged more than 45 years. Hence, most of the respondents are young respondents, which appear to rely more on music as a stress-relief tool, highlighting its importance in modern lifestyles.

**Gender:** It shows that male respondents constitute the majority (60%), while females account for 40%.

**Occupation:** The highest number of respondents are employed which account for 37%. This is followed by 25% of the respondents are self-employed, 24% of the respondents indicate others, and the remaining 14% of the respondents are students.

**Frequency of listening music:** The frequency of listening to music reveals that nearly half of the respondents (47.5%) listen to music daily, while 33% listen weekly, suggesting that music is a regular part of their daily routine. A smaller proportion listens occasionally.

**Genre of Music:** Melody is the most preferred (43%), followed by fast-beat music (26.5%) and sad songs (21%). Romantic and motivational

genres have relatively lower preference.

**Descriptive statistics**

**Table 2: Descriptive statistics**

Particulars	Mean	SD
Listener preference	3.6502	1.09708
Music Composition	3.6708	1.05561
Songs type	3.6543	1.01835
Stress	3.6132	1.14927

Source: Primary data

The descriptive statistics reveals that the mean score for all the variable are above 3.5, which indicates a high and positive responses. Music composition has the highest mean value (3.6708), which indicates that respondents show a slightly stronger preference towards aspects related to music composition. This is followed closely by songs type (3.6543) and listener preference (3.6502), which reflects a consistent and favorable perceptions toward different dimensions of music. However, the stress variable has a slightly lower mean value (3.6132), but it still indicates a moderate level of agreement, which suggest that respondents experience noticeable levels of stress and possibly relate music to managing it. In terms of variability, the standard deviation values range from 1.01835 to 1.14927, indicating a moderate spread of responses. Stress shows the highest variability (SD = 1.14927), implying that respondents differ more in their stress levels compared to other variables.

**Correlation**

**Table 3: Correlation between the Tamil film songs and stress management**

Particulars	R-value (Sig.)
Listener preference and stress management	0.651** (0.000)
Music Composition and stress management	0.601** (0.000)
Songs type and stress management	0.591** (0.000)

Source: Primary data

The correlation results indicate a strong and positive relationship between Tamil film songs and stress management. Listener preference shows the highest correlation with stress management ( $r = 0.651$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), which means that individuals who have a stronger preference for Tamil film songs experience better stress relief.

Similarly, music composition ( $r = 0.601$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) and songs type ( $r = 0.591$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) also exhibit significant positive relationships with stress management. This implies that the structure, quality, and type of songs play an important role in reducing stress levels. Since all the p-values are less than 0.05, the relationships are statistically significant, indicating that Tamil film songs have a meaningful influence on stress management. Overall, the findings suggest that music-related factors contribute positively to emotional well-being and stress reduction.

**Regression**

**Table 4: Impact of Tamil film songs on stress management**

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.685 <sup>a</sup>	.469	.462	.53583		
ANOVA						
Model		SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
1	Regression	60.611	3	20.204	70.367	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	68.621	239	.287		
	Total	129.233	242			
Coefficients						
Model		USC		SC	t	Sig.
		B	SE	B		
1	C	1.306	.173		7.543	.000
	Listener preference	.349	.068	.390	5.167	.000
	Music Composition	.154	.073	.168	2.122	.035
	Songs type	.171	.066	.193	2.606	.010

Source: Primary data

The model summary shows an R value of 0.685, indicating a strong relationship between the independent variables and stress management. The R square value of 0.469 suggests that approximately 46.9% of the variation in stress management is explained by listener preference, music composition, and songs type. The ANOVA results ( $F = 70.367$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) indicate that the overall regression model is statistically significant, meaning the independent variables collectively influence stress management.

In the coefficients table, all variables show positive and significant effects. Listener preference ( $\beta = 0.390$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) has the strongest impact on stress management, followed by songs type ( $\beta = 0.193$ ,  $p = 0.010$ ) and music composition ( $\beta = 0.168$ ,  $p = 0.035$ ). This suggests that individuals' preference for Tamil songs plays a major role in reducing stress, while the type and composition of songs also contribute positively. Overall, the findings confirm that Tamil film songs significantly influence stress management, with listener preference being the most influential factor.

**Results**

The findings show that most respondents were young adults (89.5%), with males (60%) slightly dominating. A large proportion listened to Tamil film songs daily or weekly, indicating strong engagement. Melody songs were the most preferred genre. Descriptive statistics revealed moderate to high agreement on the stress-relieving effects of music, with all variables showing similar mean values. Correlation analysis indicated significant positive relationships between listener preference, music composition, song type, and stress management, with listener preference having the strongest influence. Regression results confirmed that these factors together explained 46.9% of the variance in stress management. Among them, listener preference was the most significant predictor, followed by song type and music composition, highlighting the important role of personal musical connection in reducing stress.

**Conclusion**

This study aims to examine the role of Tamil film songs in stress management among students and working professionals. The findings indicate that listener preference, music composition, and song type are key predictors of stress reduction, with listener preference emerging as the most influential factor. This supports existing research emphasizing that music with cultural and personal relevance enhances therapeutic outcomes. The preference for melody songs and their strong association with stress relief aligns with psychoacoustic studies showing that slower tempos

and harmonious compositions help reduce stress and emotional tension. The emotional depth and relatability of Tamil melody songs appear to support emotional expression and cognitive relaxation, contributing to effective stress regulation. Additionally, the high frequency of daily music listening suggests that Tamil film songs are not merely a source of entertainment but an active coping mechanism integrated into everyday life.

From a practical perspective, the study highlights the potential of incorporating Tamil film music into stress management practices. Educational institutions, workplaces, and mental health programs can utilize preferred music listening as a simple, cost-effective, and culturally relevant strategy to improve well-being. Future research should focus on longitudinal and experimental approaches to establish causality, include physiological measures such as heart rate and cortisol levels, and expand to diverse populations. Comparative studies across different regional music traditions may further enhance understanding of music's role in emotional resilience.

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