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The Effect of Single Sessions of Music Therapy on the Level of Anxiety in Older Persons With Psychiatric Disorders – A Pilot Study

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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Abstract

This pilot study examined the effects of single sessions of music therapy on the level of anxiety in older persons with psychiatric disorders. The studied intervention was a 30 minute music therapy group and the control intervention was a verbal therapeutic intervention in the form of a reminiscence group. Participants acted as their own control. The measurement tool was the state part of a “State Trait Anxiety Inventory”. It was administered a total of four times, pre- and post- the music therapy intervention and pre- and post- the reminiscence therapy (control) group. A total of 9 participants were recruited for the study. The results indicated that single sessions of music therapy significantly reduced the level of anxiety for older persons with psychiatric disorders [$t(8)=4.626$, $p<0.0017$] as compared to the control intervention as measured by the state part of the “State Trait Anxiety Inventory”. There was no evidence for a significant carryover effect since the baselines prior to each intervention did not differ significantly ($p=0.55$). These results can be considered to be a part of a pilot study and early inquiry into this field since methodological difficulties and the time limitation of the research resulted in some necessary deviations from the original protocol. A major limitation of the study was the choice of a measurement tool, which required the client to be cognitively high functioning. Thus these results are limited to cognitively able clients, which is a relatively small proportion of this client group that could potentially benefit from music therapy. It is suggested that for future research with this client group the measured variable be physical relaxation, rather than anxiety.

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