Psychocosmetology – the opportunity to reduce stress in a beauty salon with the use of music therapy, massage, yoga, and meditation

Excessive, uncontrolled stress adversely affects the human body. The COVID-19 pandemic contributed to increased stress levels in society. The use of stress reduction techniques, proposed by psychocosmetology, such as massage, music therapy, yoga, and meditation, in beauty salons can bring many benefits including stress release.

The aim of this article was the analyze the respondent’s opinions about stress reduction in beauty salons by performing psychocosmetology. In addition, the relationship between appearance and well-being was also examined.

The results of the study confirmed the influence of using stress reduction methods on the client’s well-being, as well as the mutual influence of appearance and comfort.

Streszczenie

Celem artykułu była przede wszystkim analiza opinii respondentów, dotyczącej możliwości redukcji stresu w gabinetach kosmetologicznych poprzez wykorzystanie możliwości psychocosmetologii. Ponadto zbadano pogląd na temat zależności między wyglądem a samopoczuciem.

Wyniki badania potwierdzają wpływ wykorzystania metod redukcji stresu na samopoczucie klienta, a także wzajemny wpływ wyglądu i samopoczucia.

Słowa kluczowe: kosmetologia, psychocosmetologia, zdrowie, stres, muzykoterapia, masaż, joga, medytacja, COVID-19

INTRODUCTION
The time when the COVID-19 pandemic was announced on March 11, 2020, by the World Health Organization (WHO) was a cause of excessive stress for many people [1]. The long-lasting state of excessive tension had a negative impact the human body of a large part of the population, and consequently, the deterioration of the general health and well-being, dysregulation of the functioning of the most important internal systems and, finally, diseases, including: type 2 diabetes, hypertension, cancer, neurosis, anxiety, depression, psychosomatic diseases, as well as disturbances
in the functioning of the largest organ, which is the skin. The consequence of such changes may also be a deterioration of the external appearance.

Sport and relaxation techniques reduce stress effectively. One of the innovative disciplines is psychocosmetology, which focuses on clients of cosmetology clinics. It ensures their needs and expectations through natural and paramedical therapies [2].

**STRESS**

Stress is the body’s defensive reaction to information about the state of the external or internal environment that may pose a threat. It concerns and applies to all living organisms. It has a systemic, biological, and psychobiological character. It aims to eliminate the stress factor while restoring the body’s balance. For the proper functioning of the body, it is necessary to maintain intracorporeal homeostasis at an optimal level, i.e. to regulate the course of physiological processes within the limits favorable for the body. Its first definition was formulated by Walter Cannon in the book ‘The wisdom of the body’ in 1932 [3]. According to Hans Sely, the body’s reaction to stress has three stages.

1. **Alarm** - physiological changes in response to the activation of the stressor.
2. **Immunity** – if contact with the stressful situation continues, the human body produces resistance to the stressor that triggered the alarm reaction. At this stage, the symptoms that occurred in the first stage disappear.
3. **Exhaustion** - the impact of the stressor lasted too long and the point when the body is no longer able to maintain immunity, nor adapt to constant stress, the physiological dysfunctions occurring during the alarm reaction return [4].

Peter Sterling and Joseph Eyer proposed a concept concerning the essence of homeostasis and stress, which they called allostasis [5]. This term stands for a process aimed at maintaining stability through changes, the ability to maintain the balance of the body through changes in its functioning [6]. The aforementioned scientists observed, that even in the case of a healthy person, in the face of various activities / experiences, such as, mental experience, changes in the functioning of the organism may occur. Examples include an increase in body temperature caused by an emotional experience or an increase in blood pressure during measurement in the presence of a doctor - the so-called white coat effect.

According to the concept of Richard Lazarus and Susan Folkman, a stressful situation concerns the relationship of a specific individual with the environment perceived as burdensome and posing a threat to well-being. The authors believe that a stressful situation and its severity are caused by an individual perception by an individual (cognitive assessment and coping method) [7].

The pathological effect of stress occurs when it is excessive and uncontrolled (distress) [8]. However, it should be noted, that not all stress is such, on the contrary, it is needed as a factor necessary for the proper functioning of the body. It often mobilizes the body to a specific reaction at a given moment. Then there is the so-called eustress, a mobilizer [9]. An example of this may be the actor’s stage fright before performing on stage.

Cortisol, like corticotropin, is called the stress hormone. Long-term high blood levels can have detrimental effects such as decreased bone density, increased blood pressure, hyperthyroidism, blood sugar imbalance (e.g. hyperglycemia), decreased muscle tissue, increased body fat, decreased immunity and inflammation [10].

**PSYCHOCOSMETOLOGY**

The World Health Organization defines health as “a state of complete well-being, physical, mental, and social well-being, and not only the absence of (objectively existing) disease or disability [11]. Therefore, the human body should be treated holistically.

Psychocosmetology can be treated as comprehensive care for the human body, with particular emphasis on stress, psychosomatic diseases and aging. Its therapeutic potential is, among others, reducing stress or supporting the therapy of psychosomatic skin diseases. The use of psychocosmetology methods can also be a natural anti-aging method, as an alternative for people who, due to contraindications, cannot or for some reason do not want to use treatments, e.g. aesthetic medicine. A cosmetologist dealing with psychosomatics should be properly educated, have appropriate competences and be in an appropriate mental and physical form - which is a key element. Therefore, it should be emphasized that procedures in psychocosmetology require from cosmetologists additional knowledge in the field of psychology and natural therapies (e.g. communication and relationship building, reflexology, Ayurveda, Chinese cosmetology, hirudology, armoatherapy, selected meditation techniques). Additionally, in psychocosmetology massage, music therapy, meditation and elements of yoga are used [2].

**MASSAGE**

Massage, and therefore touch, is one of the most important somatosensory feelings. Quality of life can be improved through tactile stimulation. It is a powerful tool of modulating human emotions. A pleasant massage can have a pain-relieving effect. Massaging the affected area of the body can improve mental and physical functioning, reduce stress and relieve pain, and enhance the ability to cope with the disease [12]. Scientific research shows that massage therapy has a beneficial effect on many different disease states, e.g. depression, autism, skin diseases, pain syndromes, including arthritis and fibromyalgia, hypertension, autoimmune
Music is an art due to which health therapies can be carried out by acting on physical, emotional, cognitive, and social stimuli. It is an important part of human life, which provides entertainment, helps to create self-esteem, strengthens social bonds, and facilitates communication. It can be described as one of the forms of emotional communication as it enables people to convey emotions. The potential of music is enormous, this is why it is such an important therapeutic tool. Music therapy is used for a specific purpose, e.g. to improve mood, reduce symptoms of mental illness, treat pain, stimulate a cognitive and emotional relaxation in patients with brain injuries and neurological diseases. At the same time, it can be considered as safe and generally well-accepted intervention in health care, leading to the improvement of the quality of life. Numerous studies showed that music altered activity in the brain's core networks responsible for emotions [16].

A combination of music therapy and cosmetology can be a massage with the use of Tibetan bowls or special forks - in this case the sound is not only heard but also felt on the skin [2]. It is assumed that a tone with a frequency of 432 Hz synchronizes our body with the matter. Sound as an acoustic wave stabilizes the energy poles of the cell, fulfilling the role of tissue massage. To achieve this effect, the sounds made by Tibetan bowls are used, the frequency of which can be compared to singing [17]. According to Piotr Pułka, people who regularly participate in gong-sound bathing sessions and relaxing concerts with the use of gongs and bowls claim that their level of physical and mental health has increased significantly and that they are more resistant to external stressors [18].

**MEDITATION AND YOGA**

Meditation means contemplation, reflection, delving into your thoughts. As a healing and spiritual practice, it was established in various parts of the world over 5,000 years ago. Meditation is a mind-body practice that is used to increase a sense of calmness and physical relaxation, improve mental balance, manage the disease, and develop overall health and well-being. The mind and body practices focus on the interactions between the brain, mind, body, and behavior. Meditation can be viewed as a set of mental training systems practiced for various purposes, including training of well-being and mental health [2].

Scientific research showed that meditation could generate significant health benefits for those who practice it. There is increasing evidence that even brief meditation practices (5 days to 8 weeks) can improve mental health and even metabolism. The research proved that meditation reduced the perceived stress and depressive symptoms, sleep disorders, improved the quality of life, had a positive effect on changes in brain function,continue...
Meditation might also alleviate the course of diseases such as ischemic heart disease, hypertension, and type 2 diabetes, and by reducing the level of stress, it contributed to the reduction of blood cortisol levels [19].

One of the meditation techniques used to reduce stress is mindfulness meditation. It is used in the MBSR (Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction) stress reduction program developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn [20].

Mindfulness meditation is widely practiced to reduce stress and promote health and wellness. It is used in a variety of settings, including dormitories, schools, counselling and clinics, as well as by people working in stressful jobs. Studies on the effects of mindfulness meditation conducted in recent years have confirmed that it has a beneficial effect on mental and physical health and improves emotional balance. This type of meditation is quite easy to perform and does not require any specific equipment, clothing, or additional expenditure [2].

Yoga is an ancient practice, and in some parts of the world even a way of life, originated in India. Several styles of yoga are practiced in Western societies. Most of them involve physical postures (known as asana), breathing control exercises (pranayama), and meditation (dhyana) [21]. Yoga practices have a beneficial effect on the physiological and mental spheres, e.g. they strengthen muscle tissue, improve mood, alleviate depression, improve sleep quality and blood circulation. Yoga also has a positive effect on the reduction of symptoms of certain diseases and disorders, including: carpal tunnel syndrome, multiple sclerosis, asthma, mental disorders, cancer, irritable bowel syndrome, hypertension, diabetes, coronary heart disease, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease [22]. Scientists showed that yoga influenced the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis and the sympathetic nervous system, reducing stress [23]. Long-term, regular yoga practice affects the central nervous system [24].

Meditation and yoga can be viewed as anti-stress, anti-aging and relaxation therapies. They can also complement cosmetic procedures. However, it should be noted that the meditation prescribed for sick people is long-lasting and may be difficult for patients of cosmetology clinics, burdened with professional work and other duties. Therefore, it is worth developing meditation procedures that are less absorbing, but effective, for people who are basically healthy, but only unable to cope with stress. An interesting idea seems to be a combination of elements of meditation and yoga with cosmetological treatments [2]. For example, by using the so-called Bodyscan and respiratory elements used in mindfulness [20], or selected yoga asanas [25]. However, it should be emphasized that cosmetologists dealing with psychocosmetology should be properly educated and have qualifications for the services performed [2].

In addition, it is worth emphasizing that caring for physical attractiveness is also a health concern, so it requires consistent work. In order to bring appropriate results, beauty, relaxation treatments or various forms of stress reduction should be performed systematically. Both in the cosmetologist’s office and the daily home care [26-28].

**AIM OF THE RESEARCH**

The aim of the research was to analyze the opinions of respondents on the need to reduce stress during the COVID-19 pandemic and the possibility of using psychocosmetology to decrease stress in cosmetology salons. Moreover, the study aimed to analyze the mutual dependence on well-being and appearance.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

104 respondents aged 16-55 participated in the study. The vast majority were women (96.2%). The respondents were divided into 5 age groups: 16-20 years old, 21-26 years old, 27-35 years old, 36-45 years old, and 46-55 years old. Most of the respondents were in the 21-26 age group (Fig. 1).

The questionnaire research was carried out on a self-authored questionnaire. The survey questionnaire contained 13 questions concerning: age, gender, emotions experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic, the need to reduce stress, preferred methods of reducing stress and the possibility of using them in a cosmetology office. Two questions also concerned the relationship between appearance and well-being. The study was conducted online via the Google form provided on Facebook on February 27-19, 2021.

**RESULTS**

Most of the respondents (75%) confirmed that the COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on their psyche (Fig. 2). 64.4% reported experiencing excessive stress and anxiety during that time (Fig. 3). 46.2% of respondents also reported feeling excessive stress before the pandemic (Fig. 4). Moreover, 58.7% of respondents stated that during the pandemic they experienced stress and anxiety more often than before.

![Fig. 1 The age distribution in the study group - age ranges. Source: Own study](image)
Respondents reported accompanying mental and somatic symptoms such as anger - 63.5%, frustration - 59.6%, sadness - 56.7%, fear - 46.2%, difficulty concentrating - 35.5%, headache - 26.9%, difficulty sleeping - 26.9%, body pain - 12.5%, skin rashes - 12.5%, stomach problems - 11.5%, other symptoms - 7% (Fig. 5).

76% of respondents felt the need to reduce stress during the COVID-19 pandemic. Fig. 6 shows the respondents' answers.

In the answers to the question about the preferred forms of stress reduction, the top three included: a walk - 72.1%, listening to music - 63.5% and massage - 41.3%. The following were: physical exercise, e.g. yoga and pilates - 35.6%, dance - 26%, meditation - 20.2%, conversation with a therapist - 16.3% and other 14% (Fig. 7).

When asked about the possibility of reducing stress in a cosmetology office, 88.5% of respondents confirmed this possibility. The remaining 11.5% of respondents believed that it was not possible (Fig. 8).

For a more detailed analysis, the respondents were divided into 2 groups. The first concerned people who previously used
the services of a cosmetology office - 67.3% of the respondents, among whom the vast majority (92.8%) confirmed the possibility of reducing stress in a cosmetology office (Fig. 9). The second group accounted for 32.7% of respondents who had not used cosmetology services before. Interestingly, in this group as many as 79.4% confirmed the possibility of reducing stress in a cosmetology office (Fig. 10). Among the 11.5% of respondents believed that it was impossible to reduce stress in the office, 58.3% had not used the services of a cosmetologist before.

All respondents confirmed the influence of well-being on appearance. 94.2% of the respondents confirmed the influence of appearance on well-being, while the remaining 5.8% did not deny it and chose the answer “maybe” (Fig. 11).

DISCUSSION
The conducted research provided sufficient results confirming the need to reduce stress in respondents during the COVID-19 pandemic. It showed that excessive stress accompanied the respondents regardless of the ongoing pandemic.

There are many reports in the available scientific literature regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of the society. Joanna Dymecka, in a review article on the psychosocial effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, described the significant impact of the pandemic on mental health, which in turn can cause many emotional problems for the general public. In quarantined people, the level of symptoms of mental anxiety increased, emotional disorders, depressed mood, insomnia, irritability, symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and suicide attempts occurred. As Dymecka points out, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected every aspect of human life and is likely to exacerbate existing mental disorders as well as contribute to the emergence of new stress-related disorders. Therefore, in these difficult times, society should be supported, especially those who are most affected by the psychological effects of the pandemic [1].

The respondents recognized the possibility of reducing stress in cosmetology clinics. Among the possibilities of stress reduction, the respondents took into account such methods as: massage, yoga, music therapy, meditation, which are used in psychocosmetology. Literature data showed that the techniques used in psychocosmetology reduced stress. As Palejko, Pogorzala and Stryła pointed, a relaxing massage could be one of the ways of regenerating the body not only in somatic terms, but also caused psychosomatic benefits, because it affected the body both physically and mentally [15]. People who regularly use music therapy and participate in bathing sessions with gong sounds and relaxing concerts with the use of gongs and bowls claim that their level of physical and mental health has increased significantly and they are more resistant to external stressors [18].

According to Anna Błaszczak, interventions based on mindfulness meditation undoubtedly serve patients, help in
coping with the awareness of the disease and its symptoms, and sometimes also bring them closer to health. MBSR training particularly supports the recovery process in diseases in which stress accelerates the development of the disease, exacerbates its symptoms or pathogens [29].

The aim of the research was also to analyze the views of the respondents regarding the mutual dependence on well-being and appearance. The results of the study confirmed the mutual influence. There are many reports on this subject in the available scientific literature, which confirm the influence of appearance on the well-being of both healthy and sick people, with particular emphasis on people struggling with dermatological diseases. As rightly noted by Dagmara Polak, Aneta Teleglów and Anna Piotrowska, most studies indicate the negative impact of stress on the appearance and exacerbation of changes in the course of many skin diseases, which in turn disrupts the proper emotional state and leads to a deterioration of the quality of life [30]. Therefore, the use of stress reduction in a cosmetology office can contribute to the therapy of skin diseases, the symptoms of which are exacerbated by stress.

When analyzing the results of this study, the author took into account that the study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the fact that female respondents predominated among the respondents, which could have influenced the results.

CONCLUSIONS
1. During the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a need to reduce stress.
2. Stress-reducing treatments are needed, regardless of whether the pandemic continues.
3. Methods of stress reduction used in psychocosmetology, such as massage, yoga, music therapy, mindfulness meditation are considered effective.
4. It is recognized that the methods used in psychocosmetology, such as massage, yoga, music therapy, mindfulness meditation, enable stress reduction in a cosmetology office.
5. Appearance and well-being influence each other.

SUMMARY
The results of the study confirm the respondents’ appreciation of the possibility of reducing stress in cosmetology salons through the use of the following techniques: music therapy, massage, yoga, and meditation. Moreover, psychocosmetology concerns the holistic care of the human body, which corresponds to the definition of health proposed by the WHO. It is well known that cosmetological treatments improve the appearance. It can also be argued that they can contribute to the improvement of well-being. Treatments in the field of cosmetology bring physical, mental, social and, consequently, health benefits. Stress reduction in cosmetology offices, through the use of psychocosmetology, may provide additional support. However, it should be emphasized that cosmetologists dealing with psychosomatisms should be properly educated and should have qualifications for the services they provide.

REFERENCES / LITERATURA

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