

**Brief Communication**

# The effect of *Ssukdaemeori* on depression: A heartrending song of sorrow, Han Ak (Korean music, 韓樂) is wetting on YouTube sung by Bang-ul, Im (<https://youtu.be/IFzFeJcVLp4>)

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**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study is to examine *Ssukdaemeori* of Chunhyangga may have effect on depression for music therapy. *Ssukdaemeori* of Chunhyangga, one of the five surviving stories of pansori (a long epic song), is a touching, sad song in Han Ak (Korean music, 韓樂). In this paper, the author reports on the very sad song, *Ssukdaemeori*. While listening to the song, Koreans feel the same amount of despair when *Ssudaemeori's* heroine, Chunhyang, cries out in hopelessness and grief. The author argues that Koreans get to see the saddest parts of themselves reflected back at them in the sorrowful sight of the heroine. It is also believed that *Ssukdaemeori* has contributed to the healing of Koreans' indignation and pain. For example, depression is currently a social problem. However, listening to sorrowful music like *Ssukdaemeori* can have a good effect on people feeling sad and depressed.

**Keywords** *Ssukdaemeori*, Chunhyangga, Bag-ul Im, depression, Han Ak (Korean music, 韓樂), music therapy

**INTRODUCTION**

The application of music as a therapeutic access has an old history. As the inscriptions in ancient Egypt, Greece, China, India, and Rome talked of music as a therapist with a relaxing effect that decreases anxiety and produces relaxation (Madineh et al., 2016). In 2006, '*Predictors of antipsychotic medication adherence in patients recovering from a first psychotic episode*' noted depressive symptoms in psychosis are associated with poorer adherence, while in 2009, '*Psychiatric comorbidities and schizophrenia*' noted fewer result in terms of symptoms and daily roles. Therefore, it is important to cure these symptoms properly (Steenhuis et al., 2015).

In 1985, '*Crying: The mystery of tears*' noted tears could actually be a way of cleansing toxic chemicals out of the body. In 1991, '*Music structure and emotional response*' noted tears and other physical reactions related with weeping have also been broadly reported. Crying is just one of our natural physical actions. Many people say that they feel better after a good cry. Crying also makes one feel catharsis. Using the term "catharsis" to see the shape of emotional cleansing was first done by the Greek philosopher Aristotle in his writings Poetics. In 2000, '*Adult crying: A model and review of the literature*' noted tears are reflected in situations in which an individual is not able to manage effectively. In 2003, '*Vagal rebound during resolution of tearful crying among depressed and nondepressed*

*individuals*' noted importantly, the beginning of psychogenic crying is parasympathetically transmitted, and it is possible that the physiological aftereffect of crying episodes might reveal evidence of homeostatic function for crying. In 2002, '*Crying threshold and intensity in major depressive disorder*' noted the ecological view of shedding tears, which understand that crying is not merely an effect throughout the body, in all its physiological, behavioral, cognitive and social complexity. In fact, crying can make you feel better when you are sad.

Appropriate control of one's feelings is very important in managing a disease. Depression may influence particular aspects of emotional response across cultures (e.g., crying), (Chentsova-Dutton et al., 2007). In 2013, '*Listening to sad music in adverse situations: how music selection strategies relate to self-regulatory goals, listening effects and mood enhancement*' noted the lyrics of popular songs and the poetry of classical parts can play a significant role in defining music as sad as they can trigger memories that the listener relates with sadness (Sachs et al., 2015). Music is also used for mood change in the population generally, and as a coping strategy specifically in depression (Rebecca et al., 2016). However, there have not been many studies on the role of music in alleviating depression. In this study, it was found that listening to sorrowful music such as *Ssukdaemeori* can have a good effect on people feeling sad or depressed.

**What is *Ssukdaemeori*?**

*Ssukdaemeori* means disheveled hair like mugworts. In other words, the torture and punishment have messed up one's hair and face. *Ssukdaemeori* of Chunhyangga is one of the five surviving stories of pansori. Pansori (a long epic song) is a form of Han Ak (Korean music, 韓樂) that expanded in the southwestern area of Korea during the mid-to-late Joseon

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**Fig. 1.** Bang-ul Im. <http://terms.naver.com/entry.nhn?docId=1956695&cid=42607&categoryId=42607>

Dynasty. In 2003, UNESCO designated pansori as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible of Humanity. Pansori is a traditional Korean vocal music that generally has a solo singer and a drummer. *Ssukdaemeori* is a song sung by a woman who is missing her fiancé. The heroine of the story, Chunhyang, was suffering under a bad government and was forced to be a prostitute. She refused to do this service, so, she lived through various hardships in prison.

#### Who is Bang-ul Im?

Bang-ul Im (1904 - 1961, Fig. 1) was born in the Kwangju Jeolla province. His real name is Seung-geun Im. His stage name “Bang-ul” was made by putting the sound of a bell. The tinkling of a bell means a beautiful and clear ringing voice. He is a natural singer of minor key. He is second to none in *Ssukdaemeori* with his voice singing in high-pitched tones. Bang-ul Im was good at controlling the pitch pre-eminently. Through pansori, he had the power of representing a lot of joys and sorrows. He thought that pansori was more for the public. So, he loved spending time in popular places and singing in the market. His song, *Ssukdaemeori*, was recorded on the phonograph in Japan. Despite it being the Japanese colonial era, the *Ssukdaemeori* sung by Bang-ul Im sold one million records.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

An acoustic features of sad music described above, personality, mood, and the surrounding social context are all important factors in determining whether or not sad music is enjoyed (Sachs et al., 2015). Music is used for emotion change in the population mostly, and as a coping strategy for depression (Lepping et al., 2016). Music therapy bore specially important and amicable results when used to heal patients with depression (Van et al., 2015). In 1983, ‘*The effects of live music versus tape-recorded music on hospitalized cancer patients*’ noted that the playing of melancholy music has been shown to promote positive condition changes in depressed patients because sorrowful music cleanses the soul and provides strength through catharsis. In 1972, ‘*Weeping: A problem of many facets*’

noted that conceptually tears indicate the emotions and feelings that cannot be worked off in action, but can be finished only in biological processes that result in an overflow of tears. In 1994, ‘*The psychophysiology of crying*’ noted it has been assumed that crying also leads to changes in systemic parasympathetic activation. We know that crying can help overcome stressful situations. In 2000, ‘*Adult crying: A model and review of the literature*’ noted that the main function of crying is the removal of toxic waste products that are released when people are distressed; the removal of these substances can have an effect on one’s mental state. Some people are attracted to mournful music because they feel better by listening to it them. We do not need to dwell on the fact that misery loves company. So, the author thinks the song *Ssukdaemeori* contributed to healing Koreans’ indignation and pain during the Japanese colonial era.

The most important thing in our health is that the mind and the body come to understand each other. Therefore, crying can help promote a healthy life. It is believed that listening to sorrowful music like *Ssukdaemeori* can have a good effect on people feeling sad or depressed.

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

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