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## **STRESZCZENIE PRACY**

**w języku angielskim**

### **THE IMPACT OF MUSIC AND MUSICAL PREFERENCES ON ALEXITHYMIA AMONG INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS ADDICTED TO ALCOHOL AND OTHER PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES**

Alexithymia is understood as a multidimensional disorder that involves difficulties in identifying, verbalizing, and regulating emotions. It constitutes a significant clinical and resocialization problem in working with individuals deprived of liberty. Its high intensity often co-occurs with addictions to alcohol and psychoactive substances, as well as with previous deprivation experiences such as emotional neglect or other psychological traumas. Prisoners, due to biographical, social, and psychopathological burdens, particularly often present intensified alexithymic traits, which hinders both addiction therapy and resocialization processes.

The aim of this doctoral dissertation was to examine the relationship between music preferences, participation in music therapy, and the level of alexithymic traits in a population of addicted individuals serving sentences in conditions of penitentiary isolation. The study was conducted in the Therapeutic Unit of the Rzeszów Prison with the participation of 100 inmates. The experimental group consisted of 50 prisoners who took part in a cycle of music therapy sessions carried out within the framework of a therapeutic program. The control group was not included in such interventions. In the realities of prison isolation, conducting systematic research in parallel with the implementation of a music therapy program represents an extremely rare and valuable opportunity, which was successfully realized in this project.

Standardized psychometric tools were applied: the Perth Alexithymia Questionnaire (PAQ) in the Polish adaptation by Paweł Larionov and the Short Test of Music Preferences (STOMP) in the adaptation by Rafał Lewandowski. The study was complemented with an

Author's Questionnaire, which enabled the collection of information concerning musical experiences, as well as the history of treatment and isolation.

The analysis of results indicated that participation in music therapy sessions significantly reduced the level of alexithymic traits, particularly in the areas of recognizing, describing, and evaluating positive emotions. Music therapy proved to be an effective tool supporting the development of emotional competences, enabling a better understanding and communication of one's experiences, which is of particular importance in working with addicted individuals who often struggle with deficits in affect regulation.

The results of this study confirm the reports in the literature indicating the therapeutic role of music as a medium capable of overcoming communication barriers and stimulating emotional expression in high-risk clinical groups. Significant relationships were also observed between music preferences and the intensity of alexithymia. Individuals who preferred energetic and rhythmic, as well as reflective and complex music, demonstrated lower levels of difficulties in emotional functioning. This may suggest that active listening to music requiring cognitive engagement or stimulating activity fosters the development of abilities to recognize and modulate emotions. In the penitentiary context, it is particularly important that music preferences may serve a protective function, supporting emotional regulation processes which are otherwise significantly weakened by isolation and deprivation of psychological needs.

The study also revealed significant age-related differences. Older inmates were characterized by higher levels of alexithymic traits, which may indicate the consolidation of emotional difficulties over time. No significant associations were found between the severity of alexithymia and the length of isolation, having siblings, or birth order. This suggests that the fundamental determinants of alexithymia may have a more complex, individual character, independent of certain sociodemographic variables. An interesting finding was that individuals who had not previously participated in any form of therapy showed higher levels of alexithymia, which underscores the clinical importance of early psychotherapeutic intervention and indicates the need for systematic implementation of preventive measures.

This dissertation demonstrates the significant potential of music as a tool supporting affect regulation and the development of emotional competences in a high-risk population, such as addicted individuals serving prison sentences. The conclusions from the study may serve as a basis for designing music therapy programs in penitentiary settings that take into

account both individual music preferences and the clinical characteristics of participants. The results confirm the necessity of an interdisciplinary approach combining addiction psychotherapy, resocialization measures, and interventions from the fields of art and culture.