
EMOTIONS AND ACTIVATION LEVEL IN INDIVIDUALS WITH SKIN PICKING BEHAVIOR

K. Prochwicz¹, A. Kaluzna-Wielobó**2, A. Starowicz - Filip³**

¹Jagiellonian University Faculty of Philosophy, Institute of Psychology, Krakow, Poland ; ²Pedagogical University, Institute of Psychology, Krakow, Poland ; ³Jagiellonian University Medical College, Institute of Psychology, Krakow, Poland

Introduction: Pathological skin picking (PSP) is a repetitive picking of skin which leads to tissue damages and significant distress. According to the emotion regulation hypothesis, picking behaviors are initiated in order to regulate pathologically high or abnormally low stimulation level associated with various emotional states.

Objective: The aim of the study was to investigate the relationship between different activation levels, negative affective states and skin picking of various picking styles.

Method: Participants, 51 university students with PSP symptoms selected on the basis of the Skin Picking Scale and 62 students without the history of PSP filled out questionnaires concerning activation levels, positive and negative affect, anxiety, depression and boredom. The participants with skin picking were also assessed by The Milwaukee Inventory for Dimensions of Adult Skin Picking in order to determinate whether they represent automatic or focused picking style.

Results: The hierarchical regression analysis indicated that skin picking is positively predicted by general activation, and negatively by high activation (tension). Individuals with skin picking are also characterized by low level of calmness.

Conclusions: The results obtained in the study show that skin picking could play an important role in coping with negative emotional states, especially those related to low tension, and could reveal itself once the level of calmness is particularly low. Skin picking can also be initiated when one experiences high activation associated with high energy level. The focused and automatic picking style are engaged in the general activation and high activation regulation, whereas the general deactivation could be modified predominantly by the focused picking.