

# Enjoying Expression: Exploring the Benefits of Music Therapy on Patients Diagnosed with Schizophrenia and Using Metaphor Games / Improvisations for Increasing Emotional Awareness Level

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## 1. Topic of research and its importance

Although music therapy is an evidence-based and effective therapy method in clinical psychiatric settings all around the world and there are several Cochrane studies (Kamioka et al., 2014), the literature on music therapy's effect on emotional awareness is very limited. This study, which has been conducted as a part of presenter's Music Therapy Master's thesis aims to examine the clinical benefits of music therapy specifically on emotional awareness (Salur, 2016).

## 2. Method

A study was conducted in Istanbul University Psychiatry Clinic with 6 patients with ages between 24 and 53, at the time under standard care due to diagnoses of schizophrenia or schizophrenia-like disorders by the hospital staff. The participants attended 20 music therapy sessions with pre-post clinical psychological tests applied around the sessions. Emotional awareness dimension of Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (Gratz & Roemer, 2004) has been used for measuring the change.

## 3. Clinical process and emotional awareness intervention

In the music therapy process, spontaneous group dynamics allowed the therapist to introduce animals as metaphors for several musical games and improvisations. Group participants played their instruments like the animals they or the other members chose, then talked about these animal's feelings and emotions. At early stages of the process, the therapist prepared a "cheat sheet" emotion names list with group members' input to make the expression process easier.

It is worth noting that the animal games were not planned before the process. The therapist observed the group dynamics, needs and inclinations, followed them and this caused the group to evolve these games, which resulted in this specific benefit. This is a significant indicator towards the importance of a person-centered therapist stance.

## 4. Results

A paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare clients' difficulties

in emotion regulation, specifically related to difficulties in emotional awareness, measured by the sixth dimension of DERS in pre-therapy-process and post-therapy-process conditions. There was a significant difference in the scores for pre-therapy-process ( $M = 19.83$ ,  $SD = 3.19$ ) and post-therapy-process ( $M = 17.83$ ,  $SD = 2.56$ ) conditions;  $t(5) = 2.74$ ,  $p = .041$ . The group mean has decreased at a significant level. In the session notes, it is observed that towards the end of the process all clients start using more emotional descriptive words in both music therapy activities and daily and expressive discussions. Changes at the individual and group level can be seen in Figure 1.

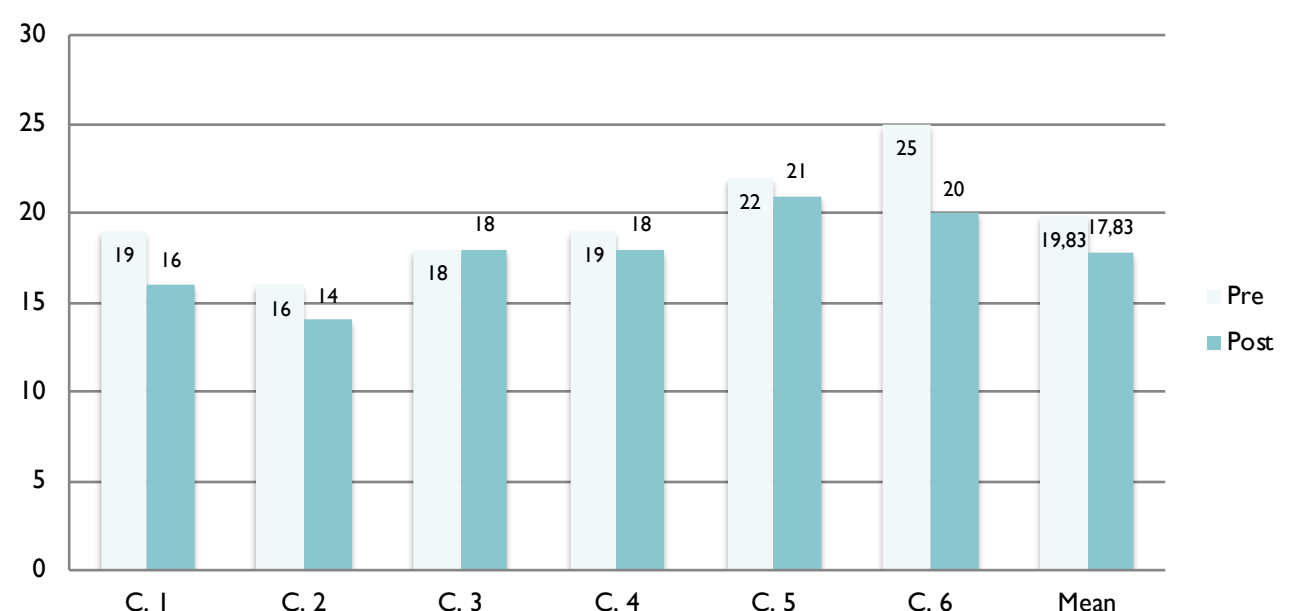


Figure.1: Changes at the individual and group level in difficulty in emotion regulation related to difficulties in emotional awareness.

## 5. Conclusion

After a 20-session long music therapy process, where music therapy games / improvisations using animals as metaphors have been played to reach emotional content, members' difficulties in emotion regulation have been reduced significantly through increased emotional awareness. Session notes consisting of therapy crew's observations support the statistical analysis of these benefits.

These findings show that music therapy can be beneficial on multiple dimensions, including emotional awareness, and therefore, more implication opportunities are suggested.

Gratz, K. L., & Roemer, L. (2004). Multidimensional Assessment of Emotion Regulation and Dysregulation: Development, Factor Structure, and Initial Validation of the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale. *Journal of Psychopathology and Behavioral Assessment*, 26, 41–54.

Kamioka, H., Tsutani, K., Yamada, M., Park, H., Okuizumi, H., Tsuruoka, K., ... Mutoh, Y. (2014). Effectiveness of music therapy: A summary of systematic reviews based on randomized controlled trials of music interventions. *Patient Preference and Adherence*, 8, 727–754.

Salur, Ö. (2016). *Aiming for Change: Exploring the Benefits of Music Therapy on Patients Diagnosed with Schizophrenia*. University of Jyväskylä. Retrieved from <http://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi:jyu-201609043951>