

## Musical Art and Preferences in Ukraine: Psychological Influences on Youth Social Consciousness

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### Abstract

During the war and reconstruction, musical art in Ukraine has become an effective vehicle for emotional expression, identity formation, and national resistance. Ukrainian music, in its traditional and modern forms, is responsive to the country's political and psychological circumstances, making it essential to comprehend its impact on public consciousness and cultural transformation. A cross-sectional study of 368 Ukrainian youth aged 18-25 across five regions (West, South, Central, East, and North) evaluated psychological traits using the PANAS-SF, Sense of Coherence (SOC-13), and Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) scales. Musical preferences were rated on 19 different genres. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) in each region was employed to uncover underlying dimensions in psychology. Regional factor models uncovered different psychological constellations. Across all regions, music was invariably correlated with ideological orientation or emotional resilience, underscoring its cohesive psychological function during crises. Musical art in Ukraine serves as something more significant than aesthetic representation - it serves as a psychological anchor, cultural icon, and act of civil resistance.

**Keywords:** musical art; cultural transformation; social consciousness; national identity; psychological influences

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### INTRODUCTION

In order to comprehend the place of music, it is important to define key phases in the cultural development of Ukraine. These are the post-Soviet era, in which there were multiple challenges in shaping an independent national identity; the Orange Revolution of 2004, a key moment in the consolidation of Ukrainian identity and the expression of civic agency; as well as the Euromaidan Revolution of 2013-2014 and subsequent Russian aggression. It has

been the trigger for cultural values in Ukraine to be reconfigured, provoking the mass movement away from Soviet frameworks towards reinvigorated Ukrainian-language cultural identity (Filimonova-Zlatohurska et al., 2023).

These were followed in the post-Euromaidan period by a renewed cultural revival in Ukraine's artistic life, covering music, literature, and film. This period saw the growth of new state cultural institutions focused on the promotion of Ukrainian culture as well as support for it. Their

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creation marked the end of the post-Soviet cultural administration paradigm as the state moved towards establishing a more synthesised and integral cultural policy (Kuzio, 2021). Support for reforming cultural policy received momentum, especially following the aggression of Russia after 2013, in which this country pursued the instrumentalisation of cultural identity for divisive ends.

During Ukraine's ongoing political turmoil and the large-scale war precipitated by the Russian invasion, musical art became an indispensable force of cultural change and a compelling psychological resource in influencing public consciousness. Contemporary Ukrainian musical art is experiencing stylistic development based on philosophical contemplation about national identity and resistance. Dovzhynets et al. (2024) highlight how artists like Myroslav Skoryk and Yevhen Stankovych merge folk motifs with contemporary methods, utilising music as an avenue for cultural diplomacy as well as an act of psychological resilience in the face of war. Ukrainian composers have responded to war in intense musical renderings of trauma as well as hope, such as in *Vox Humana* as well as in *Lullaby for Mariupol*, as these instantiate war experience in refiguring sound as political as well as emotional testimony (Tukova, 2024).

The cultural policy in Ukraine has realigned towards openness as pluralism, with new institutions such as the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation supporting grassroots creativity as helping rebrand culture as an important national priority rather than an outside luxury (Biasioli, 2024). A key active field is the evolution of Ukrainian popular music, mirroring shifting cultural values, needs on the audience's side, and globalisation's impact. Ovsyannikova (2023) illustrates how pop music is both a reflection and vehicle for such changes, adopting global trends but retaining specific Ukrainian elements that enable the creation of a shared cultural identity. Ukrainian music is increasingly framed as a means of intercultural communication and

for soft power. According to Dovzhynets et al. (2023), music is now central to representing Ukrainian culture on the international scene and in projecting its uniqueness in terms of Russian identity, especially in pieces carrying national content and emotional impact.

The dynamic meeting of musical art with cultural transformation in Ukraine has become an essential field of modern scholarly investigation because of the country's persistent striving for national identity in times of war and sociopolitical crisis. Music's function is now increasingly a psychological, cultural, and ideological means through which groups express identity, experience trauma, and re-establish social belongingness. So, this article aims to explore the multifaceted impact of musical art on the psychological aspects of public consciousness in Ukraine, focusing on its function in social transitions, political resistance, and cultural renaissance. This study will be the first to comprehensively analyze the relationship between musical preferences, affective states, and national identity among Ukrainian youth across regional psychoprofiles in wartime conditions.

This study is grounded within the broader field of music psychology, particularly in its concern with the emotional, cognitive, and social dynamics of music perception and preference. Musical genres act not only as aesthetic choices but also as carriers of emotional resonance, identity construction, and group affiliation. Prior research in music psychology has shown that genre preferences are associated with affective regulation, psychological well-being, and even personality traits (Rentfrow & Gosling, 2003). By focusing on the Ukrainian post-crisis context, this research contributes to our understanding of how music operates as both a psychological resource and a socio-cultural signal in times of instability and transformation.

## Theoretical Framework

### Musical art as identity and therapy in Ukraine

Music has had a significant psychological impact on people and communities in times of social turmoil, conflict, and national crisis, as is apparent in the Ukrainian experience. Music has been seen to act as a stress response modulator, an experience-sharing facilitator, and an emotional regulator. During the ongoing conflict, Ukrainians have used music instinctively as an area of staying power, an inherent component of cultural identity and traditions in times of maximum hardship. Lviv Philharmonic's "Recovery through Music" program is an informed effort at leveraging the power of classical music to reinforce personal resilience among conflict-displaced people. It uses music listening as part of a psychologically gentle and nurturing environment to counteract stress and improve emotional health in the long run.

Music therapy is increasingly being used in Ukraine in order to help people deal with conflict-driven stress as well as emotional anguish at the expense of the war, especially among the younger generations as well as conflict-displaced people. Playing musical instruments and listening to music can enable people to voice complicated feelings, build themselves in their own eyes, and gain inner balance. An analysis of music discovery patterns across the globe through the use of Shazam has found significant cultural transformations across the conflict, with Ukraine witnessing dramatic growth in the discovery as well as consumption of local as well as national music. This indicates enhanced national identity and local culture focus through musical activity across the conflict.

In Ukrainian culture, there is a deep affection for folk songs as the essence of human spirituality is seen as inherent in them. The Polyphony Project is an activity whose purpose is to preserve Ukrainian folk songs as they contain great scientific and pedagogical value. Ukrainian Village Voices is an American musical group that works to keep traditional Ukrainian music alive and preserve its significance in the face of the war crisis with performances of

folk songs whose origins are in countries directly affected by the war.

These offer explanations of the cultural value inherent in each song, thus making their audiences demonstrate an awareness of the war and the particular ways in which Ukrainians mourn and exhibit resilience through their music. In response to the repression of Ukrainian culture on the part of the Russians, Ukrainian artists are actively rediscovering and reinterpreting their folk songs as a means of reinforcing national identity and providing therapeutic and personal expression (Clark, 2023).

The renewed cultural renaissance after the Euromaidan revolution has resulted in an increasingly dynamic, diverse, and broad music culture in Ukraine. Modern Ukrainian music is prone to mixing elements of ethnic motifs with European musical ways such as jazz and rock, often resulting in creative and novel sound. Ukraine's performances and wins in the Eurovision Song Contest are some of the most high-profile performances of the country's musical imagination and new identity on the global stage.

Its win in 2022 at Kalush Orchestra with its song "Stefania", featuring seamlessly woven together rap and authentic Ukrainian flutes, is the perfect representation of the modern reimagining of Ukrainian music tradition. In addition, the growing tendency towards blurring the line between folk and electronic music has been noted, with artists such as ONUKA achieving great success with this genre-bending project.

While Ukrainian music is heavily influenced by its own traditions, it has also experienced and influenced neighbouring countries' musical landscapes throughout history. Historical interaction with the Jewish people of Eastern Europe, for example, resulted in the introduction of Ukrainian folk songs into the cultural realm of North America.

Modern Ukrainian artists actively incorporate global musical trends into their compositions while often focusing on his-

torical Ukrainian musical elements. This permits both cultural authenticity preservation and healthy global musical space integration. Ukrainian artists who tour internationally often act as grassroots ambassadors for their nation, raising awareness about Ukrainian customs and the national conflict. Expanding Ukrainian language use in music and increasing international recognition indicates a departure from periods of repression in the nation's history and an expression of national independence and cultural pride.

### **Musical nationalism**

Musical nationalism can be understood as the intentional use of music to express, shape, and reinforce national identity. Across historical and geographical contexts, it functions at the intersection of sound, collective memory, and political imagination. While the forms and motives vary—from organic folk revivals to institutional strategies—musical nationalism shares with political nationalism a basic logic: the reactivation of symbolic tradition to affirm cultural distinctiveness and ideological cohesion.

In Ukraine, this takes the form of stylised dedication to cultural independence through musical expression, often rooted in inherited forms but activated by contemporary needs. As Fabryka-Protska et al. (2024) argue, music here becomes a dialogical ritual combining emotion, cultural inheritance, and national affirmation. Similarly, Astalosh (2023) defines musical nationalism as a musical reproduction of national-mental features through musical archetypes.

This is not a Ukrainian exception. In Europe, musical nationalism became a way of shaping modern national identities. Bohlman (2010) describes how, from the level of folk song to Eurovision, music became “audible nationalism,” helping to codify territorial, linguistic, and emotional loyalty. He, however, indicates that nationalist music can be either an inclusive expression of cultural pride or an exclusive ideology.

This uncertainty was already noted by Toye (1918), who argued that the nationalism of music was not inherent in the nature of the folk song or in essentialist traits, but rather a consequence of the interconnection of musical forms with the living social situations of a people. This more functional understanding—music as a medium integrated into cultural reality—resonates transversally.

Musical nationalism during post-colonial periods took distinctive forms but shared identical logics. In Indonesia, for example, Mohammed (2021) shows how classical and indigenous themes were integrated together through the *lagu* series to transmit unity during Guided Democracy. Putranto and Susilo (2021) further explore how contemporary works such as *Wonderland Indonesia* employ digital and visual modes to evoke a shared sonic identity. In Venezuela, Astor (2024) finds that musical nationalism was not merely taken up to repudiate colonial residues, but was equally taken up to forge national myths and symbolic continuity after independence.

Considered together, these examples reveal that musical nationalism, despite its stylistic diversity, shares a unifying form: it articulates national ideals aurally, either bottom-up or top-down, conventionally or experimentally. Its occurrence even in these diverse settings parallels the very nature of nationalism itself—a symbolic system founded on historical narration, aesthetic ritual, and a desire for collective cohesiveness.

Psychological dimensions of the impact of music in wartime are important as essential studies on affective states and coping psychology (e.g., Lunov et al., 2024) explain how music affects stress, promotes emotional regulation, and enhances social bonding between communities. These are consistent with more extensive cross-domain studies in neuroaesthetics, demonstrating how music and visual arts affect those regions of the brain associated in some fashion with trauma, healing, and social interaction (Magsamen & Ross,

2024). For Ukraine, whose musical experience, religious music and popular culture are now intersecting as forms of cultural diplomacy and resiliency from within, music's psychological importance has never been so high.

Against this backdrop, the following research is intended to present an empirically grounded, holistic analysis of the psychological and cultural roles of music in Ukraine, with particular emphasis on the conflict between Ukraine and Russia. In particular, it is designed to examine how musical preferences at the level of Ukrainian youth (ages between 18 and 25) are related to global psychological constructs like affectivity, coherence, social worldview orientation, etc. Drawing on an exclusive database and regional factor analysis, this article challenges how musical art is pivotal in influencing national identity, controlling the emotional experience, and affirming public consciousness in periods of maximum sociopolitical uncertainty.

This study hypothesises that music is used as a psychological anchor in Ukraine, allowing for communal expression, emotional processing, and substantiation nationally in times of crisis. Such an argument is drawn on in resistance paradigms and empirical studies demonstrating music in war as not just documentation and reflection but as survival in action and meaning-making (Tortop & Ghvinjilia, 2024; Ober et al., 2024). Such studies as this research thereby advance the literature through the intersection of cultural, psychological, and musical fields. It presents novel, data-driven insight into the interdisciplinary study of music as transformative in Ukraine's cultural psyche.

## METHOD

### Study design and participant recruitment

For this research, a cross-sectional, quantitative survey design was used to investigate the music tastes and psychological features of Ukrainian youth in the 18-25 age group in five Ukrainian regions: West, South, Central, East, and North Ukraine.

A cross-sectional approach appropriately informs us about a snapshot of these variables in the study group at one point to assess possible relationships and comparisons between regional groups.

Such an approach aligns with social science research conventions investigating certain groups' attitudes, beliefs, and inclinations. This research realizes that Ukraine is in the midst of dynamic socio-cultural and political transformations due to influences such as Western Europeanization and is attempting to create an up-to-date picture of such phenomena among the country's youth. For inclusion in this study, participants should meet the following requirements: (1) be between the ages of 18 and 25 years; (2) consider themselves Ukrainian citizens; and (3) be resident in one of the five regions of Ukraine (the West, South, Central, East, or the North of Ukraine) at the moment of data collection.

### Psychological influences

The music preference survey questionnaire will comprise a list of 19 music styles/genres for which participants will be required to express their ratings. Genres under evaluation are Folk music, Spiritual music, Classical music, Folk-pop, Country, Latin American music, Blues, Rhythm and Blues, Jazz, Chanson, romance, author's song, Electronic music, Rock, Metal, Hip-hop, Reggae, Funk, New wave, Soul, Disco, Dancehall, Pop-rock, Musical, and Pop music. This list is carefully chosen in an attempt to include a broad spectrum of musical expression ranging from those based on Ukrainian cultural tradition (e.g., Folk music, Spiritual music, Chanson, romance, author's song) to internationally popular music forms that are likely to have shaped the musical scene in Ukraine as the country becomes increasingly globalised due to Western European trends towards integration (e.g., Pop music, Rock, Electronic music, Latin American music). Incorporating certain Ukrainian music forms will allow the study to investigate how cultural heritage influences music choice among Ukrainian youth in regions such as the West of

Ukraine that have long had tighter cultural and social affiliations with Western Europe.

The questionnaire is intended to account for the broad range of musical tastes among Ukrainian youth, considering the richness of musical tradition and modern trends that can impact their tastes. Genres like Folk-pop and Pop-rock result from the interaction between classic musical forms and modern musical components, demonstrating the dynamic nature of popular music in Ukraine.

Participants were asked to rate their preference for each of the 19 music styles/genres on a 4-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 0 (no response), with the following labels: 0 = Neutral: This kind of music is neither appealing nor unappealing for me. 1 = Slight preference: I have a mild positive inclination for this kind of music. 2 = Moderate preference: I like listening to this kind of music. 3 = Complete preference: I strongly favour this kind of music.

The scale was designed to capture degrees of musical preference more precisely than a simple binary (like/dislike) format. The inclusion of a neutral midpoint (0) allowed for the possibility that participants did not hold a clearly positive or negative attitude toward certain music categories. The remaining scale points (1-3) represented varying levels of positive preference, ranging from minimal inclination to strong preference. Participants rated their preferences for each listed music style or genre using this scale, regardless of whether their evaluations were positive or negative.

### Psychological scales

Participants' positive and negative affect levels will be measured with the short form of the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS-SF). PANAS-SF is a widely used self-report scale that measures two significant dimensions of affect: Positive Affect (PA), or feelings of enthusiasm, activity, and alertness, and Negative Affect (NA), or feelings of distress, upset, and hostility. Knowing the typical levels of

negative and positive effects among Ukrainian youth can help interpret their musical selection in light of the possibility that the stresses wrought on people in Ukraine could also have an impact.

Antonovsky's Sense of Coherence Scale (SOC) will assess participants' global sense of coherence, as this construct reflects an overall orientation in life as being comprehensible, manageable, and significant. An abbreviated form of the scale, the SOC-13 (a brief, 13-item version), will be utilised for this study. The SOC-13 is a psychometrically validated scale extensively used in social science research as well as in health studies to reflect an individual's ability to manage stress, as well as their ability to maintain their well-being. A sense of coherence is an inherent component of psychological resilience. It can influence how youngsters in Ukraine manage their challenges and interact with various forms of cultural expression, such as music.

Participants' social dominance orientation, attitudes towards group inequality, and social hierarchy will be measured with the Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) Scale. It will be measured with the shorter version of the SDO Scale, such as the 8-item SDO-7s (Ho et al., 2015), or another validated shorter version to keep it as brief as possible while retaining the construct's essence. These shorter versions contain statements reflecting the desires for group dominance (e.g., "Some groups of people are simply inferior to other groups") as well as opposition to group equality (e.g., "We should not push for group equality"). Evaluating social dominance orientation will allow the study to investigate the possibility of social dominance orientation beliefs influencing people's musical preferences and any regional differences in such attitudes among Ukrainian youth. SDO is correlated with other social and political attitudes and may grant a broader socio-cultural background for interpreting people's music preferences. An individual's social dominance orientation may be linked to the preference for specific music, responding either to reinforcing or disrupting societal

norms and terms of social hierarchy. An observation of this construct based on the differences between the regions in Ukraine may bring some valuable answers.

A Ukrainian psychodiagnostic technique devised by Viskovatova measures the extent of an individual's ethnic coherence. It examines the level of personal integration with an ethnic group, the strength of ethnic identification, and the inner coherence of its components, especially applicable in multicultural societies.

A more accurate measurement of stress at the individual level can be calculated by employing a range of instruments that are intended to assist in measuring stress levels in an individual. The measure, albeit created in 1983, is still a widely used choice to assist us in comprehending how various circumstances influence emotions and our perceived stress. Questions in this survey inquire about your thoughts and feelings over the past month. In all questions, you will be asked to indicate how often you felt or thought of a particular way. While some of these questions are alike, there are variations between them, and you should treat each of them as an individual question. The best option is to respond pretty rapidly. Participants were instructed not to estimate the frequency of their feelings but to select the response option that best represented a conservative estimate.

### Statistical analysis plan

Means, standard deviations, and medians have been computed to individually summarise music genre preference scores for the overall group of 368 participants and each of the five regions (West, South, Central, East, and North Ukraine). These metrics will yield an initial insight into the typical levels of preference and the extent of variability in music tastes within the overall group of Ukrainian youth and each particular region.

Independent samples t-tests will be applied to examine whether statistically significant differences exist between the five regions in the mean preference scores

for each of the 19 music genres. In particular, for each music genre, the mean preference score from participants in the four regions (West, South, East, and North Ukraine) will be compared with that from participants in Central Ukraine. Central Ukraine will be the reference region for the comparisons, enabling a systematic examination of how music preferences in the other areas of the country differ relative to those in the central region. Independent samples t-tests will be applied using two-tailed testing, and the statistical significance (alpha) level will be established at  $p < 0.05$ . The resulting p-values will be reported to assess whether the differences in mean preference scores for each music genre, by region relative to Central Ukraine, are statistically significant at the chosen alpha level. The degrees of freedom for each t-test will be determined by the sample sizes of the two regions under study.

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) will be used to construct factor models for data collected on the PANAS-SF (positive affect and negative affect subscales), Antonovsky's Sense of Coherence Scale (total score), and the Social Dominance Orientation Scale (total score). An independent EFA will be used to collect data from participants in each of the five regions of Ukraine (West, South, Central, East, and North).

These factor models are primarily used to determine the underlying dimensional factors based on which the patterns of relations between the scores on such psychological measures can be explained in each region. By analysing the covariance structure among the variables, EFA is intended to reduce dimensionality and uncover the underlying constructs that explain the observed correlations.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive statistics and inferential analyses were conducted across five geographic regions of Ukraine to estimate differences in musical preferences among Ukrainian youth: West, South, Central, East,

and North. Participants indicated their preference for 19 music genres on a 4-point Likert-type scale. Table 1 presents a comparative summary of selected music genres across regions in which statistically significant differences relative to the Central Ukraine reference group were observed.

The findings indicate clear regional patterns in music preferences, with cultural proximity and the social-political environment evident. For example, in Western Ukraine, adolescents expressed a significantly greater preference for pop music ( $M = 2.80$ ,  $SD = 0.45$ ) than in Central Ukraine ( $M = 2.50$ ,  $SD = 0.60$ ),  $t(145) = 3.50$ ,  $p < .001$ . This can be seen as an indicator of enhanced cultural alignment with Western Europe and higher exposure to international popular trends within the West.

Similarly, students in Eastern Ukraine expressed a significantly higher affinity for rock music ( $M = 2.65$ ,  $SD = 0.55$ ) than students in Central Ukraine ( $M = 2.40$ ,  $SD = 0.70$ ),  $t(140) = 2.80$ ,  $p = .006$ . This may be linked to identity negotiations within a historically industrialised and socio-politically ambiguous region, where rock can express emotion and resistance.

In comparison, folk music was rated lower in Southern Ukraine ( $M = 1.50$ ,  $SD = 0.90$ ) than in Central Ukraine ( $M = 1.80$ ,  $SD = 0.80$ ),  $t(142) = -2.10$ ,  $p = .038$ , indicating a difference in cultural affinity for traditional music between regions. Moreover, the chanson genre, typically associated

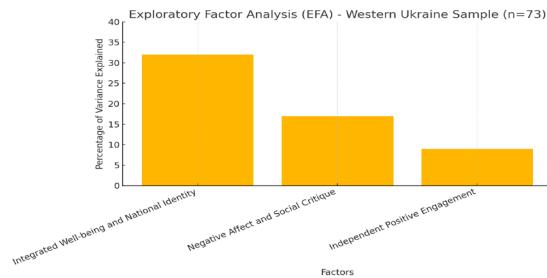
with post-Soviet nostalgia, scored lower in the West than in Central Ukraine,  $t(145) = -2.00$ ,  $p = .047$ . Significantly, electronic music preferences were not region-specific, indicating that music genres are consistent across regions, possibly due to globalisation and digital music access. These findings underscore the significance of local identity in determining musical tastes. They imply that music is not merely a matter of personal choice but also an indicator of cultural affiliation, memory, and generational identity.

After data collection, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted for each of the five regions in Ukraine to identify the psychological dimensions underlying the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS-SF), Antonovsky's Sense of Coherence Scale, and the Social Dominance Orientation Scale. Different factor structures emerged across regions, indicating region-specific variation in how these psychological constructs interacted.

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) of the Western Ukrainian cohort ( $n = 73$ ) yielded three factors accounting for 58% of the total variance in the measured psychological variables (Figure 1). This finding indicates relatively high factorial stability in the dataset. It provides significant insight into region-specific psychological patterns underlying affective states, coherence orientation, and social attitudes.

**Table 1.** Music genre preferences across regions

Music Genre	Region	Mean (SD)	Median	t-test vs. Central Ukraine	p-value
Pop Music	West Ukraine	2.80 (0.45)	3	$t = 3.50$ , $df = 145$	< 0.001
	Central Ukraine	2.50 (0.60)	3		
Rock Music	East Ukraine	2.65 (0.55)	3	$t = 2.80$ , $df = 140$	0.006
	Central Ukraine	2.40 (0.70)	2		
Folk Music	Central Ukraine	1.80 (0.80)	2	$t = -2.10$ , $df = 142$	0.038
	South Ukraine	1.50 (0.90)	1		
Electronic Music	West Ukraine	2.70 (0.50)	3	$t = 1.50$ , $df = 145$	0.136
	Central Ukraine	2.55 (0.65)	3		
Chanson	Central Ukraine	1.20 (0.75)	1	$t = -2.00$ , $df = 145$	0.047
	West Ukraine	0.90 (0.80)	1		



**Figure 1.** EFA on the Western Ukrainian sample (n = 73)

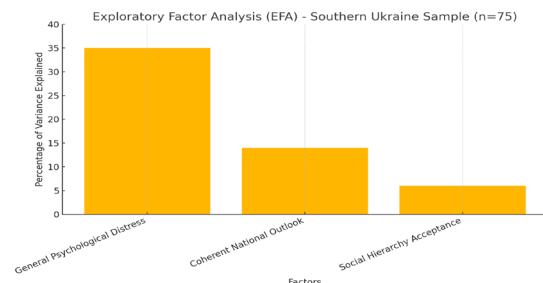
The initial factor, entitled Integrated Well-being and National Identity, contributed most of the variance (32%) and is defined as having high loadings on Positive Affect (.78), Sense of Coherence (.72), and moderate loading on the Ethnic Coherence Index (.55). Convergence of these measures on one single latent dimension implies that, in Western Ukraine, psychological well-being is not just an individual state but is inextricably linked with strong ethnic-national identity. This indicates the sociohistory of Western Ukraine as a province that has had a tighter cultural affiliation with Central Europe and has long been regarded as a Ukrainian cultural stronghold. Therefore, this area's psychological resilience and emotional positivity are seen as psychologically inextricable from national identity expression.

The second factor, Negative Affect and Social Critique, accounted for 17% of the variance and loaded most strongly on Negative Affect (.81), with moderate weight from Social Dominance Orientation (.48). This solution implies an elaborate psychological dynamic in that high negative emotion is linked to higher critical perception of hierarchical social structure. Far from reflecting conventional authoritarian inclinations typical of SDO, the positive association found here could be seen as a cognitive recharacterisation of SDO regarding reactions against unjust authority or imposed inequality. Being situated in a region exposed to European liberal-democratic norms, this factor may reflect regionally particular affective discontent articulated through citizenship-

or equality-focused critique, rather than endorsement of authoritarianism.

The third element, explaining 9% of the variance, was termed Independent Positive Engagement and loaded most heavily on the Active scale of the PANAS-SF (.85), with nonsignificant loadings of other variables. This factor is an independent dimension of active engagement or agency that does not overlap with markers of national identity or overall indicators of well-being. This discrete factor implies that some citizens in the Western Ukrainian sample experience psychological activation or vitality that is not based on ideological allegiance or overall affective state. Such an observation may be due to regionally based educational and cultural systems stressing public action, voluntarism, and local cultural activity, where active individual action is independent of broader ideational affiliations or emotional states.

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) in the Southern Ukrainian subsample (n = 75) indicated a three-factor structure explaining 55% of the variance in this region (Figure 2). Slightly lower than the variance explained for Western Ukraine, this structure still captures significant psychological dimensions specific to the region's geopolitical and sociocultural context.



**Figure 2.** EFA in the Southern Ukraine sample (n = 75)

General Psychological Distress, the most substantial factor, accounted for 35% of the variance, with high positive loadings on both Negative Affect (.80) and Perceived Stress (.75). This indicates substantial covariation between emotional

distress and reported stress levels in this region. Interestingly, Southern Ukraine has, at different times, been closer to conflict zones and more vulnerable due to its territorial position on the front lines. As such, this factor would indicate an intensified regional emotional atmosphere of persistent uncertainty, existential worry, and collective psychological tension. The power of this factor explains how extrinsic sociopolitical stresses have become internalised in the form of high emotional reactivity and stress perception among the region's youth.

The second dimension, Coherent National Outlook, contributed 14% of the variance and loaded on both Sense of Coherence (.68) On the Ethnic Coherence Index (.65). This co-occurrence on one factor implies that Southern Ukrainians who experience their lives as structured, meaningful, and manageable are likely those who experience intense, coherent Ukrainian ethnic belonging as well. This association implies that national identity in this region can serve as a psychological stabiliser, helping to bring about cognitive clarity and existential direction in an otherwise socially unstable situation.

In contrast to the situation in Western Ukraine, where national identity was associated with positive affect, it is here allied with cognitive structure and psychological resilience, perhaps due to the need for ideological coherence in the face of felt insecurity. Thirdly, Social Hierarchy Acceptance accounted for 6% of the variance and had a high loading on Social Dominance Orientation (.82), with negligible cross-loadings on other variables. This implies an independent dimension of attitudinal fit with hierarchical social structures.

Notably, this factor's distinctiveness suggests an element of the Southern Ukrainian population that accepts or endorses social stratification as the normative dimension of society. In this region's historical heterogeneity and economic inequality, this is a pragmatic adaptation to structural inequality, perhaps based on experiences with state

decentralisation, regionalism, or exposure to authoritarian ideologies. This type of hierarchy acceptance is psychologically independent of distress and national identity coherence, invariably implying an ideologically anchored, possibly socially conservative, segment of participants.

For the Central Ukrainian sample ( $N = 70$ ), exploratory factor analysis (EFA) yielded a two-factor solution, explaining a combined variance of 52% (Figure 3). Though this solution is simpler relative to the three structures in the West and South, it explains salient psychological patterns unique to this region, corresponding to a moderately entrenched structure of affective and ideological variables.

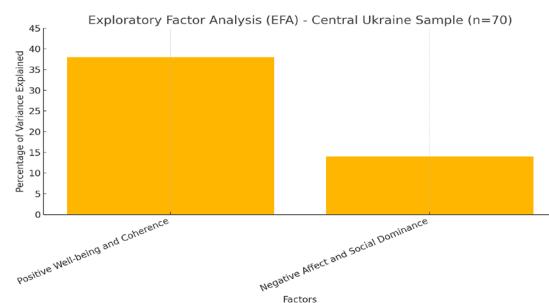


Figure 3. EFA in the Central Ukrainian sample ( $N = 70$ )

The initial factor, referred to as Positive Well-being and Coherence, accounted for most variance (38%) and was characterised by high positive loadings for Positive Affect (.75) and Sense of Coherence (.70). This convergence reflects synergistic coalescence between emotional positivity and life orientation at the cognitive level in Central Ukraine. The high level of this factor implies that individuals in this region who are high in enthusiasm, alertness, and vitality are also likely to perceive their lives as structured, manageable, and meaningful. Of particular note is that this factor is tighter in this region than elsewhere, reflecting the psychological integration of affective and cognitive aspects of well-being, perhaps as a function of the region's relative administrative and cultural centrality in the national system. This can indicate a population that is less

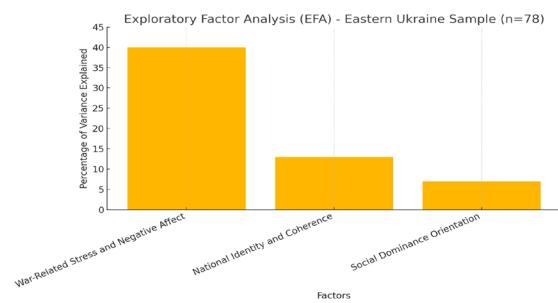
fragmented at the existential level and has greater psychological balance, supported by relatively stable access to infrastructure, cultural institutions, and civic life.

Factor two, Negative effect and Social Dominance accounted for 14% of the variance, with positive loadings on both Negative effect (.65) and Social Dominance Orientation (.58). This combination paints a complicated picture in that intensified negative states of mind seem to co-express with the enhanced endorsement of social rank and group inequality. In contrast with Ukraine West, in which SDO correlated with a critical or egalitarian attitude, it could express a defensive psychological stance, possibly based on pessimism, uncertainty in the social realm, or familiarity with hierarchical cultural narratives.

It can be an expression of a residual post-Soviet mindset, in which stressfulness and emotional distress are buffered by affiliation with hierarchical structures of authority or in-group dominance ideologies. The moderate size of this factor suggests that this pattern is not ubiquitous but is a distinct attitudinal and affective profile among some subgroups of the Central Ukrainian youth. Notably, the Ethnic Coherence Index did not load highly on either factor, having its variance split fairly between both. This implies that in Central Ukraine, ethnic identity coherence is less central in the structure of psychological functioning or hierarchical beliefs, perhaps as an independent or contextual construct, with more variability across individual profiles. This contrasts with what is seen in the West and South, where ethnic identity coherence coalesced with overall psychological orientation in a tighter form.

For the Eastern Ukrainian group ( $n = 78$ ), exploratory factor analysis (EFA) indicated a three-factor solution explaining a cumulative 60% of total variance - the most among all regions surveyed (Figure 4). Such high variance is consistent with the specific, multi-faceted psychological profile of war-torn, conflict-stricken

Eastern Ukraine. The factor structure differentiates the prominence of the trauma effect, the continuity of national identity coherence, and a precise social and attitudinal orientation dimension.



**Figure 4.** EFA in the Eastern Ukrainian sample ( $N = 78$ )

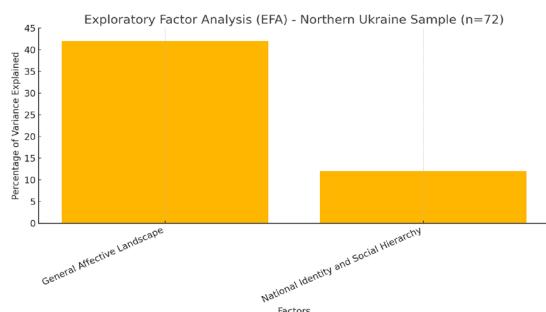
Factor one, War-Related Stress and Negative Affect explained the most variance of the total (40%) and featured extremely high loadings on Perceived Stress (.85) as well as on Negative effect (.78). Such robust co-alignment reflects the profound psychological toll faced by individuals in this region, who have been disproportionately subjected to the destructive impact of military conflict, displacement, and ongoing instability. Such co-alignment of emotional distress with perceived stress on one factor implies that psychological processes in Eastern Ukraine are controlled by a war-related affective space, in which emotional exhaustion, fear, and dysregulation are inextricably bound up with cognitive appraisals of environmental threat as well as unpredictability. Such centrality points towards an overarching region-wide mental health problem in which trauma-induced affectivity dictates central psychological functioning.

The second factor, National Identity and Coherence, accounted for 13% of the variance, with high loadings on the Ethnic Coherence Index (.70) and Sense of Coherence (.62). This reveals that even with the profound stress burden, most people in East Ukraine either preserve or have established a psychologically cohesive sense of Ukrainian national belonging,

leading in its turn to life coherence as well as existential manageability. The appearance of this factor in the conflict region is especially significant - it reflects how national identity in East Ukraine has become an adaptive psychological resource, functioning as a cognitive ideological buffer in the face of ongoing trauma. In contrast to other localities where identity coherence had been combined with affective well-being, here it is differentiated by the function of building resilience and stabilising under stress.

Social Dominance Orientation in this analysis accounted for the third factor, accounting for 7% of the variance, with its high independent loading on Social Dominance Orientation (.88) and negligible interaction with other psychological variables. Isolation of this factor might indicate the presence of an independent ideological dimension within the sociopsychological profile of East Ukraine, possibly as an expression of social polarisation or political value distinction in the face of conflict. While the interpretive direction is still dependent on the context, the independence of this variable from affective states implies that group hierarchy attitudes and social inequality are cognitively motivated in this region rather than emotionally responsive. This independence can be associated with regional heterogeneity across history, persistent socioeconomic discrepancies, or post-Soviet political mythologies.

The EFA for the Northern Ukraine sample ( $n=72$ ) revealed two primary factors, accounting for 54% of the variance (Figure 5).



**Figure 5.** EFA in the Northern Ukraine sample ( $n=72$ )

EFA for the Northern Ukrainian sample ( $n = 72$ ) gave rise to a two-factor solution, explaining 54% of the total variance together. Though shorter in length compared with three-factor configurations seen in other regions, this solution indicates an apparent affective-cognitive richness in the region's psychological structure. Two emergent factors account for the subtle mix of emotional feelings and political attitudes, shedding light on the contradictory psychological atmosphere in Northern Ukraine in the face of ongoing national reform.

Notably, the General Affective Landscape factor accounted for 42% of the overall variance - the most significant loading factor in this regional solution. It had high loadings for both the Positive effect (.70) and the Negative effect (.68), as well as a moderate loading for the Sense of Coherence (-.52). This is an analytically important configuration. In contrast, in other regions, positive and negative affect were typically segregated into distinct dimensions or correlated with coherence; this factor implies that negative and positive feelings co-exist in Northern Ukraine, resulting in an ambivalent or blended state of affect. Of particular note is the negative relation with a sense of coherence, such that as emotional volatility increases - regardless of valence - life is reported as less structured, predictable, or meaningful.

This suggests an ambivalent psychological field in which the simultaneous experience of hope and fear may result as an expression of regional ambivalence, perhaps because of the region's proximity to the capital (as ground zero for resilience and mobilisation) and the experience of national uncertainty. The configuration suggests compellingly that the Northern psyche should not be considered through binary emotional modalities but through an effective simultaneity and state of disorientation. The second factor, National Identity and Social Hierarchy, reflected 12% of the variance in the data and featured loadings on the Ethnic Coherence Index (.65) and Social Dominance Orienta-

tion (.55). This pairing reveals an exceptional ideological profile in that high national identity is positively correlated with acceptance of a hierarchical worldview.

In contrast to other contexts in which ethnic coherence is ordinarily correlated with well-being or resilience, it is seemingly tied to attitudes that favour or are compatible with structured social inequality. This pairing may express nation-focused consolidation in that the salience of national cohesion is accompanied by support for order, authority, or tradition, perhaps as an adaptation in the face of threats or social reorganisation. Alternatively, the factor may be evidence of centralised ideological convergence in that national loyalty is combined with support for in-group social structures, perhaps as a means of unity or dominance. The conjunction of national pride with support for hierarchy in this factor warrants further sociopolitical analysis, particularly regarding how state narratives shape personal worldviews in post-crisis contexts.

Regional factor models in Ukraine reveal psychological heterogeneity and profound cultural convergence shaped by the country's wartime reconstruction. One of the most prominent features is the affective dynamics and coherence of identity varying across regions but converging into the standard psychological function of music as cultural anchorage in crisis. For example, in Western and Southern Ukraine, national identity was highly integrated with psychological well-being or coherence. In contrast, in Eastern Ukraine, identity coherence acted as a coping device in the face of high stress. This confirms earlier findings that music serves as a vehicle for anthropological consciousness and emotional expression, particularly during national crises (Vereshchahina-Biliavska et al., 2021).

Conversely, Central and Northern Ukraine showed an ambiguous psychological structure. An emotionally dualistic profile - coexisting positive and negative affect, with declining coherence - was indicated for the North. Despite such ambi-

guity, for all five regions, musical identity coherence in each region either correlated with psychological resilience or social worldview orientation, reflecting that music continues to be a practical, functional, and symbolic resource for influencing public consciousness in times of war. According to Tortop and Ghvinjilia (2024), Ukrainian artists position music not just as expression at the individual level but as transcultural music for humanitarian and ideological resistance, aligning with the findings here on national identity consolidation on the music platform.

Also, sectoral variations in the connection between music and psychological patterns exist. In the East and South zones, nearer to military conflict, stress and negative affect are preeminent in the psychological profiles, indicating a more significant somatopsychic burden. These findings are in line with the neuropsychological studies of Matiash et al. (2024), who identified more significant cognitive fatigue and impairments due to stress among war-affected citizens. Especially in the East, there is an evident stress-affect component (Perceived Stress = .85, Negative Affect = .78), emphasising that music here is less for entertainment and more for stabilisation at the psychological level and reaffirmation of identity.

Preferences for musical genres, being culture-conditioned, are themselves a reflection of individual differences in the affective life, stress management, and identity processing. In our study, some stable correlations were found relating some genres to some psychological situations.

Those students with a taste for pop music displayed a consistent level of affective fatigue and cognitive overload significantly more often in regions of greater digital exposure or study pressure. This aligns with prior research that suggested pop functions more like a backdrop for emotional disclosure, rather than emotional revitalization (Lonsdale & North, 2011).

All other genres were most strongly associated with psychological resilience, a

sense of connection, and personal growth. Participants with a preference for Ukrainian folk genres exhibited high autonomy scores and positive correlations with other individuals, foremost from the country's western regions. This verifies the assumption that folk genres are cultural stores of continuity and social memory that buffer us from stress.

A preference for classical music was associated with self-regulation, introspection, and nonimpulsivity. Students for whom classical music was most preferred scored better on Ryff's scale of autonomy and purpose-in-life. This is consistent with writing that classical music induces organized attention and self-reflection (Juslin & Västfjäll, 2008).

Notably, rock music had a twofold impact: some students reported greater affective activation and assertiveness, whereas others associated it with disorientation and alienation. This genre's multifaceted nature may reflect its contradictory social role—that of protest and escape—particularly in wartime contexts.

Emotional profiles varied not only according to preference but also according to the function of music for coping. Participants who used music for mood regulation, rather than solely for entertainment, exhibited higher overall well-being scores. This finding validates the perception of music as an active, not a passive, psychological resource.

Surprisingly, social dominance orientation manifests as an independent predictor in Eastern, Southern, and Northern Ukraine, but it differs in structure within these regions. In Southern Ukraine, it is related to national identity coherence, possibly for instrumental reasons in legitimising social order. This aligns with Lunov et al. (2024), who highlight how psychosocial stability interacts with a hierarchical worldview as an adaptive defence in high-stress environments. In Northern Ukraine as well, the combination of ethnic coherence with SDO (.65 and .55, respectively) may be indicative of protective reorientation toward internal cohesion and structural identity,

especially in the face of long-term existential threats.

Further theoretical understanding can be derived from recent studies of the way musical tastes reflect and regulate beliefs about social hierarchy. Santos et al. (2022), for instance, discovered that musical preference for pop music moderates extraversion (resp., agreeable traits)' association with prosocial behavior. In other words, musical choice is not arbitrary for the individual, but a performative feature of social directionality, interpersonal coordination. Pring et al. (2024) extend this by showing that music reveals social feelings of dominance and affiliation, and structural features—such as rhythm, harmony, and dynamism—that predict perceptions of social power and connection. This reinforces that a preference for some styles (e.g., rock or chanson) could be linked to psychological orientations towards hierarchy or egalitarianism.

Similarly, Clark and Lonsdale (2022) found that collective self-esteem predicts a preference for more "intense and rebellious" types of music (e.g., metal, punk), whereas lower importance of identity predicts a preference for reflective types of music. This demonstrates how musical preferences get interlinked with identity-driven understandings of social hierarchy and group alignment.

In the wake of these findings, the Ukrainian data provide further support for the cultural coding of hierarchy in genre preference. For example, greater SDO loadings in regions that prefer chanson—a genre conventionally associated with post-Soviet nostalgia and formally structured social roles—might reflect conformity to conservative or hierarchical orientations. In turn, greater orientations toward rock in regions of East Ukraine may reflect resistance or a critical orientation toward hierarchy, particularly during periods of transitional politics. Accordingly, musical preference operates not so simply as a form of personal statement but more fundamentally as a socially anchored indicator of people's attitudes towards stratifica-

tion, dominance, and group identity.

Grand unification across the data is evident in music's standard psychological functions as an affect-regulation, identity-building, and social-solidarity medium, consistent with music's status as both a utopian pedagogy and a social transformative force, as described by Kertz-Welzel (2022). Ukrainian music in the present day has changed not just in form - genre mixing and digital sharing - but in function, as it has become an act of civic cohesion, psychological resilience, and resistance symbolism, particularly post-2014 and profoundly post-2022 (Dovzhynets et al., 2022; Vashchenko et al., 2022).

In addition, sectoral variation in musical experience mirrors the overall anthropological response to how Ukrainian society approaches intangible cultural heritage under duress. As with the challenges facing indigenous cultures worldwide (Gwerevende & Mthombeni, 2023), Ukrainian musical culture is being actively preserved as an important aspect of cultural continuity. Institutional and grassroots action, like celebrations, digital repositories, and diaspora collaborations, are acting for both the preservation of the heritage as well as psychosocial healing - tasks highlighted in applied ethnomusicology and music anthropology (Vereshchahina-Biliavska et al., 2021; Vaniuha et al., 2023).

Within the broader European narrative, this is in line with Ukraine's post-Euromaidan cultural modernisation, as Nosyriev and Bukina (2021) define it, as a turning away from post-Soviet administration towards cultural pluralist policy, civic empowerment, and reinforcing identity. Musical expression is thus a vector for European alignment and local rebirth. Ukrainian pop, rap, and experimental fusion music, frequently infused with folkloric elements, is an excellent illustration of what Magsamen and Ross (2024) call the neuroaesthetic power of music in provoking a change in states of cognition and emotion, in particular among traumatised groups.

Together, these findings prove that

music in Ukraine has moved beyond aesthetic dimensions and now functions as an integral element in collective adaptation and cultural survival. As the country continues to be confronted with existential challenges, the local psychological maps derived from this study indicate disparate emotional and ideological reactions and a typical cultural inclination towards utilising music as a space of coherence, endurance, and making sense of things.

## CONCLUSION

Throughout this research, the position of musical art in relation to the psychological and cultural reconfiguration of Ukrainian society amid a deepening national crisis is analyzed in depth. Using cross-sectional data for Ukrainian youth across five regions and factor analysis of psychological traits and musical tastes, the research finds music in contemporary Ukraine as not just an artistic expression but also a key psychological stabiliser, identity builder, and agent of civic resilience.

Regional variations, as different as they are in their psychological profiles - while ranging from enhanced stress and affect distress in the East to identity-coherence in the West - uniformly validate the unitary cultural importance of music in the nation overall. Irrespective of varying exposures to stress, ideological differences, and emotional topographies, each region manifests a common dependence on music as a means of sense-making, affect regulation, and collective survival. These findings are consistent with previously reported cross-disciplinary findings that music can moderate affect states, facilitate neurocognitive healing, and strengthen social ties in situations of prolonged adversity.

The information also emphasizes music's capacity to reassert and reimagine Ukrainian national identity in the face of an existential threat. Be it through conventional folk music, sacred music of the Orthodox tradition, or experimental postmodern music with war artifacts as objects of musical performance, Ukrainian musical

art is a space of cultural sovereignty and symbolic resistance. Music no longer just mirrors Ukraine's conflict - today it creates the psychological as well as emotional narratives through which it is suffered and memorialized.

In the end, this research verifies that in the Ukrainian situation, music is not peripheral but central to the psychological coping with the crisis. It operates as a culturally situated form of resilience, as an avenue for the expression of identity, and as a means for maintaining public awareness in the face of fragmentation. While Ukraine continues to grapple with geopolitical as well as internal problems, the transformative value of music will perhaps emerge as an integral element of personal survival as well as of national continuity.

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