

LISTENER'S CONCEPTIONS ABOUT THE INFLUENCE OF THE EDUCATIONAL CONTROL AGENCY ON THE MUSIC OF THE BTS GROUP

CONCEPÇÕES DE OUVINTES SOBRE A INFLUÊNCIA DA AGÊNCIA DE CONTROLE EDUCACIONAL NAS MÚSICAS DO GRUPO BTS

CONCEPCIONES DE LOS OYENTES SOBRE LA INFLUENCIA DE LA AGENCIA DE CONTROL EDUCATIVO EN LA MÚSICA DEL GRUPO BTS

Alicia Lana Mesquita SILVA¹
Ilana Camurça Landim TAVARES²

ABSTRACT: This study aimed to analyze listeners' conceptions about the influence of the educational control agency on the songs of the BTS group. To this end, an online questionnaire was prepared and published. The research had 72 participants, 63 female and nine male participants, aged between 18 and 29 years ($M = 22.76$; $D = 2.95$) who attend educational institutions, signed the Free Commitment and Enlightened (ICF) and reside in Brazil. Through Bardin's analysis, three categories were found, two of which will be addressed in this article. It proved necessary to persist and oppose coercive practices through countercontrol. This research had a limited number of participants. However, it presents contributions to better understand the relationship between BTS and how listeners understand the influence of the educational control agency on their music, as well as helping to advance knowledge about Behavior Analysis and music.

KEYWORDS: Psychology. Behavior analysis. BTS. Education.

RESUMO: Este estudo objetivou analisar concepções de ouvintes sobre a influência da agência de controle educacional nas músicas do grupo BTS. Para tanto, foi elaborado e divulgado um questionário on-line. A pesquisa contou com 72 participantes, sendo 63 do sexo feminino e nove, masculino, de idades entre 18 e 29 anos ($M = 22,76$; $D = 2,95$) que frequentam instituições de ensino, assinaram o Termo de Compromisso Livre e Esclarecido (TCLE) e residem no Brasil. Através da análise de Bardin, encontraram-se três categorias, duas das quais serão abordadas neste artigo. Demonstrou-se ser necessário persistir e se opor a práticas coercitivas por meio do contracontrole. Esta pesquisa apresentou número limitado de participantes. Contudo, apresenta contribuições para compreender melhor a relação entre o BTS e como os ouvintes entendem a influência da agência de controle educacional em suas músicas, além de ajudar no avanço do conhecimento sobre Análise do Comportamento e música.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Psicologia. Análise do Comportamento. BTS. Educação.

¹ University Center Christus (UNICHRISTUS), Fortaleza – CE – Brazil. Degree in Psychology. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0033-2067>. E-mail: psialiciaac@gmail.com

² Pontifical Catholic University (PUC), Rio de Janeiro – RJ – Brazil. PhD in Clinical Psychology. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0239-5582>. E-mail: ilanaclandim@gmail.com

RESUMEN: *Este estudio tuvo como objetivo analizar las concepciones de los oyentes sobre la influencia de la agencia de control educativo en las canciones del grupo BTS. Con este fin, se elaboró y publicó un cuestionario en línea. La investigación contó con 72 participantes, 63 del sexo femenino y nueve del masculino, con edades entre 18 y 29 años ($M = 22,76$; $D = 2,95$) que asisten a instituciones educativas, firmaron el Compromiso Libre e Iluminado (ICF) y residen en Brasil. A través del análisis de Bardin, se encontraron tres categorías, dos de las cuales serán abordadas en este artículo. Resultó necesario persistir y oponerse a las prácticas coercitivas a través del contracontrol. Esta investigación contó con un número limitado de participantes. Sin embargo, presenta aportes para comprender mejor la relación entre BTS y cómo los oyentes entienden la influencia del organismo de control educativo sobre su música, además de ayudar a avanzar en el conocimiento sobre el Análisis de Comportamiento y la música.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Psicología. Análisis de comportamiento. BTS. Educación.*

Introduction

In the last four years of the 2010s, precisely between 2017 and 2020, BTS (acronym for 방탄소년단/ Bangtan Sonyeondan, in romanization) gained notoriety not only in South Korea, its country of origin, but throughout the world. The group was conceived by the company Big Hit Music in 2011, and underwent changes in members and musical style until 2013, when BTS made their official debut in June, with the musical album “2 COOL 4 SKOOL” (ELBERSE; WOODHAM, 2020).

In its inception, BTS was made up of young people between the ages of 15 and 21, who were either still going to school or starting college. Thus, the lyrics and messages released by the group in the series of albums called School Trilogy talked about how educational institutions and adults, in general, limited repertoires, possibilities of choice and imposed social standards distant from people's reality (LEE, 2019). Therefore, even though the education systems in Brazil and South Korea have their particularities, there are similarities in relation to the historical and cultural perspectives in both countries, as both use banking education models (ROSA, 2011).

In this model, students who adapt and are able to focus on their studies are positively reinforced (e.g., through recognition, positions in school rankings) under meritocratic arguments, as agencies such as the family seek to maintain standards of success (SATO, 2011). In contrast, the contextual reality of the students is varied, so that the syllabus, whether at school or college, is far from their experiences.

In this way, students from different levels of education identify with the songs and messages of School Trilogy, since many are forced to fit into patterns, follow dreams that do not make sense to them and feel unmotivated with their studies. In the lyrics of the song “N.O” (BTS, 2013), for example, the artists denounce the repetitive and massive routine of students, in which, if the individual is not in first place, he is a failure, as in the excerpt “School, house and PC, that's all we got/ We live the same life and it has to become number one”.

For Behavior Analysis, music can represent a verbal behavior, which can be defined as an operant behavior of communication of feelings, thoughts and events, emitted by speakers in a certain context. It can be shaped and maintained by consequences that depend on listeners, so it has a social component (MEDEIROS; MEDEIROS, 2018).

It is noticed that the group aims to highlight coercive cultural practices through art, aiming to change the behavioral practices of an individual or society (SOUZA, 2018). For Sidman (1995), coercion involves the use of punishment or the threat of punishment to compel others to act as one would like. It can also be defined as the practice of rewarding people by allowing them to escape punishment or threats, that is, using contingencies of punishment and negative reinforcement.

Educational institutions can be considered control agencies, since they involve the construction of a system that governs the behavior of individuals through rules. For Skinner (2003), the educational control agency represents acceptable norms and behaviors within a culture. They are successful because, when emitting behaviors accepted by the school, reinforcers are released (e.g., being valued by teachers), whereas going against the norms is punishable (e.g., being excluded by colleagues).

For behavioral science, the objective of education is the planning of contingencies that install useful behaviors for other stages of life (SKINNER, 2011). Analyzing the traditional teaching model, Skinner did not find it advantageous, as he considered it hostile and punitive, even without physical punishment. Preparing students for contingencies outside the classroom, even in contemporary times, includes humiliation, segregation and competitiveness (FLORES, 2017).

By becoming aware that the reinforcers that select behaviors are not restricted to a position in a company or school awards, and that punishment has unfavorable effects on individuals (e.g., impaired behavioral repertoires, low emotional regulation), one limits the control of who it has power, requiring strategies on the part of those who are controlled, to circumvent such a social event, which Skinner (2003) calls countercontrol.

Skinner (2011) points out that educational institutions suffer from mentalist explanations about difficulties in teaching and learning. This means that the understanding that one has of these difficulties is causalistic and based on “internal forces”, which are not sufficient to explain the influence of the environmental variables involved in this process. Still according to Skinner, this form of understanding can reduce the complexity of the phenomenon and blame the students, who may show suffering resulting from the punishments suffered in the educational and family environment.

It is understood that the contents of the songs by the band BTS can be better discussed based on the behavioral analysis of the culture, given that the concepts cross the musical construction of the septet. Contents that pervade Behavior Analysis were not found in the literature, only psychological studies in other approaches, such as Jungian psychology (STEIN, 2020).

In addition, the theme encompassing BTS songs as a means of resolving educational contingencies still lacks in-depth research, given the identification of young people with the songs and the group's potential to promote countercontrol strategies. An example is the “Love Myself” campaign by BTS and Big Hit, in partnership with UNICEF, which has already raised more than US\$ 2.98 million globally (UNICEF, 2021), aiming to end violence against children and young people and helping teens around the world open up about their own experiences.

Therefore, the objective of this study is to analyze listeners' conceptions about the influence of the educational control agency on the songs of the BTS group. More specifically, it aims to (1) investigate the emotions and perceptions evoked in the face of pre-selected songs from the group and (2) analyze BTS songs and messages in relation to the experiences of listeners at school or college, as well as (3) identify how BTS' work influences listeners to counteract the coercive practices of educational control agencies.

Method

Sample characteristics

The sample was composed for the convenience of the researcher. 72 people voluntarily participated in this study who met the following inclusion criteria: 1) ages between 18 and 29 years ($M = 22.76$; $D = 2.95$); 2) attend educational institutions, 3) sign the Free and Informed Commitment Term (TCLE) and 4) reside in Brazil. It was not mandatory that the participant was fond of the BTS group to answer the questionnaire. The following table reports the

characteristics of the sample with regard to the notions of gender, sex, marital status, education, region, among others.

As exclusion criteria, there are: 1) illiterate people; 2) be younger than 18 years old and older than 29 years old; 3) incomplete answers; 4) not having signed the TCLE and 5) residing outside Brazil.

Table 1 - Sociodemographic data of the sample

Gender	N	%
Cisgender woman	59	81,9
Cisgender man	9	12,5
Other	2	2,8
Transgender woman	1	1,4
Non-binary	1	1,4
Sex	N	%
Female	63	87,5
Male	9	12,5
Undergraduate course	N	%
Psychology	10	18,1
Law	5	9
Architecture and Urbanism	3	5,4
Literary Studies	3	5,4
Pedagogy	3	5,4
Design	3	5,4
Nursing	2	3,6
Pharmacy	2	3,6
Journalism	2	3,6
Social services	2	3,6
Archives	1	1,8
Librarianship	1	1,8
Biology	1	1,8
Biomedicine	1	1,8

Computer Engineering	1	1,8
Events	1	1,8
Physiotherapy	1	1,8
Photography	1	1,8
Gastronomy	1	1,8
Geography	1	1,8
Business Management	1	1,8
History	1	1,8
Medical School	1	1,8
Veterinary medicine	1	1,8
Advertising and Advertising	1	1,8
Human resources	1	1,8
Radio, Tv and Internet	1	1,8
Industrial Production Technician	1	1,8
Information System	1	1,8
Marital status	N	%
Single	71	98,6
Stable Union	1	1,4
Schooling	N	%
Graduation in progress	38	52,8
Complete Higher Education	19	26,4
Complete High School	9	12,5
Incomplete Higher Education	5	6,9
Incomplete High School	1	1,4
Work	N	%
No	38	52,7

Yes (e.g., lawyer, publicists, teachers, psychologists)	34	47,2
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Source: Prepared by the authors

Instrument

The formulation and use of a standardized questionnaire containing 17 questions, eight closed and nine open, was proposed, and videos were attached with the translations of pre-selected songs, in addition to sociodemographic questions.

Three songs were selected and considered as instruments, being them *No More Dream*, from the album "2 COOL 4 SKOOL"; *N.O*, both released in 2013, this being the title track of the album "O! RUL8.2?"; and *Silver Spoon*, released in 2015, integrating the musical album "The Most Beautiful Moment in Life Pt.2". They were chosen because they bring the theme of pressure on students, aversive control in their lives and the limitation of subjectivities based on studies.

The questions were elaborated in order to meet the objectives of the study, as well as the selection of the songs. Questions were asked about how participants feel when listening to the songs; if such songs are connected with some experience in an educational environment; whether it is possible to recognize, through the messages in the group's songs, educational control practices; and how they understand the group's work after responding to the survey.

Ethical Procedures

The research followed the guidelines of Resolution 510/2016 of the National Health Council (BRASIL, 2016), which guarantees the confidentiality of identity in responses and the full exercise of the rights of participants. The risk of the research is low, however, when they signed the TCLE, the participants had access to the researcher's contacts for possible referrals, if necessary.

Data collection

The data collection process took *place online, through a form, elaborated on the Google Forms platform*, linking *the researcher's direct contact* in case of questions or suggestions and observations.

The questionnaire was published on the researcher's social networks for 21 days in May 2021. The participant took, on average, twenty minutes to answer the questions.

Once the information was collected via *the web* (on the platform where the data was saved), it was used, as a preventive measure of the loss of the *information collected, the performance of daily backups* (for example, *in Google Cloud*) and the protection of responses through password.

Data analysis

As a data analysis procedure, Bardin content analysis (2011) was used, characterized as a set of communications analysis techniques, seeking to obtain indicators that allow inferring knowledge related to the conditions of production and reception of messages, in a systematic and objective way. With this, the analysis was divided into three phases: the pre-analysis, that is, a first contact with the answers obtained with the form; exploitation of the material, containing coding, classification and categorization procedures; and treatment of results.

As a result of this analysis, three categories emerged: (a) parents' expectations about their children's success; (b) the use of countercontrol in the face of coercive school and family practices: the voice itself as an act of resistance; (c) relevance of the work of the BTS in presenting the problems of the current education system. In this research, specifically, the following categories will be addressed: the use of the countercontrol in the face of coercive school and family practices: the voice itself as an act of resistance; and the relevance of the work of the BTS when presenting the problems of the current education system.

Findings

The results of this study considered the disposition of the answers in the questionnaire, in the questions related to letters, speeches and videos of the BTS presented in the form.

They were asked to listen to *the N.O. song*³ and explain what message they understood from the song, exemplifying some situation they experience or experienced. The answers presented interpretations aimed at criticism of the education system and rules that become aversive.

In one of the questions, an excerpt of the group's speech at the 73rd United Nations General Assembly was presented and asked what meaning individuals attribute to the passage. Some responses addressed the marginalization of groups and people, reflecting on self-acceptance,⁴ disruption of stereotypes and courage to be who they really are (e.g., being a black person who talks about his ancestry and identity, accepting and inspiring others in the community).

Self-knowledge was also mentioned as a way of understanding the rules that control one's own behaviors and social values, such as the response that reports that "it is necessary to understand what influences our choices and understand values that guide them" (sic).

It is also pointed out how empathic the members are when they say that they want to hear from fans from different regions, contexts, gender identities and others, through reports such as: "The empathic form approached by Kim Namjoon (*group leader*) is as a stimulus to people who are facing problems and feel suffocated and cannot leave the place." This speech brings *Bangtan* closer to *army*, his group of fans, by identifying themselves with what they sing and talk about studies or other areas of life.

The penultimate question was whether it is possible to recognize cultural practices of educational institutions through the group's messages. Among the participants, 71 (98.6%) people said yes and one (1.38%) said they could not say, and it can be inferred that not all of them can be open or receive positively the work of the BTS. They stated that they were identified with the letters, since, although there are cultural differences, in Brazil or South Korea, the competitiveness, rigidity of the curriculum and cultural pressure are similar (e.g., *there is school ranking*, "special" classes for those with higher grades). It points to the

³ This song questions the notion of happiness based on being college graduate and owning big house and car. It also alleges the injustices of the current education system, which focuses on few people.

⁴ "No matter who you are, where you come from, your skin color, your gender identity, just talk! Find your name and your voice, speaking for yourself."

standardization of individuals, aiming to indoctrinate and control people, elements present in music videos, literary intertexts, dances and discourses of the group in question.

In the last question, about how participants see the work of the BTS in view of the practices mentioned above, it was stated that it is a relevant work, helping the younger population to seek change and not be silenced. They were also considered important for personal development, surprising participants who did not know the songs (*e.g.*, come to understand the growing success of the group and why fans identify with them and each other). It was also mentioned the diversity of subjects that the group brings, as in the response that talks about the songs of the group reflect who they are, evolving with fans. In addition, individual and social maturation is attributed to them (*e.g.*, modifying behaviors according to the songs).

Discussion

The use of countercontrol in the face of coercive school and family practices: the voice itself as an act of resistance

This category reflects on how the school is an agency used to model behaviors useful to a power-holding group, and education is a rule to measure people's value (SKINNER, 2003). This entails competitiveness, *bullying* and invalidation of students' feelings at school and at home, so that it is necessary to be good not only in school subjects, but in many other areas, such as playing sports, learning other languages or at work. Mental health is devalued in favor of the first place, as when one participant mentions that "They were days without sleep to study, crying crises with notes that were not maximum. This was a burden for me for a long time, and caused me to develop some psychological conditions" (*sic*). It is denoted the urgency of breaking with this model of banking education with concrete actions.

Santos and Borges (2019) present that, in the countercontrol, when they are forbidden to issue certain behaviors and/ or are obliged to issue others, people tend to resist against this coercive control. Therefore, it can generate a "struggle for freedom" (*e.g.*, to choose your own profession, to study what matters most or not), seen in the responses of participants who, in front of *the song No More Dream*, wanted to follow their dreams, even if there are punishments from family members and school.

It is emphasized that this "struggle for freedom" that the group provides goes in the opposite direction to the conception of freedom for behavior analysis. According to this theoretical line, the concept of free will loses its meaning, because it is understood that the

levels of behavior selection influence behaviors, since they are intertwined with stimuli and consequences. However, by not being under the control of the aversive consequences of the educational control agency and the family, it is under the control of positive reinforcers (*e.g.*, support from friends, identifying with BTS fans, personal gratification) (SKINNER, 2011).

It is also affirmed in this category that self-knowledge is necessary, in order to know the limits between the dream itself and those of others and break the cycle of excessive work and study routines. Still, even those who try to escape these molds of others end up suffering from insecurities, reprisals and misunderstanding, making it difficult to make choices according to their own values. This is because, in the view of Behavior Analysis, self-knowledge is of social origin. Skinner (apud OLIVEIRA, 2017) says that to describe behaviors and contingencies of which it is a function, it is necessary a verbal community that creates opportunities and strengthens the movement of self-description.

By asking listeners to speak for themselves at the UN General Assembly in 2018, the group favors this movement of self-discovery, encouraging them to go beyond placement in the vestibular. This can be exemplified in the speech of a participant, who stated "I think the meaning (*of this speech*), for me, is to discover me, to know myself, who I am, what my tastes are, my qualities and defects, where I want to be/get there, what I want to do and be, and when I meet, speak and express this to the world, regardless of contrary and/or hostile voices." (sic).

From this, by turning against the oppression of the educational control agency, the BTS motivates listeners to become active individuals in their lives, because there is a perception about what influences the follow-up of school rules, anxiety about tests and competitiveness to be the first place in the vestibular. It is demonstrated that they bet on the power of change through the collective, that is, acting in macrocontingencies, a concept best discussed in the following session (LEE, 2019). This can be exemplified in the answer in which it is said "You have a voice. It may take a while, but know that you have a voice to speak for yourself. But that means talking about your choices, your tastes, etc." (sic).

Relevance of BTS's work when presenting the problems of the current education system

They are shown, in several responses (*e.g.*, "They reach an audience that is creating/forming a social thought and through the songs they show a new side of the coin, not everything is black and white"; "A super important work that promotes social change reaching people of different ages and groups"), which BTS expresses, in its songs, injustices, excessive

charges and the revolt of the current generation, impacting even those who are not fans of the group.

On the listeners to whom the BTS is directed, it can be assumed that the speech of the UN group in 2018 is aimed at minorities, to the extent that generally, injustices and excessive charges are imposed on individuals from invisible groups. Nevertheless, BTS itself is considered a minority, as they are Asian artists who do not follow the molds of the American music industry.

The campaign and the trilogy of albums *Love Yourself*, for example, have as one of its characteristics the political character. The expression reveals, thus, the existence of individuals in the face of segregation and social rejection, helping to discriminate the contingencies that lead to prejudices and psychological disorders. Identity then becomes political (LEE, 2019). Therefore, their work is important to minority communities, helping LGBTQI+ populations, black, Asian and even people with disabilities to owe the aversive practices of society.

Thus, there is a social effect accumulated in situations in which contingencies do not intertwine, that is, individuals who behave are not necessarily in the same place living the same situations (AZEVEDO; HUBER, 2021). This means that when different people listen to *Bangtan* songs frequently, they perceive how educational institutions control behaviors by punishment and contribute to the development of self-love, the voices of the members arrive in various places in the world, bringing attention to the themes they portray. To this, behavior analysis calls it macrocontingency (GLENN, 2015).

The study by Silva *et al.* (2020) corroborates the finding so found in this category, because music can be used as a means to improve relationships with other people. When identifying with the band members, it is possible that the same happens among fans, because the authors of the aforementioned study state that when there are similar characteristics among the admirers of an artist, listeners usually approach each other.

It is possible to explain this approach through model learning, called modeling, used to improve specific social behaviors (DEL PRETTE; DEL PRETTE, 2018). In this case, BTS can be a model of how to be tolerant, practice philanthropy or empathize with listeners, who soon become models of each other. Thus, the members are in the position of speakers, issuing new rules on what to face coercive control (*e.g.*, think critically before the news in the newspaper, work together for improvements in education and the environment), and are reinforced when the listeners follow them.

Therefore, it is possible, through joint behaviors, to find validation, bond formation and alternative answers to follow your dreams, academic or not. Both artists and fans have behaviors to make donations, projects in favor of mental health and go against reinforced school coercive practices, increasing the likelihood of producing new songs with similar themes, strengthening cultural practice (GLENN, 2015).

In addition, the participants stated that *Bangtan* "asks important questions to help think about how to deal with these oppressive situations." Thus, the group points, again, to self-knowledge as a tool to recognize what is controllable, so that listeners can engage in actions that generate effective changes in the educational environment (SKINNER, 2011). As the SUGA member said at the *Dear Class of 2020* virtual event, "Get your hands on the changes you can make, because your possibilities are limitless," in free translation.

Therefore, it is denoted that, in addition to bringing South Korean historical and cultural elements, BTS also brings global components. For example, to deliver its address at the 76th United Nations General Assembly in 2021, the group asked fans on social media for help in telling their stories about their youth and what they were facing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Looking at Armys' responses from various regions of the planet, members concluded that "This generation is looking for new things by learning. They're not lost. They are finding courage and accepting challenges." ⁵. It is observed again that it is possible to analyze the relationship between BTS and its fans from macrocontingency, which was previously defined, generating a cumulative product of social importance (VASCONCELOS; LEMOS, 2018). Thus, instead of using self-knowledge and countercontrol for acts of rebellion and violence, through global actions, personal development, inclusion and empathy are promoted.

Final considerations

The objective of this study was to analyze listeners' conceptions about the influence of the educational control agency on the songs of the BTS group. The research participants reflected on how the school is an agency used to model behaviors useful to a power-holding group, and education is a rule to measure people's value (SKINNER, 2003). This entails competitiveness, *bullying* and invalidation of students' feelings at school and at home.

⁵ Translated speech from the video posted on the United Nations Youtube channel. Available: <https://youtu.be/jzptPcPLCnA>. Access: 10 Jan. 2022.

It is affirmed that it is necessary self-knowledge to know the limits between the dream itself and those of others and break the cycle of excessive study routines. This is because, in the view of Behavior Analysis, self-knowledge is of social origin (OLIVEIRA, 2017). By asking listeners to speak for themselves at the UN General Assembly in 2018, the group favors this movement, encouraging them to go beyond the placement in the vestibular.

Therefore, when different people listen to *Bangtan* songs frequently, they perceive how educational institutions control behaviors through punishment, so that the group contributes to the development of self-love, arriving in various places in the world, bringing attention to the themes they portray. To this, behavior analysis calls it macrocontingency (GLENN, 2015).

Moreover, BTS motivates listeners to become active individuals in their lives. It is demonstrated that they bet on the power of change through the collective, acting in macrocontingencies and impacting young people of different nationalities (LEE, 2019). Thus, the group points to what is controllable, so that listeners can engage in actions that generate effective changes (SKINNER, 2011).

Despite the broad results, there are still few studies on BTS by analytical-behavioral bias to support the results found and the discussions formulated. However, this study presents contributions to better understand the relationship between BTS and how listeners understand the influence of the educational control agency on their music and make it possible to relocate educational contingencies, besides helping to advance knowledge about behavior and music analysis.

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