

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Rhythms of Resistance: The Cultural Dynamics and Emotional Resonance of Iranian Rap in the Iranian Soundscape

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Abstract

This paper delves into the dynamic interplay between Iranian rap music and its audience within Iran's socio-political context, marked by stringent censorship and authoritarianism. Drawing on theoretical frameworks from James C. Scott and Pierre Bourdieu, the study explores Iranian rap as a medium for 'hidden transcripts'—a subtle form of resistance against oppressive structures. Through qualitative analysis, including participant observation and in-depth interviews with Iranian rap listeners, the research uncovers the genre's emotional impact and its implications for individual and collective identity, cultural continuity, and political resistance. The findings reveal that Iranian rap music resonates deeply with Iranian youth, providing empowerment, solidarity, and a sense of community. It articulates a narrative of resistance, reflecting the complex interplay between fear and courage, nostalgia and loss, hope and aspiration. The music becomes a vehicle for expressing not only immediate frustrations but also broader societal aspirations. This paper contributes to the discourse on music as a form of cultural resistance, highlighting Iranian rap's role in shaping cultural identity and agency. It underscores the genre's significance in navigating life under a repressive regime and offers insights into how art can reflect and influence a society's socio-political dynamics. The study affirms the transformative potential of music, suggesting that creative expressions of resistance can foster hope and inspire collective action towards a more open and just society.

Keywords: emotion, music, resistance, rap, culture, anthropology.

Öz

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Bu makale, sıkı sansür ve otoriterizmle işaretlenmiş İran'ın sosyo-politik bağlamı içinde Farsça rap müziği ve dinleyicileri arasındaki dinamik etkileşimi ele alıyor. James C. Scott ve Pierre Bourdieu'den teorik çerçeveler çizerek, çalışma, baskıcı yapılarla mücadelede ince bir direniş biçimi olan 'gizli metinler' olarak Farsça rap'i inceliyor. Katılımcı gözlem ve İranlı rap dinleyicileriyle yapılan derinlemesine röportajlar da dahil olmak üzere nitel analiz aracılığıyla, araştırma, türün duygusal etkisini ve bunun bireysel ve kolektif kimlik, kültürel süreklilik ve politik direniş için olan sonuçlarını ortaya çıkarıyor. Bulgular, Farsça rap müziğinin İranlı gençlerle derinden yankı bulan güçlü bir altkültürel ifade biçimi olduğunu gösteriyor, onlara güçlendirme, dayanışma ve topluluk hissi sağlıyor. Müzik, korku ve cesaret, nostalji ve kayıp, umut ve arzu arasındaki karmaşık etkileşimi yansıtan bir direniş anlatısı oluşturuyor. Müzik, sadece dinleyicilerin anlık hayal kırıklıklarını ve arzularını ifade etmekle kalmıyor, aynı zamanda daha geniş toplumsal değişim arzularını da dile getiriyor. Bu makale, Farsça rap'in kültürel kimliği ve faliliği şekillendirmeki rolünü vurgulayarak bir kültürel direniş biçimi olarak müzik hakkındaki söylemlere katkıda bulunmaktadır. Türün, baskıcı bir rejim altında yaşamı yönlendirme ve müzakere etmedeki önemini vurguluyor ve sanatın bir toplumun sosyo-politik dinamiklerini yansıtmaya ve etkileme şekillerine dair içgörüler sunuyor. Çalışma, müziğin dönüştürücü potansiyelini doğruluyor, yaratıcı direniş ifadelerinin umut uyandırabileceğini ve daha açık ve adil bir toplum yönünde kolektif eyleme ilham verebileceğini öne sürüyor.

Anahtar Kelimeler: duygu, müzik, direniş, rap, kültür, antropoloji.

Introduction

In Iran's complex cultural and political landscape, music has always been a key player in shaping and reflecting the thoughts and feelings of the people. Rap music, in particular, has become a powerful voice, especially among the young. It often challenges the strict censorship rules of the country. This study looks into the deep emotional and cultural layers of rap music in Iran, a place where creating art is often a careful act under political scrutiny. The main issue here is the struggle between Iranian youth wanting to express themselves and the strict rules set by the government. This struggle is very clear in rap music, which has become an important way for people to speak out against oppression, even though it's often not fully understood or valued for its emotional and cultural importance.

The goal of this research is to uncover the deep emotional connection and cultural importance that rap music has for Iranian listeners, especially considering the political situation in the country. This study aims to show how rap music is used for personal and group expression and as a way to deal with and resist the challenges of living under a strict government. The importance of this study is that it can help us better understand how art and politics interact and add to the conversation about how music can be a form of cultural resistance. By looking into how listeners emotionally connect with rap music, this research hopes to shed light on the wider social and political issues in Iranian society. Using a qualitative approach, this study involves detailed interviews and observing participants to really understand the experiences of Iranian rap music fans. The research questions are about the emotional reactions to rap music, the cultural background of these reactions, and how Iranian rap artists connect with their audience.

Background: Getting familiar with the field

Iran's musical odyssey is a tale of continuous evolution, mirroring the nation's rich cultural heritage and complex socio-political narratives. The journey of music in Iran is not merely a timeline of artistic development but a reflection of the nation's soul, chronicling its triumphs and

tribulations through melodious expressions. This exploration delves deep into the historical backdrop that has shaped the Iranian musical identity, offering a comprehensive understanding of its transformation from the ancient dynasties to the contemporary underground rap scene.

Placing music and poetry in Iranian culture

Poetry and music have long been pillars of Iranian culture, with their influence permeating social, political, and spiritual realms. The ancient Avestan hymns and Rumi's ghazals exemplify the enduring role of poetry in Iran's artistic heritage. Poets have historically leveraged their verses for social and political critique, shaping Iran's historical trajectory and offering alternative societal visions. Spiritually, poetry has been a conduit for expressing devotion and exploring life's profound mysteries, as seen in the works of Iran's revered poets. The significance of poetry in Iranian culture extends to its symbiotic relationship with music, where the lyrical content of a song often takes precedence over its melody. Rap music has gained popularity in Iran, possibly because, more than just being about music, it places a significant emphasis on its lyrics. Iran's historical affinity for words, akin to its appreciation for poetry, could contribute to the appeal of rap music in the country.

Tracing back to the Sasanian Empire, Iranian music's origins highlight its role in societal functions, from royal hunts to battle hymns, as detailed by Majd (Majd, 2011). Despite the Arab conquest, Iranian musical traditions persisted, influencing Islamic arts and contributing to genres as far-flung as flamenco. Islam's influence on Iranian music, contrary to constraining it, enriched its metaphysical and mystical qualities, as Miller notes (Miller, 2012). This art form was preserved and refined through generations by musicians and Sufi mystics, particularly during the Safavid era, when it became integral to religious theater. Music's therapeutic role in Iranian culture is also notable, with traditional healing ceremonies in Baluchistan using instrumental music for treating possession diseases, demonstrating music's deep-seated role in Iranian life. Despite challenges, Iranian music's resilience underscores its cultural

and social significance, maintaining its revered status in Iran's cultural tapestry.

Music Before the Islamic Revolution

During the transformative years leading up to and following the Iranian Revolution, music in Iran underwent a profound metamorphosis. The Pahlavi dynasty's modernization policies, spearheaded by Reza Shah, sought to Westernize Iran's cultural landscape, inadvertently setting the stage for a rich intermingling of Western and traditional Iranian musical elements. This era witnessed the flourishing of non-religious art forms, with figures like Ali Naqi Vaziri, who studied in Europe, pioneering a Western-influenced harmony within Iranian music (Azimi, 2020). The subsequent reign of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi saw an even greater infusion of Western culture into Iranian music, with pop music reigning supreme and enjoying relative freedom from censorship. The Islamic Revolution of 1979, however, marked a dramatic shift, as it did for all facets of Iranian life. The revolution's impact on music was profound, with resistance songs becoming anthems for protesters and a means of spreading revolutionary messages. These songs, often set to traditional melodies and performed by a mix of professional and amateur artists, were instrumental in rallying the masses and articulating the spirit of rebellion.

Anoushiravan Ehteshami notes that the tradition of using music as a tool of resistance has deep roots in Iran, dating back to the constitutional revolution of 1906 (Ehteshami 2007, pp.29-44). Aref Qazvini, a renowned musician and composer, became a symbol of this resistance, using his art to inspire political change. His compositions, drew from the rich tapestry of Iranian mythology to echo the nation's contemporary struggles for freedom. The resistance music of the 1979 revolution was a tapestry of influences, blending choral music, Latin American leftist anthems, and Iranian laments. These songs, often recorded in makeshift home studios, captured the raw emotion of the era and became a vital part of the resistance movement. Religious themes also found their voice in the music of the revolution. Songs like "Khomeini Ei Imam," attributed to Ayatollah

Khomeini, were performed by religious groups and reflected the ideological underpinnings of the Islamic Republic Party.

In sum, the Iranian Revolution's resistance songs were not merely musical compositions; they were potent tools of propaganda, communication, and mobilization that contributed significantly to the fall of the monarchy and the rise of the Islamic Republic (Tavakoli Targhi, 2001). Through their powerful lyrics and melodies, these songs became a rallying cry for a nation in the throes of profound change.

Situation of Music After the Islamic Revolution

The 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran was a pivotal moment that transformed the nation, ushering in a theocratic regime based on Sharia law. Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the revolution's figurehead, emphasized the importance of cultural reform to establish Islamic ideology across society. He aimed to purge Western influences, as reflected in the Cultural Revolution Law, which sought to replace Western culture with an Islamic-national educational culture (Nooshin 2020, pp.269-275). The Cultural Revolution had widespread effects, including the closure of universities and the enforcement of strict Islamic principles in public and private spheres (Simadoust, 2017). Art, including music, had to conform to Islamic values, determining what was permissible (Halal) and what was not (Haram) (Tapper, 2002).

The Islamic stance on music is complex, as the Quran does not explicitly mention it, but some Hadiths suggest that music associated with sinful behavior is prohibited. Yet, there are instances of Prophet Muhammad engaging in singing. Scholars like Tariq Ramadan have proposed criteria for music to be considered permissible in Islam, including adherence to Islamic ethics and maintaining a balance in its role in life (Larsson 2012, pp.49-64).

Post-revolution, music in Iran was heavily regulated, with the government banning most musical activities. Khomeini's condemnation of music likened its influence to that of opium, leading to a crackdown on musical instruments and recordings, with severe punishments for violations (Simadoust, 2017). Despite these restrictions, music persisted in Iran, adapting to

the sociopolitical climate. The Iran-Iraq War saw the use of music for propaganda, with broadcasts of heroic songs and religious monodies to honor martyrs. The Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, established in 1986, further regulated cultural products, including music, based on Islamic moral codes (Simadoust, 2017). Over time, Khomeini moderated his views on music, and after the Iran-Iraq War, there was a slight easing of restrictions, with classical Iranian music returning to the airwaves, albeit with continued censorship (Shiloah 1995). Despite the repressive environment, music remained a form of resistance and identity expression. The death of Khomeini in 1989 and the end of the war brought more changes. The 1990s saw a resurgence of pop music, with illegal VHS tapes circulating and private parties featuring banned songs (Mozafari, 2011).

Under President Seyyed Mohammad Khatami's more liberal regime starting in 1997, the music scene experienced further liberalization. Female singers could perform for all-female audiences, music schools reopened, and the ban on carrying musical instruments was lifted. However, musicians still faced restrictions on content, with religious and theosophical themes being favored (Rostovac 2009, p. 59-82). Pop music grew in popularity, and while rock bands faced more scrutiny, the music scene diversified. The underground music scene also emerged, especially during Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's presidency, when Western music faced renewed bans. This scene, often based in basements, became a space for young, educated Iranians to express themselves through rock, rap, and alternative music, addressing taboo subjects like sex, drugs, and politics (Rostovac 2009, p. 59-82 Nooshin 2005, p. 463-494). The internet's arrival in the mid-90s facilitated the underground music scene's growth, allowing musicians to bypass government restrictions and connect with audiences despite the lack of physical venues (Simadoust, 2017). This scene represented a new wave of musical creation, reflecting the struggles of Iranian youth against governmental and societal pressures.

Rap Music Scene of Iran

Iranian rap, also known as *rap e Farsi*, is a music genre that emerged in Iran in the 2000s, reflecting the social, political, and cultural narratives of Iranian youth. It has faced challenges like censorship but remains a vital cultural force. Golpushnezhad (Golpushnezhad 2018, pp.260-275) divides the evolution of Iranian rap into three distinct phases: the initial phase of community formation, the "golden age" of widespread acceptance, and the contemporary phase of ongoing evolution amidst socio-political changes.

Initially, Iranian rap was centered in Tehran, with groups like *021* pioneering the scene. Despite government and societal pushback, the community grew, leveraging the internet to share their music. Economic disparities influenced the quality and themes of the music, with rappers from affluent areas focusing on indulgence, while those from less privileged areas addressed societal issues. Notable rap battles, such as between *TM Bax* and *Zedbazi*, highlighted the competitive spirit within the scene.

The second phase saw technological advancements like high-speed internet and satellite TV expand rap's reach, with platforms like Rapfa centralizing the music. Although still illegal, some rappers monetized their craft through underground performances. The 2009 presidential election saw rap as a medium of resistance, gaining recognition even among older generations. By the 2010s, Iranian rap had solidified its presence, with artists performing abroad and the government ambiguously acknowledging the genre. The contemporary scene is marked by the diaspora of pioneering rappers, collaborations with international artists, and festivals in Europe. The current rap scene is categorized by the artists' location and orientation: expatriate rappers, socio-political rappers in Iran, and government-affiliated rappers. Recent events, such as the 2022 protests sparked by a tragic incident, have seen rappers arrested, showcasing the ongoing struggle and resilience of the genre in the face of oppression.

Situating the Study in a Theoretical Framework

The theoretical underpinnings of this research are grounded in a multidisciplinary exploration of ethnomusicology, the anthropology of art, and the interplay between resistance and emotion. This framework is pivotal for dissecting the complex cultural phenomena surrounding Iranian rap music.

Art and Cultural Contextualization

Understanding music and art involves looking at the broader cultural context, like putting together a puzzle. Alfred Gell's "Art and Agency" revolutionized the way we think about art in anthropology. Gell suggested that art, including music, is like a living entity with the power to connect with people and influence them. Art reflects and shapes the society it comes from, serving as a mirror and a tool for change. (Gell, 1998), When we listen to Iranian rap, for instance, we're not just hearing sounds; we're engaging with a social force expressing the struggles, dreams, and voices of the people. This music aims to stir things up, evoke emotions, and provoke thought, demonstrating Gell's idea that art is a dynamic conversation between the artist and the audience.

Robert Plant Armstrong's "Affecting Presence" emphasizes the emotional impact of art. Armstrong sees art as a living force that can deeply affect us on an emotional level. He introduces the concept of 'affecting presence,' highlighting how art communicates with us personally, creating unique experiences for each individual. Armstrong explores the cultural context of art, emphasizing the 'rules of formation' that shape artistic expressions within different cultures. He delves into the intersection of emotions and culture, asserting that to truly understand art, we must grasp how it engages our feelings within its cultural origins. (Armstrong, 1971) In the case of Iranian rap, it serves as an 'affecting presence,' embodying a form of protest deeply rooted in the country's cultural scene, echoing the pain, pride, and dignity of those living under challenging conditions. Armstrong's work underscores the importance of feeling, not just analyzing, art to comprehend its true essence.

Resistance and Power Dynamics

James C. Scott's influential work, 'Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts,' (Scott, 1990) directly informs the theoretical approach of this study. Scott explores how individuals in oppressive environments employ subtle forms of resistance to challenge and subvert power structures. He introduces the concept of 'hidden transcripts,' representing private thoughts and actions hidden from dominant powers. These hidden acts, including language, humor, and music, serve as powerful tools for resisting authority without overt political confrontation. Scott's ideas become particularly pertinent when analyzing Iran, where citizens use hidden transcripts to resist strict government control. In societies with limited political rights and no legitimate avenues for opposition, people often resort to covert forms of resistance. Scott identifies two social spaces: the 'onstage' space where individuals conform to the dominant power's expectations, and the 'offstage' space where they can express themselves more freely. The public transcript and hidden transcript reveal that true resistance often occurs in subtle, everyday acts. Scott terms these acts as the "arts of resistance," where people use cultural expressions to resist power, even though these acts might not be overtly political. In repressive regimes, these arts of resistance serve as a way for people to maintain their humanity and dignity. Scott's concept of hidden transcripts is reflected in the lives of Iranian citizens, who find ways to resist and express themselves privately despite strict social and cultural rules. These hidden acts become a form of agency, allowing individuals to assert their autonomy and cultural identity in the face of oppression. The hidden transcripts, characterized by their location, various forms of behavior, and ongoing tension, embody a significant form of resistance against dominant powers. Scott's insights emphasize that to truly understand societal actions and motivations, both public and hidden transcripts must be considered.

In addition to James C. Scott's work, Pierre Bourdieu's analysis contributes significantly to the theoretical framework of this study. (Bourdieu, 1991) Bourdieu's analysis explains the broader

context of societies under totalitarian governments, highlighting the emergence of two distinct cultures. There is an official culture imposed by the ruling group, embodying prescribed values and rules, alongside an unofficial culture practiced by the general population. Understanding the dynamics of resistance in such a society necessitates an exploration of its history and culture. In the case of Iran, the unofficial culture, encompassing literature, music, and humor, has influenced the official culture over time. Bourdieu's perspective underscores the importance of linguistic nuances and cultural expressions in unveiling the power dynamics inherent in societies under authoritarian rule.

Emotion and Culture

In the studies of the anthropology of art, we encounter the terms "emotion" and "affect" very often. Some scholars see them as synonymous, but this study aligns with the view that treats them as distinct concepts, particularly when discussing art. The philosophical foundation for this perspective draws from Baruch Spinoza's ideas. According to Spinoza, affect, the driving force behind action, and emotion are intertwined facets of the same coin. Emotion, for Spinoza, arises from thoughts and ideas, and both affect and emotion play a role in instigating action. This connection between emotion and action is crucial when considering art as a tool of resistance, where hope and fear become fundamental emotions shaping responses to societal issues. (Deleuze, 1988) Our study aligns with Spinoza's philosophy that emotion, as a driving force, is integral to action. In the context of Iranian rap music, emotions like hope and fear are deeply intertwined with the art form's role as a tool of resistance. The lyrical content and themes in rap music often convey these emotions, offering a form of expression that challenges societal norms and power structures.

Dominique Moisi expands on Spinoza's emotions, adding humiliation as a third key emotion. Moisi suggests that hope signifies confidence, fear indicates its absence, and humiliation represents wounded confidence. These emotions profoundly influence individual

actions and inactions. Fear can lead to constant worry and inaction, a tool often employed by controlling governments. Hope, rooted in confidence, fosters the belief in positive change. Humiliation, as wounded confidence, can initially result in inactivity but may escalate into actions against those causing the humiliation. This framework provides a nuanced understanding of how emotions shape our sense of self and our responses to the world. (Moisi, 2010) Moisi's framework of hope, fear, and humiliation provides a lens to understand the emotional landscape within societies. In the context of Iran and its rap music scene, the emotions expressed in the music reflect the societal dynamics. Rap artists may convey hope for change, fear of oppression, and responses to societal humiliation. These emotions become powerful narratives in the artistic resistance against the constraints imposed by the government.

John Leavitt's perspective on culture and emotion is essential, emphasizing that emotions are complex, culturally embedded experiences. Leavitt challenges the idea that emotions are mere feelings and introduces a translation of emotions across cultures. He suggests moving beyond empathy to sympathy, aligning our emotions with others to construct models of their experiences. Leavitt also highlights the role of ethnography and literature as vehicles for conveying emotions, offering rich data to reshape our understanding. Furthermore, Leavitt introduces the concept of collective symbolic productions of emotion, where rituals and cultural practices trigger shared emotional responses within groups, transcending individual experiences. This comprehensive approach, integrated with other perspectives, underscores the importance of cultural context in understanding and interpreting emotions. In the context of Iranian rap music, Leavitt's approach guides the exploration of emotional responses shaped by the unique socio-political and cultural landscape, religious beliefs, political dynamics, societal norms, and the interplay of bodily states, non-verbal expressions, and technology. (Leavitt, 1996) Leavitt's approach emphasizes the importance of cultural context in understanding emotions. In the study of Iranian rap music, this means considering the socio-political and cultural

landscape of Iran. Leavitt's idea of translating emotions across cultures aligns with the exploration of how Iranian rap music, with its unique cultural expressions, resonates with and communicates emotions to its audience. The study delves into how cultural meanings and societal norms shape emotional responses to rap music.

Methodology

In this research, I used a mixed-methods approach to explore the role of Iranian rap music as a form of everyday resistance in Iran's socio-political context. This approach provides a comprehensive understanding of individuals' subjective experiences and the broader socio-cultural phenomena. In this study, I wanted to understand how rap music affects Iranian listeners emotionally. To reach this goal we used different methodologies and got a deep insight into the emotional and cultural layers of Iranian rap. I found out that in Iran, where rap is an underground art, it brings out a range of emotions in its listeners, closely tied to the culture of Iran. All the methods used in this research were aimed at finding out what emotions rap music brings out and how these emotions lead to certain actions or behaviors in Iranian listeners. I also wanted to understand what makes it more or less likely for these emotions to turn into actions. Given the sensitive nature of the subject, especially within Iran's political climate, ethical considerations were paramount. The research adhered to principles of consent, honesty, and trust. Participants were informed about the research goals, and their consent was obtained for the use of the data within the research. Trust was particularly crucial, as the study involved a music genre that challenges governmental authority. Establishing trust with participants who knew the researcher only through an online forum presented a unique challenge, which was addressed through consistent honesty and transparent communication. The methods that we used were participant observation and semi-structured interviews.

In this qualitative research method, the researcher spends time in the field, participating in activities to gain a complete understanding of the

study subjects. Participant observation helps the researcher notice things that might be missed from a distance. This type of observation is especially helpful in the early stages of the study, allowing the researcher to gain a general understanding of the field and decide on other methods to use.

Due to political reasons in Iran and the illegality of rap music there, which prevents any rap concerts or events, participant observation for this research was conducted on social media and forums related to Iranian rap music. The researcher actively participated in discussions on these social media platforms. In the contemporary era, social media has become an integral aspect of our daily lives, presenting itself as a valuable field for research. Disregarding this domain would be a mistake for researchers. However, like any field, it possesses both advantages and limitations. Numerous studies discuss the methodologies researchers should employ when conducting studies on social media platforms. One of the challenges that is discussed in so many of these researches is the ethical dimension of studies that use social media platforms as their field. The article: "Ethical Dilemmas Using Social Media in Qualitative Social Research" explores ethical considerations in social media research, focusing on four key areas: the risk of harm, the distinction between private and public data, issues related to informed consent, and concerns about anonymity. (Hennel, Limmer, Piacentini, 2020, pp.473-489)

The issues mentioned in this article were crucial for our research anonymity of the people who were participating in the conversations on social media was very important and their identity being revealed would have the risk of harming them which is why I am not mentioning the name of any of the platforms that participant observation took place in. Also in the course of our conversations, it was mentioned that I was researching the topic so the people in the conversation were informed.

In semi-structured interviews, the researcher uses open-ended questions and then determines follow-up questions based on the informants' responses to capture their psychological and experiential world. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with listeners of Iranian rap music. These interviews were designed

with open-ended questions to obtain rich, descriptive data. The interviews aimed to provide a window into the experiences and emotional states of individuals who listen to Iranian rap, capturing their feelings, perceptions, and narratives. The interviews were conducted online via the ZOOM application. A voluntary participation form was sent via email before the interview. If they agreed to participate, a ZOOM link was shared with them due to the ethical considerations of this research. Participants were reached through social and political rap forums. They were selected based on age groups, focusing on listeners born between 1987 and 2000, we talked with thirty informants in this age group. This age group has witnessed the birth of rap music in Iran and is the most active in political and social rap forums.

The Role of Rap Music in Reflecting and Shaping Emotional Experiences

In the context of Iran, where the socio-political landscape imposes significant constraints on expression, music—particularly rap—has emerged as a powerful medium for the articulation of collective and individual emotions. This section delves into the intricate ways in which Iranian rap music not only mirrors the emotional landscape of its listeners but also actively participates in molding it. Through the lens of our interviewees' experiences, we explore the symbiotic relationship between music and emotion, and how this dynamic interplay is particularly poignant within the unique cultural tapestry of Iran.

The interviews we conducted showed that Iranian rap music acts like a secret way of communicating. It's a tool people use to express their disagreement, challenge cultural and political rules, and keep their sense of self and power in a tough environment. This music talks about topics that are usually off-limits or hard to talk about, giving listeners comfort and a way to let out their feelings. The emotions shared by the people we talked to ranged from finding comfort and letting go, to feeling angry and resentful, and even feeling hopeful and wanting change. This shows the many sides of resisting in Iranian society. For example, the interviews showed how music helps keep hope

and dreams alive, even though it's risky to get involved with underground rap. This hope isn't just sitting back and waiting; it's an active force that pushes people to want change, tying in with our research question about music's power to inspire. Rap music becomes a light of possibility, making listeners think about and work toward a society that respects their dreams. Also, the interviews gave us a detailed look at how the emotional power of Rap music can make people brave enough to face possible consequences. This shows the complicated choices listeners make, adding depth to our research focus on what makes emotions turn into actions.

The analysis of the interviews through the lens of John Leavitt's perspective (Leavitt 1996, p. 514-539) on emotions reveals a rich tapestry of cultural and emotional interplay within the Iranian context. It shows how rap music, as an art form, acts as a social agent, shaped by and shaping the cultural and social context of Iran. It also serves as a powerful emotional force, creating subjective experiences that reflect and influence the inner lives of its listeners. Here we are going to list the emotions that were mostly seen in interviews.

Our interviews showed that rap music is a powerful source of empowerment for many Iranian listeners. It makes their experiences and feelings valid, helping them build a stronger sense of self and identity. This empowerment theme is closely linked to their culture. It challenges the stories told by those in power and offers a different identity based on being real and resisting. One of the interviewees shared that when he first listened to a rap song during his teenage years, it felt as though someone was articulating his thoughts. The lyrics addressed topics he had always wanted to discuss but lacked the courage to do so. This hesitance was not solely due to political reasons; he also felt cultural pressure, as if he were not permitted to voice dissenting opinions when confronted with ideas he believed to be incorrect. Another interviewee shared how rap played a pivotal role in shaping his personality during his formative years, making him a more honest individual. He emphasized that the level of openness and clarity about societal conditions expressed in rap was a rarity in artistic forms during that period. He remarked, "We struggled to

find such transparency in any other artistic creation. During that time, everything, including our inner thoughts, faced heavy censorship. Rap, however, marked the beginning of a new chapter in our lives, teaching us the value of honesty."

Nostalgia was also a strong emotion among the people we talked to. They felt a deep yearning for an Iran that was once more open or an imagined Iran that could exist without the current limits. This nostalgia is about more than just missing the past. It's about the future possibilities that are being held back. The music becomes a way for listeners to connect with their cultural past and grieve over what they see as it's fading away. This feeling directly relates to our research focus on cultural context. It shows how emotions brought out by Rap music can mirror a shared memory and a collective story.

Rap music also creates a strong sense of solidarity and community among its Iranian listeners, especially important because it's an underground genre. The shared feelings that come from the music build connections. These connections can lead to social unity and even political action. One of the interviewees shared her experience of connecting with like-minded individuals through rap forums and discussions. It was in one of these rap communities that she met her boyfriend. Their shared passion for the genre not only deepened their connection but also provided a platform for improved communication and understanding. This underscores how music, particularly Iranian rap in this instance, can act as a bridge between individuals, facilitating interactions and enriching relationships. Another interviewee likened listening to rap music to strolling down the street with a close friend who openly shares their struggles and experiences. This creates a profoundly personal connection that intensifies the music's resonance. He emphasized that knowing there's someone creating songs about these struggles and others listening to the same songs because they are going through similar experiences has made him feel a sense of belonging to a community.

Hope and the wish for a better future and change are also common themes in our interviews. Even with the risks that they face for listening to underground rap, people hold on to the hope that

their voices will help change society. This hope is active and motivating, pushing people to seek change. The way music feeds this hope supports our research about music's power to inspire. Rap music shines as a symbol of what could be, pushing listeners to dream of and work towards a society that values their dreams and goals. An interviewee shared insights on how rap music transformed societal perceptions of problems. Before the emergence of rap, she noted that societal issues were not as palpable; despite an awareness of significant problems, the lack of open discourse rendered them invisible. This invisibility, she argued, allowed people to avoid thinking about the problems altogether. However, rap music changed this dynamic by addressing these issues candidly. It was likened to shining a light on the proverbial elephant in the room – suddenly visible to everyone, prompting discussions and reflections. The interviewee provided a concrete example by highlighting the reduction in street harassment in Tehran. She attributed this positive change, in part, to rap music. Following the Women's Life Freedom movement in Iran, numerous rap artists created songs addressing various issues faced by women. These songs encouraged introspection and emphasized the need for individuals to initiate change within themselves. For instance, the lyrics conveyed messages about not judging or making sexist comments based on a woman's clothing choices, challenging people to recognize their role in societal issues. The interviewee expressed confidence that, before these rap narratives, many individuals were unaware of their contribution to the problem. However, the explicit discussions in rap music brought these issues to light, fostering self-awareness and instigating positive transformations within the community. These responses to Rap music give a full answer to our research question about how music shapes cultural identity and personal power.

In our interviews, fear was a common feeling due to the dangers of engaging with underground music. However, this fear is often matched with bravery and resilience. The way music emotionally impacts people can give them the courage to face possible risks. One interviewee reminisced about the early years of Iranian rap when high-speed

internet wasn't accessible to everyone, and rap music could only be obtained through CDs. During their high school years, they were all avid rap music fans, pooling money to buy the latest CDs. Each day, one person would take the CD home to either listen to it or copy it onto a computer. However, carrying a rap music CD at school or on the streets was a source of significant stress, almost comparable to carrying drugs. Getting caught with such a CD at school could lead to serious trouble. Similarly, in public spaces, such as the streets, there was a constant risk, as police officers would sometimes randomly stop and check bags for drugs, knives, or even rap CDs, making those years a period of heightened risk and danger.

Another thing that we wanted to explore in this research is what factors influence the translation of emotions felt by rap music audiences into action, we are going to explore the factors:

Connecting with the Music: How much listeners feel connected to the music and its message is really important. If they relate to what the songs are saying, they're more likely to be inspired to do something.

Cultural and Social Influence: In Iran, where expressing yourself openly is often restricted, the culture has a big impact on how people react to rap music. When listeners act on the new ideas in rap music, it's a big deal in a society that's usually more traditional.

Personal Experiences Matter: What someone has gone through in their life affects how likely they are to act on their feelings. For example, people who've faced unfairness or oppression might be more driven to take action because of the music.

Strength in Community: Having support from others who feel the same way can push people to turn their feelings into actions. Knowing you're not alone and that others are ready to stand with you is a strong motivator.

Belief in Making a Difference: If listeners believe that their actions, inspired by the music, can make a change, they're more likely to take a stand. Believing in the power of their actions is crucial.

To sum it up, the feelings that rap music brings out in Iran lead to actions that challenge old ways,

encourage deep thinking, and bring people together for change. Whether people act on these feelings depends on how much they connect with the music, their cultural background, personal experiences, support from others, and their belief in the impact of their actions.

In this research, we've woven together a story about how Iranian rap music touches hearts and minds in Iran, and how it fits into the bigger picture of Iran's culture and politics. We talked to people who listen to this music and found out it's not just about the tunes—it's about feelings, identity, and standing up to challenges.

The emotions that come out in these interviews are diverse. Iranian rap can make people feel strong and proud, or it can remind them of what's been lost in their culture. This music is like a mirror showing what its listeners are going through. It's not just background noise; it's a key part of the conversation in Iran, questioning the usual stories told by those in power and offering a different way of seeing things.

Even though Iranian rap is underground, it's created a strong bond among those who listen to it. This community is hidden but full of life, sharing dreams and memories. It's more than just enjoying music—it's about quietly standing up to what's normal in society. This music is a safe place for people to express themselves freely, just like James C. Scott talked about in his idea of 'hidden transcripts'.

A big issue we noticed is how people don't just listen to the music—they use it to spark change. The hope and drive that comes from this music show it's not just about dreaming of a better future; it's about making it happen. This ties in with what scholars like Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1991) have said about how culture can shape our world. We also saw that even though it can be risky to get into this kind of music in Iran, people are brave enough to do it anyway. They weigh the importance of the music against the risks, showing how powerful music can be in tough situations.

This research is important for understanding music and art in different cultures. It shows us that music isn't just something to listen to—it's a way for people to express themselves and react to what's happening around them. The story of rap music in Iran is a perfect example of how art can be

a way to share feelings, keep culture alive, and comment on politics.

Conclusion

In our deep dive into Iranian rap music and its impact, we've explored how art, resistance, feelings, and culture all mix together. We've looked at how individuals and groups in Iran connect with this music, using ideas from thinkers like Scott and Bourdieu. This journey showed us how music can say what words often can't and can bring hidden thoughts and feelings into the open.

Iranian rap has become a key voice for Iranian youth, a way for them to talk about their struggles and dreams. It's about balancing their rich cultural past with their need to be free and express themselves. The interviews we did showed us how this music isn't just personal; it's a shared way of standing up and hoping for something better.

Through Iranian rap, we see how art can be a strong tool against strict control. It's a way for people to be themselves and question what's usually accepted. This music is like a cultural treasure, showing the tension between what's public and private, spoken and unspoken. It's proof of people's constant search for freedom, even when things are really tough.

The ideas from Scott and Bourdieu helped us peel back the layers in this music. The idea of 'hidden transcripts' is important, showing how quiet resistance can grow away from the spotlight in Iranian society. Bourdieu's (Bourdieu, 1991) thoughts on culture add to our understanding of how Iranian rap fits into the bigger picture.

As we wrap up this paper, it's clear that Iranian rap is about more than just music. It's part of bigger discussions about society, culture, and politics. It shows the strength and creativity of people who, despite challenges, find ways to speak out, share their stories, and build a community. The way listeners connect with this music isn't just because it sounds good; it's a purposeful act of keeping their culture and identity alive.

The stories from our interviews talk about a shared hope for a better future. They show how young people, despite the risks, use underground rap to feel powerful and resist. This music has become a way for them to express all the complex

feelings that come with living under a regime that limits their freedom—fear, longing, anger, hope, and dreams.

In the end, this paper isn't the last word on the subject. It's just the start of a bigger conversation about the role of Rap music in places where people face oppression. The story of Iranian rap is still being written by those brave enough to imagine a world where they can speak freely. It's a strong reminder of how art can challenge, bring people together, and inspire. This study also helps us understand why people resist in tough situations. How Iranian listeners connect with rap music—finding strength, community, and hope—gives us a closer look at how people push back against tough rules. It's a reminder that resistance isn't always about big protests; sometimes it's about the small, private ways people stand up for themselves.

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