The Mastery of Art Therapy in Working with Preschool Children

Abstract. The study presents some aspects of art therapy in working with preschool children. The purpose of the study is to analyse the features of the creative activity of art therapy: game therapy, visual language, isotherapy, mandalas, collage; to reveal the characteristic features of the intervention of art in work with preschool children. The following general scientific methods were used to achieve this goal: analysis, synthesis, comparison, and modelling. It has been found that therapy helps children process difficult emotions, explore their “self”, develop greater self-awareness and self-esteem, and learn to manage their emotions and solve problems. It has been studied that the creative process can help to work with memories, events and feelings that are identical to the emotions and activity of the child. It is substantiated that art therapy effectively helps children with anxiety, depression, trauma, and grief, and it can be used to increase the child’s self-esteem, communication and problem-solving skills, socialisation. The necessity of using modern methods of art therapy is confirmed. The main aspects of working with preschool children are analysed. The practical side of using art therapy as an art for preschool children, tips and exercises that will help children get into the right way of thinking to create, which are included in any artistic activity to emphasise the therapeutic elements of the process. The current approaches to the art therapy process for preschool children are described: enhances creativity, allows children to express their thoughts and feelings, encourages the integration of psychological, physical and social aspects, improves productive functions, helps children make better decisions, helps children solve their problems, improves motility. The practical significance of the work is that it can be used by students, educators, psychologists, parents for in-depth study of art therapy in working with preschool children

Keywords: nonverbal communication, creativity, game therapy, visual language, isotherapy, mandalas, collage

INTRODUCTION

Today, the problem of art-therapeutic mastery in working with preschool children occupies an important position among researchers’ studies, as it is not new, but relevant. This is due to the prevalence of innovative technologies in the system of educational activities of children through art. Preschool is considered to be synthesising and therefore art therapy helps children to work creatively, reduce anxiety, stress and lighten the mood. Art therapy also provides social interaction in a safe controlled environment, helping to build empathy and other important social skills. The purpose of art therapy is to support the healing process and improve the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of the pre-schooler. The relevance of the study of art therapy is determined by the fact that recently in Ukraine, psychotherapy is developing rapidly and its new forms and models are being actively acquired.

In order for a child to feel the multidimensionality of socio-cultural life in all its manifestations, and to be able to fully harmonise his own personality and its development in society, art comes to help, which is both an educational
and therapeutic parameter. In particular, art therapy, as an artistic activity, can be fun and exciting, complex and provocative, as well as stimulating, provoking reflection.


The studies of M. Belogerova [8], N. Galameiko [9], O. Derkach [10], E. Tararina [11], J. Ball, R. Kaur [12], Delphi Heather Lee, [13], D. Waller [14], L. Rappaport [15], A. Ikemi [15], M. Miyake [15], E. Hass [16], O. Nattman-Schwart [16], A. Altman [16] deserve attention on the specified problems. In particular, O. Voznesenskaya [17] reveals media art therapy as a means of overcoming the consequences and prevention of psychotrauma. J. Ball and R. Kaur note that children who have difficulty processing and integrating sensory information, and difficulties with daily activities, can benefit from intervention, in particular, through art therapy [12]. D. Waller shares his research on the changes that occur in the process of physical involvement of materials, through the manufacture of a significant art object, through the sublimation of feelings in images, as well as through communication with the therapist through an art object. The scientist draws attention to the purpose of art therapy as a method of promoting positive change through interaction with the therapist and art materials in a safe environment [14].

The purpose of the study is theoretical and practical substantiation of the role of art therapy in the development of preschool children. The objectives of the study are: to clarify the essence of art therapy (game therapy, visual language, isotherapy, mandalas, collage); substantiate the effectiveness of art therapy in working with preschool children with anxiety, depression, trauma, and grief, as well as to increase the child’s self-esteem, communication skills, socialisation; analyse the main areas of work with preschool children and offer tips and exercises for child’s proper thinking in the process of creative activity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Considering some aspects of art therapy in working with preschool children, it should be noted that the sociological context of the study of the outlined problem is related to the analysis of psychological research in the context of forms of artistic self-expression by art. In particular, O. Voznesenska substantiates the advantages of using the methodology of art therapy as a means of psychosocial recovery [18]. The pedagogical work of the scientist contains approaches to studying the use of art-therapeutic technologies in the education and social sphere. In her other scientific work, O. Voznesenskaya [19] defines the terminological field and diagnostic possibilities of art therapy, methodological aspects of application of dance-movement therapy. Undoubtedly, the foundations of the aspirations and hopes of a modern person are based on obtaining additional energy to overcome the crisis, difficulties, or a worthy path through life’s trials. This is possible given the complexity of the child’s real life.

O. Derkach’s research is also of interest, where art therapy is presented in colour, i.e., in the relation “colour-mood”. By exploring the meaning of colours in their daily lives and their effects on the mind and heart, a person can gain inner peace through the effective use of these colours in everyday active life. Thus, the author notes that holistic healing and therapy can act as a “container” for powerful emotions, and can also be a means of communication between child and adult.

In their studies, L. Rappaport, A. Ikemi, M. Miyake, E. Hass, O. Nattman-Schwart, A. Altman, I. Hrytsiuk [20], L. Magdysyuk [20], M. Zamelyuk [20], I. Podoliak [20] and others, and in particular, J. Ball and R. Kaur covered the issue of using art (music, painting, drama, literature, etc.) to develop personality and analyse its therapeutic effect. Notably, O. Fediy’s research shows that the main means of art therapy include means resulting from the types of art: fine arts (art therapy), poetry or prose (bibliotherapy), dancing (dance therapy), fairy tale (fairy tale therapy), etc.

The authors share the opinion of O. Denisova that the importance of art depends on the harmonisation of social life of the individual with the environment and society, its utilitarianism, and conflict [21]. Notably, that art is directly in the combination of nature and person in terms of rhythm, symmetry, proportion, balance, which are the basis of beauty [21]. At the same time, some scientists (M. Mushkevych [22], I. Hrytsiuk [22], V. Koshirets [22], H. Khvorost [22], T. Duchyminska [22], L. Magdysyuk [22], O. Fenina [22]) note the complexity of the relationship between adult, child and art object, as well as how this process of changing the child’s views on the world and its behaviour occurs.

Exploring the pedagogical foundations of art therapy in teacher’s education, S. Lebedeva identifies the components of thermal centres. The author considers art therapy as a location of therapeutic and pedagogical approaches, innovative technology of the use of art, integration of multifaceted processes of human-art interaction. Actualisation of cognitive interests in various forms of art pedagogy and the formation of motivation for further independent activity in the chosen direction encourages teachers to create and expand the range of opportunities for children by combining the potential of art, pedagogy, and psychology.

Accordingly, the analysis of the above-mentioned works of scientists suggests that the problem of art therapy in working with preschool children is relevant and needs detailed study because by creating art, children can focus on their own ideas and feelings, increase self-esteem and work on social skills.

METHODOLOGY

The research was carried out using theoretical research methods: analysis (modern approaches to art therapy as art...
Application of art therapy to people of respectable age with certain memory impairments

T. Branch
V. Anisimova
D. Murphy

Application of art therapy to people of respectable age with certain memory impairments

T. Karkalas
N. Rogers
O. Bulatova

The practice of art therapy in addressing issues of diversity, work with traumas

Works on research on the effectiveness of art therapy methods for children with learning disabilities (including autism spectrum disorders – ASD) in primary education

As is evident from Table 1, this phenomenon of art therapy requires detailed substantiation for the impact on the child’s development and its non-verbal communication, the transmission of thoughts, feelings, or emotions without words. For those who have been abused, this is one way to “tell without talking” when they cannot or are afraid to talk about specific events or feelings; a sensory approach that helps children feel and communicate on different levels – visual, tactile, kinaesthetic, etc. Creative self-expression, in particular fine art, provides useful information about the development of children, especially those under the age of 10. For example, differences in creative development may help to understand the child’s emotional experiences, cognition, and sensory integration, but only to a certain extent, which is not always apparent through conversation therapy alone.

Neurobiology continues to inform mental health professionals about why specific arts-based interventions in the context of therapy may be beneficial to children. In particular, certain sensory characteristics of fine art seem to be effective in improving mood, sensory integration, and calming the body and mind, especially in children who have experienced traumatic events.

Like game therapy, art therapy provides an approach that involves the use of art as a tool for understanding and expressing oneself. This method is a useful tool for improving a child’s life, as artistic expression allows children to handle adverse events in a way that is easier for them to create than to rely solely on their verbal skills.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of the results of art therapy research in Ukraine and abroad

In order to deepen the study of the selected issues, attention was paid to the works of authors who studied art therapy, an analysis of art therapy practices was conducted in Ukraine and abroad. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The practice of using art therapy in Ukraine and abroad

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>№</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Scope of the study</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>V. Anisimova</td>
<td>Art and morality to the subject of art pedagogy</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>A. Bayere</td>
<td>Application of art therapy to people of respectable age with certain memory impairments</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>O. Bulatova</td>
<td>Aspects of art-pedagogical approach in education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>D. Murphy</td>
<td>Art therapy in work with children and adolescents who have experienced sexual violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>N. Rogers</td>
<td>While using various arts for self-medication or therapeutic purposes, people do not worry about the beauty of the work, the grammatical or stylistic correctness of the text, or the harmony of the song’s sound; art is used to express, to facilitate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>T. Karkalas</td>
<td>Art therapy provides an easier way of self-expression not only for children but also for adults. The individual learns to love himself by helping others to express themselves. Art therapy is not teaching something, but learning the smell of flowers and a sense of silence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>T. Branch</td>
<td>Works on research on the effectiveness of art therapy methods for children with learning disabilities (including autism spectrum disorders – ASD) in primary education</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>S. Dobby Copeland</td>
<td>The practice of art therapy in addressing issues of diversity, work with traumas</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>D. Karmi</td>
<td>Conducted research on how children can learn empathy through images</td>
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Source: developed by the authors on the basis of research of L. Magdysyuk, R. Fedorenko, and M. Zamelyuk [6]
opportunity to express a metaphor through artistic expression. In fact, a child who has experienced traumatic events or suffers from emotional disorders may only find it possible to create fantasy stories. With the support and guidance of a therapist, these stories serve as a way to slowly and safely release anxious or terroristic experiences.

All creative therapies are essentially relational therapies, as they involve active sensory dynamics between the practitioner and the individual, emphasising the connection between the child and the therapist. In this sense, art therapy can be useful for restoring and transforming attachment through experiential and sensory means and can take into account those early relational states that exist before words' domination, allowing the brain to establish new, more productive patterns [4]. Any professional who effectively applies the principles of art therapy to work with children is well versed in how to establish a positive commitment, attitude, and reflexive convergence, and the latter applies to the experience when two people cooperate. Creative expression, as well as a game, adds to these positive relational experiences many others, including sensory, affective, and cognitive direction.

Thus, art therapy allows children to express what has happened to them through art, and helps to reduce stress and anxiety when they work to solve these problems. At the same time, it provides children with a safe place to express their negative feelings and emotions, thus improving the mental, emotional, and physical well-being of the child.

**Art therapy as the mastery of a psychological tool**

Let us consider art therapy as the mastery of a psychological tool using creative materials with which children can explore their thoughts and feelings. Art therapy goes beyond colouring and includes such activities as painting; writing stories and poems; choreographic dances; writing and performing plays, which can take place both in private therapy sessions and in groups, giving children the opportunity to work on their social communication skills.

Notably, that art therapy for children can be used to help a child cope with such a life event as a serious illness, parents’ divorce, fighting against low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, learning disabilities, behavioural problems, and developmental delays (autism, etc.).

Fine art offers a completely natural form of communication for most children. That is why art therapy is often considered useful to help children in various difficult situations, such as personality and emotional disorders, speech disorders, childhood trauma, grief and loss (Fig. 1).

**Figure 1. Pedagogical bases of art therapy with children**

**Source:** developed by the authors based on research by S. Lebedeva [5]

In the practice of art therapy, it is advisable to use such art forms as game therapy, visual language, isotherapy, mandalas, collage, to evoke the expression of the deepest feelings, to build personal stories and increase the child's self-awareness (Fig. 2).

Some children have difficulty expressing their feelings in words, so art can help them express themselves. Using art as a tool for relaxation or emotional reflection concerns, first of all, the creative process, not the final work of art.

**Figure 2. The main advantages of using an art-therapeutic approach with children**

**Source:** developed by the authors basing on the research by L. Magdysyuk, R. Fedorenko, and M. Zamelyuk [6]

Art therapy can include art and previous activities that allow for therapeutic physical exercise and sensory stimulation. With the help of works of art, these broad areas of concern can be addressed at the same time. For example,
the tactile experience of art and previous activities with
children: it helps to create and improve their own ideas;
enriches the child’s life, and helps to see new facets of
the world (new or renewed view of life that charges with
energy); focuses children on what worries them in order
to solve the problem; is a natural way of transmitting
feelings and is socially acceptable.

Practical ways of using art therapy with preschool
children

It is also worth paying attention to the practical side of art
therapy as a mastery for preschool children. Let us focus
on exercises that will help children get into the right way of
thinking, express their ideas and fantasies about the world
in which they live. Children also tend to use pictures to deal
with various life phenomena. These tips and exercises can
be incorporated into any artistic activity to emphasise the
therapeutic elements of the process (Fig. 3).

Getting Started: children should not
spend too much time thinking about
what the final product will look like,
and can start by choosing specific
materials, colors, and textures they
like. Stories, magazines, or pictures
can be a good catalyst

Creative space: create an art
space that will allow your child to
experiment freely and be messy. Use
a cloth or a newspaper on top of the
kitchen table, in the garage, or just
outside

Give them space: do not always
draw with a child. When parents
draw something visual while the
younger child is drawing. It can be a
distraction

Have conversations

Explore the child’s creative process

Avoid giving instructions

Let it be: give the child time to
realise his positions in the created
product of art

Figure 3. Tips for the art-therapeutic process

Source: developed by the authors based on the research by M. Zamelyuk, L. Magdisyuk, and N. Olkhova [4]

Children’s curiosity shapes their potential for cre-
vativity. It is easy for them to invent things and come up
with new ideas, which is reflected in their questions and
the games they invent. Through the creative process, children
can learn, explore, experience new emotions and percep-
tions, get inspired, learn to cope with difficult situations,
and improve attention, motility, and visual-spatial skills.
The difference is that they express them differently. Art-
therapeutic exercises help to promote self-expression and
problem-solving.

The technique of “Doodle” can be used with the child
using colour, creativity, and circular movements, feel relaxed: helps to get rid of anxious thoughts, exit and focus on one’s
emotions; stimulate one’s feelings; to fantasise, to create a
game idea. Exercise for drawing doodles helps to relax, de-
volve imagination, creativity, concentration.

By asking children to draw a place where they feel
safe in the exercise “Recreate a place where you feel safe”,
where there are waves of breath and the ocean, the child can
immerse himself in the aesthetics of sensations. Children
move the brushes upwards while inhaling and fill the lungs,
and the hands move downwards, exhaling slowly, releasing
air. Colouring the waves helps children visualise the pattern
of breathing, noting that exhaling is longer than inhaling.

It is worth pointing out the main aspects of the use
of dough art in working with children: the development of
children. Coloured mandalas: children can decorate or paint existing mandalas to help them feel calm and relaxed, to connect with their deepest thoughts and emotions. If the child is old enough to draw with a certain accuracy, he can make his own mandala and then decorate it. This activity not only relaxes children but also stimulates their creativity. Mandalas and attentiveness: a therapist suggests that the child pays close attention to the creative process. To do this, the therapist uses elements that contribute to an environment such as relaxing music. With the help of mandalas, children can simultaneously express their feelings and improve their creative and visual-motor skills. Moreover, the art therapist can use his work to analyse the thoughts and feelings of the child. Mandala Colouring is an art therapy exercise for children that encourages relaxation and serenity.

Notably, that art therapy contributes to a clearer, subtle expression of one’s experiences, problems, internal contradictions, on the one hand, as well as creative self-expression – on the other:

* Photos: the child can get to know himself by choosing different photos of himself and the world. The art therapist can analyse how the child chose the photos and how they relate to the child’s conflicts.
* Paintings: children can use painting as their creative path. Even without realising it, the pictures show what is happening in their inner world. Moreover, an art therapist can draw with very young children to stimulate their feelings. Finger painting is a great way to stimulate different parts of the brain at the same time.
* Collages: Creating a collage can promote creativity. Moreover, it is also a great point for the child’s thoughts and feelings.
* Sculpture: An art therapist may offer the child clay or the child may even make a “living sculpture” of his or her own body to express thoughts, situations, and certain feelings.

Through movement, children can integrate their emotional, cognitive, and physical bodies. It also appeals to their mood, as exercise and movement release endorphins and make it easier for them to express their emotions and ideas.

Theatre (psycho, mask image therapy) helps children to use reconstruction to express what is happening to them. Therapists often use theatre and drama to help children find solutions to their problems. The distinctness can help them think unconventionally. As an example, dance (form, rhythm, dance therapy) has incredible therapeutic power because it helps children to direct their emotions. Music (music therapy) helps to solve emotional problems, strengthens creativity and encourages socialisation, increases attention, memory and helps children to structure their language.

“Music and Reflections”: For this exercise, the child should find and explore their deepest thoughts with music in the background. The child and the therapist then analyse the process so that the child can integrate his or her physical, emotional, and cognitive experiences.

“Composition”: For this exercise, children use their ingenuity to compose a song that reflects what they think and feel. After they compose a song, they should sing it or at least talk about it. In one part of the session, they may even rethink or rewrite the song as a symbol of conflict resolution. With the help of the song, children can express their feelings in a really fun way. For example, they can choose songs that they identify with and explore their feelings with the help of a work group or therapist.

**CONCLUSIONS**

The generalisation of the above-mentioned allows the authors of this study to conclude that art therapy is mastery for preschool children and has the following advantages: enhances creativity; enables children to express their thoughts and feelings, encourages the integration of psychological, physical, and social aspects, improves productive functions such as attention, memory and spatial orientation, improves speech, stimulates self-awareness, helps children work better in groups, makes children feel safe and be heard, helps to increase self-confidence, promotes good communication, helps children make better decisions, helps children cope with their problems, improves motility skills.

Art therapy is a means of improving the child’s well-being, which allows him to learn to express himself, resolve conflicts and problems using self-expression through art. Thus, art makes it possible to build therapeutic relationships around the creative activity of the individual. Art can act as a “bridge” between two people, creating both a space and a connection between the child and the therapist. This can help reduce anxiety and allow the child to go through the process of building relationships with adults.

Further research is associated with creative counselling, which combines creativity with game therapy, art therapy, sand therapy, visual images, miniature phenomenological worlds, therapeutic games, bibliotherapy, support skills, ethics, group therapy, and many others.

**REFERENCES**


Мистецтво арт-терапії у роботі з дітьми дошкільного віку

Анотація. У статті представлена окремі аспекти арт-терапевтичного мистецтва у роботі з дітьми дошкільного віку. Метою дослідження є аналіз особливостей мистецької діяльності арт-терапії: ігрова терапія, візуальна мова, ізотерапія, мандали, колаж; розкрити особливості втручання художнього мистецтва у роботу з дітьми дошкільного віку. Для вирішення вказаної мети було використано деякі загальнонаукові методи: аналіз, синтез, порівняння та моделювання. З'ясовано як терапія допомагає дітям переробити важкі емоції, дослідити своє «Я», досягти та активність дитини. Обґрунтовано, що арт-терапія ефективно допомагає дітям із занепокоєння, депресією, травму та горем, а також їх можна використовувати для підвищення самооцінки дитини, спілкування та навичок.

Ключові слова: невербальна комунікація, творчість, ігрова терапія, візуальна мова, ізотерапія, мандали, колаж.