

## PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AND “LE VIEILLARD ET L’ENFANT”: A REVIEW OF CURRENT EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

### ПСИХОЛОГІЧНЕ БЛАГОПОЛУЧЧЯ ТА «LE VIEILLARD ET L’ENFANT»: РЕЗУЛЬТАТИ ЕМПІРИЧНОГО ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ

*The article examines the impact of the music album “Le vieillard et l’enfant” (“The Old Man and the Child”, 2021) on the psychological well-being of the individual in a crisis life situation. It is determined that psychological well-being is a component of the positive functioning of the individual, which contributes to its social adaptation in a dynamic changing world. In contrast to the concept of “mental health”, “psychological well-being” in its content correlates primarily with the existential experience of a person’s attitude to his own life. That is, it, first of all, exists in the consciousness of the bearer of psychological well-being and is, from this point of view, a subjective reality, characterized by integrity and based on the integral assessment of one’s own existence. Theoretical studies of the connection between emotional state and listening to music are analyzed, the specifics of a music album, the psychological meaning of the novel on which it is based, the key issues of the album and their role in psychological well-being are outlined. The empirical study was conducted by the authors on a sample of 308 women with breast cancer, focusing on the ability to reduce stress, improve the emotional state of women undergoing treatment or recently completed it. It is emphasized that music therapy with cancer patients has a long history and has proven its effectiveness, but traditionally it is conducted using classical music, rather than modern music, including music for children. The study found that most of the music album “Le vieillard et l’enfant” influenced such components of psychological well-being as “positive attitude towards others” and “self-acceptance”, minimized the expression of negative emotions such as anger, shame, guilt and fear and intensified interest, surprise and pleasure. At the same time, there is a decrease in the overall level of stress and an improvement in the emotional state of women in general.*

**Key words:** *psychological well-being, emotional state, music therapy, self-acceptance, crisis, stress.*

*У статті розглядається вплив музичного альбому «Le vieillard et l’enfant» («Старий і Дитина», 2021) на психологічне благополуччя особистості у кризовій життєвій*

*ситуації. Визначено, що психологічне благополуччя є складовою частиною позитивного функціонування особистості, яка сприяє її соціальній адаптації у динамічному й мінливому світі. На відміну від поняття «психічне здоров’я», «психологічне благополуччя» за своїм змістом співвідноситься, зокрема, з екзистенційним переживанням людиною ставлення до власного життя. Тобто воно існує у свідомості власне носія психологічного благополуччя і є суб’єктивною реальністю, що характеризується цілісністю й базується на інтегральній оцінці людиною власного буття. Проаналізовано теоретичні дослідження зв’язку емоційного стану та слухання музики, висвітлено специфіку музичного альбому, психологічний сенс роману, на якому він заснований, окреслено ключові питання, яким присвячено альбом, та їх роль у психологічному благополуччі. Емпіричне дослідження проведене авторами на вибірці із 308 жінок, хворих на рак молочної залози, основна увага приділена можливостям зниження рівня стресу, покращення емоційного стану жінок, які проходять лікування чи нещодавно його завершили. Акцентовано, що музична терапія з онкохворими має тривалу історію та довела свою ефективність, однак традиційно вона проводиться із використанням класичних музичних творів, а не сучасної музики, зокрема музики для дітей. В результаті дослідження встановлено, що найбільше музичний альбом «Le vieillard et l’enfant» вплинув на такі компоненти психологічного благополуччя, як позитивне ставлення до інших і самоприйняття, мінімізував вираженість негативних емоцій на кшталт гніву, сорому, почуття провини та страху, активізував інтерес, подив і задоволення. При цьому спостерігається зниження загального рівня стресу та покращення емоційного стану жінок загалом.*

**Ключові слова:** *психологічне благополуччя, емоційний стан, музична терапія, самоприйняття, криза, стрес.*

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Psychological well-being is a component of positive functioning, which, according to C. Ryff, C. Keyes, is characterized by self-acceptance, the ability to create positive relationships with others, autonomy, maturity (it is not about age, but about competence, skill in a particular business), the presence of life goals, personal growth (the desire for self-realization and self-improvement) [13]. In contrast to the concept of “mental health”, “psychological well-being” in its content correlates primarily with the existential experience of a person’s attitude to his own life. That is, it, first of all, exists in the consciousness of the bearer of psychological well-being and is,

from this point of view, a subjective reality, characterized by integrity and based on an integral assessment of one’s own existence.

The novel “La route d’Altamont” (Gabrielle Roy, 1966) is devoted to the coverage of the autobiographical narrative, the peculiarities of the personal identity crisis for different age groups, the succession of generations, the existential problems that are actualized in crisis life situations. Researcher of G Roy’s heritage D. Fortier [4] adapted the text of Roy’s story especially for the music album “Le vieillard et l’enfant” (“The Old Man and the Child”, La Montagne secrète, 2021), which made it possible

to understand it for children from 3 years of age, while preserving its basic problems. namely: childhood, family, self-discovery and the world at large, the desire for independence and desire for adventure, which, in general, characterize the psychological well-being of the person.

Music album “Le vieillard et l’enfant” (2021) consists of the actual lyrics of G. Roy, adapted by D. Fortier, lyrics by Ch. Vézina, music by D. Lavoie and illustrations by Rogé. In the dialogues there is a communicative interaction between the characters, the lyrics and illustrations reflect the key points of G. Roy story – “movement”, “journey”, “plain”, “lake”, “intergenerational interaction”, “reflection”; the autobiographical narrative is emphasized by music using exclusively acoustic instruments. D. Lavoie said that he wanted to reflect the simplicity of the text through music: “The idea was to illustrate the tale with music in a fun, playful and bright form [...] I wanted it to be quite acoustic, close to folk”.

This article highlights the results of an empirical study of the impact of a music album on the psychological well-being of the individual in crisis life situations, in particular in the situation of cancer. The specificity of the empirical study is that 99.6% of the participants did not understand French, and therefore described their own experiences only based on the perception of the melody of the songs and the overall composition of the album.

According to traditional perspectives, the components of subjective wellbeing (SWB) are a greater ratio of positive to negative emotions, and a sense of satisfaction with life [2]. The World Health Organization (WHO) has defined positive mental health as a state of well-being in which the individual is aware of his or her abilities, can cope with the stress of daily life, work productively and contribute to society” [7]. The state of well-being has always existed psychologically in human life. Psychological well-being in the context of the hedonistic approach (N. Bradburn, E. Diener) is determined by achieving pleasure and avoiding unpleasant emotions, while pleasure is interpreted in a broad sense – not only as bodily pleasure, but also derived from achieving meaningful goals and results [2]. Psychological well-being in the eudemonic approach (C. Ryff) is defined as human self-realization in specific living conditions, the search for a creative synthesis between meeting the demands of the social environment and the development of their own individuality. Note that eudemonism is an ancient principle of understanding life, later in ethics – the principle of interpretation and justification of morality, according to which happiness (“bliss”) is the highest goal of human life. The precondition of ancient eudemonism is Socrates’ idea of inner freedom, which is achieved through the self-consciousness of the individual

and his independence from the outside world. One of the critics of eudemonism in ethics was I. Kant, who believed that the motive for a truly moral act can only be a duty, but not the pursuit of happiness [13].

The mediating effects of emotion regulation (reappraisal and suppression) were examined in the relationship between music engagement and well-being. Findings provide initial evidence that engaging with music for the purposes of cognitive and emotion regulation may enhance well-being primarily through the habitual use of cognitive reappraisal. When positive feelings are frequent and intense and negative feelings are relatively low and when activities in life provide satisfaction, subjective well-being of individuals increases. This suggests that anxiety may have a significant relationship with subjective well-being.

Music therapy is a frequently used complementary and creative arts treatment in psychosocial cancer care. The general goal is to relieve symptom distress and to improve quality of life of patients in various stages of an oncological disease [8].

Breast cancer is one of the leading causes of death among women aged 35–50 years and has increasingly become a significant public health burden due to its associated high morbidity, mortality, and tremendous health care costs. Psychosocial distress, in the forms of depression and anxiety, regularly accompanies breast cancer diagnosis and throughout its treatment. Hence, it is important to objectively assess the therapy options that may help this distress [7]. Breast cancer is a condition whose diagnosis may result in extensive emotional, physical, and social suffering. It engenders stress and anxiety related to future prognosis and potential mortality. It may also cause uncertainty about changes in a woman’s body image and treatment options. Patients may experience anxiety regarding surgical experience, coping with acute pain, treatment regimens, financial burdens of care, and disruptions of their personal and professional lives [12].

Studies on the effects of music therapy reported that patients may benefit from music therapy which directly alleviates pain in patients via specific physiological, psychological, and socioemotional mechanisms [6]. With reference to the direct physiological effects, music therapy changes neuronal activity with entrainment to musical rhythms in the lateral temporal lobe and cortical areas devoted to movement. Music is a highly engaging activity which has been associated with improved health and wellbeing in a range of contexts across the lifespan [3]. Research examining the impact of music listening [12] and self-selected music [1] on health and well-being attributes many

of the beneficial effects of music to the cognitive and emotional management of hedonic well-being [9].

The current study aimed to examine the associations between music engagement of music album “Le vieillard et l’enfant” and well-being of women treated for primary breast cancer. This study was designed according to the experimental model and employed the single group pretest-posttest without control group research design.

We employed a mixed methods intervention design, in which qualitative data (i.e., semistructured interview with Healthy-Unhealthy Music Scale and Differential Emotions Scale [14]). In addition, the study used tools such as Ryff Psychological Well-being Scale and Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10). Psychological Well-Being Scales (PWBS; Ryff 1989) is a 42 item self-rating inventory that encompasses the six areas of psychological well-being: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life and self-acceptance. C. Izard delineated 12 discrete emotions labeled: Interest, Joy, Surprise, Sadness, Anger, Disgust, Contempt, Self-Hostility, Fear, Shame, Shyness, and Guilt (as measured via his Differential Emotions Scale or DES-IV). Discrete emotion theory states that these specific core emotions are biologically determined emotional responses whose expression and recognition is fundamentally

the same for all individuals regardless of ethnic or cultural differences. Healthy-Unhealthy Music scale (HUMS) is one such assessment tool developed on Australian population that uses music engagement as an indicator of anxiety levels and potential high-risk for depression as assessed by Kessler’s Psychological Distress Scale (K10). A trial was conducted with 308 women treated for breast cancer.

The research results are presented in table 1. Pre-test group differences were explored with T tests. Statistically significant ( $p < 0,05$ ) pre-test differences were entered as covariates in all main analyses and for statistically significant post-test outcomes.

First of all, we note changes in the severity of stress before and after listening to the album, if at the beginning of the study according to the Kessler’s Psychological Distress questionnaire women had a very high level of stress ( $47.9 \pm 2.18$ ), then it decreased statistically significantly ( $18.5 \pm 1.47$ ) and meets the normative indicators on this scale.

Regarding the perception of music in general, the positive effect of music on the psychological state was initially noted by 48.4% of women, and negative – 30.5%, at the end of the study the figures changed – 73.4% noted a positive attitude to music (differences are statistically significant at  $p = 0.05$ ), while negative – 9.1% (differences are statistically significant at  $p = 0.001$ ). Neutral attitudes

Table 1

### Impact of a music album “Le vieillard et l’enfant” on psychological well-being

Componets	Pre-test mean and SD	Post-test mean and SD	P
Kessler’s Psychological Distress Scale (K-10)	47,9±2,18	18,5±1,47	0,001**
HUMS Healthy	12,53±1,93	22,46±3,18	0,001**
HUMS Unhealthy	13,07±1,74	7,11±2,84	0,05*
Positive Relations with Others (PWBS)	52,8±2,12	68,2±1,19	0,05*
Autonomy (PWBS)	53,4±2,18	53,8±2,08	0,683
Environmental Mastery (PWBS)	62,1±1,31	62,9±1,87	0,792
Personal Growth (PWBS)	56,1±1,37	57,8±3,91	0,528
Purpose in Life (PWBS)	51,1±2,04	59,5±2,78	0,191
Self-Acceptance (PWBS)	35,8±2,63	67,2±2,53	0,001**
Psychological well-being (PWBS)	311,3±1,94	369,4±2,39	0,006**
Interest	8,8±1,62	9,9±1,07	0,557
Joy	2,1±3,18	9,8±0,24	0,001**
Surprise	5,2±1,23	9,6±1,69	0,007**
Sadness	9,5±0,27	1,8±0,66	0,001**
Anger	2,2±1,13	0,1±0,05	0,05*
Disgust	3,4±2,18	0,1±0,11	0,05*
Contempt	3,9±1,37	0,1±0,15	0,05*
Fear	9,8±3,01	1,1±0,67	0,001**
Shame and Shyness	9,7±2,05	0,5±0,96	0,001**
Guilt	8,9±2,12	1,7±1,94	0,001**

towards music were found in 21.1% and 17.5% of women, respectively.

In terms of psychological well-being, the music album had the greatest impact on such components as Positive Relations with Others ( $52,8 \pm 2,12$  and  $68,2 \pm 1,19$ ) and Self-Acceptance ( $35,8 \pm 2,63$  and  $67,2 \pm 2,53$ ). Positive Relations with Others is the ability to build trusting relationships, openness, the ability to compromise to maintain relationships, Self-acceptance – positive attitude towards oneself, an adequate assessment of one's own past, not prone to self-blame, is characterized by an invaluable attitude to oneself, tolerance and readiness to accept new experiences. That is, listening to music in a group gave the opportunity to share their positive emotions with others, discuss their experiences and thus – to strengthen them, which, in turn, improved self-esteem, attitude and self-confidence, including opportunities to overcome the disease.

We asked participants to assess their condition by basic emotions before and after listening to the music album. The evaluation was carried out on a 10-point scale – from 0 – this emotion is not true for me now, up to 10 – this emotion is now very strongly expressed.

At the beginning of the study, 92,9% of participants expressed a strong interest in listening to a music album, but 5,5% in the conversation said that “they will not be surprised by anything”. 20 minutes after the listeners listened to the album, their level of interest increased, in particular, women were interested to hear the story on which the album is based and find out who performs the songs they liked best.

The results of static analysis revealed significant differences before and after listening to this album on such basic emotions as joy ( $p=0,001$ ), surprise ( $p=0,007$ ), sadness ( $p=0,001$ ), anger ( $p=0,05$ ), disgust ( $p=0,05$ ), contempt ( $p=0,05$ ), fear ( $p=0,001$ ), shame and shyness ( $p=0,001$ ), guilt ( $p=0,001$ ).

In crisis situations, a person's life is reduced to one point – here and now – the past becomes only memories, and the future – very uncertain, and in the case of cancer – often impossible. In fact, during the crisis, human life is reduced to the present moment. This is clearly demonstrated in the novel “La Route d'Altamont”.

According to D. Fortier: “Childhood and ageing – moments of wonder and peace, at the same time – are transitional stages of the life, when there is an encounter with the immeasurable – a kind of window into what awaiting people: the future life of the child and the inevitable death of the elderly”. An important psychological view, clearly reflected in “Le vieillard et l'enfant” is the value of being in a situation “here and now”, the meeting of past (old age) and future (childhood) occurs in the present, it is here that the two

contrary points of life cycle [11]. Confronting / combining childhood with old age is a key aspect of the paradoxical concept of time reflected in the novel “La Route d'Altamont”, and especially in “Le vieillard et l'enfant” [5]. Thus, opposites that can neither agree nor cancel each other are united in a paradox in which they can coexist simultaneously. Indeed, through the characters of Christine and Saint-Hilaire, G. Roy illustrates the paradoxical course of time, which takes place in the form of pauses and jerks, in a circular motion, where opposites combine – so childhood and old age, the two extreme poles of life, meet and merge into one point at a given point in time. When Christine asks Monsieur Saint-Hilaire what the distant coats of Winnipeg Lake are – its end or its beginning, the old man replies, “The end, the beginning? You ask a strange question! The end, the beginning ... What if it was the same thing! ... Maybe everything ends in a big circle, in which the end and the beginning converge”.

Music therapy is a form of emotional support focusing on difficulties to express psychological distress and difficult feelings, thoughts related to challenging cancer diagnosis, and treatment situation. Engaging in music activities may allow individuals to achieve an optimal balance of affect and, accordingly, enhance hedonic well-being. Music is also often used to manage one's environment and facilitate communication with others. Thus, according to the scales of psychological well-being, it was found that the music album had the greatest impact on such components as Positive Relations with Others and Self-Acceptance. This enhanced sense of autonomy and relatedness to others may explain the positive psychological outcomes described by individuals participating in group musical activities.

There was a statistically significant reduction in stress, improved attitude to music, recognition of its positive effect on well-being. In addition, after listening to the music album, the expression of such emotions as joy, interest and surprise increased significantly and decreased – fear, anger, guilt and shame. Therefore, the tendency to seek opportunities to engage with music to regulate emotions is likely to result in a greater sense of fulfilled personal psychological functioning and social well-being.

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