

The Use of Art Therapy Techniques in the Centres of Educational Care – Results of Preliminary Research

Využití arteterapeutických technik ve střediscích výchovné péče – výsledky úvodního výzkumu

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Abstract:

The aim of this paper is to present the preliminary findings on the application of art therapy techniques in centres of educational care (CEC). The present study is an initial phase of a larger research project focused on analysing the implementation of art therapy within CECs. We explored how individual CECs inform their clients about available services, with a specific emphasis on art therapy. The subsequent research phase will be conducted in selected CECs, involving both clients and art therapists. A mixed-method research design will be used, incorporating interviews with art therapists and questionnaire surveys with clients. This study seeks to determine the extent to which art therapy techniques are utilised in CECs. The article will also outline future research procedures, methodologies, and the intended applications of the findings.

Keywords:


Art therapy; art therapist; art therapy techniques; the centre of educational care

Abstrakt:

Cílem příspěvku je prezentace dosavadních výsledků využívání arteterapeutických technik ve střediscích výchovné péče (SVP). Jde o předvýzkum výzkumného šetření, které se týká analýzy SVP z hlediska využívání arteterapie. Zajímalo nás, jak jednotlivá SVP informují svoji klientelu o nabízených službách, výhradně pak o arteterapii. Další část výzkumu bude realizována již ve vybraných SVP, jak s klienty, tak s arteterapeuty. Aplikován bude smíšený výzkumný design, kdy proběhnou rozhovory s arteterapeuty a dotazníkové šetření s klienty. Mimo jiné, je cílem našeho šetření zjistit, v jaké míře jsou arteterapeutické techniky využívány ve SVP. V příspěvku budou nastíněny další postupy, metodologie výzkumu a také jeho plánované využití.

Klíčová slova:

Arteterapeut; arteterapeut; arteterapeutické techniky; středisko výchovné péče

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Introduction

Hauschková (2020) describes art therapy as a journey through an individual's soul and self. Thus, we should reflect on different approaches offered to children who find themselves in a life situation that is challenging, unpleasant, or risky. We will build on this idea with another idea mentioned by Polínek (2015), namely that the fundamental pedagogical error is to address the outward manifestations of risky behaviour. This implies that we should address the underlying issues of the problem. Therefore, we want to explore the experiences of clients of educational care centres with art therapy. The planned research project deals with the use of art therapy techniques in the centres of educational care (CEC). Clients are referred to CEC primarily due to the risk or presence of behavioural disorders. The CEC offers counselling or diagnostic activities, but also special educational and psychological activities, which include, among other things, therapeutic programmes. Among the therapeutic programmes mentioned, we can also include art therapy. We believe that expressive therapy, and art therapy in particular, have significant potential for working with this clientele. Therefore, we would like to make this issue more widely known to the facilities' staff where clients with behavioural disorders (hereafter referred to as BD) are treated.

In this paper, we focus primarily on the initial stages of research. We will define key terminology, including "centres of educational care" and "art therapy," and introduce other essential topics. The discussion will cover the research objectives and the approaches to achieving them, detailing the methodology and intended research methods. As part of the research that has already been conducted, we present preliminary results, specifically an analysis of CECs with a focus on how these centres raise awareness among their clientele via their websites. We will also outline the future methods and goals for the ongoing research.

1 Definition of basic terminology

Art therapy serves as the foundational concept that frames our exploration of the research problem. As such, art therapy can be classified as an expressive therapy. Therefore, it is about working with the client using visual art forms (Potměšilová & Sobková, 2012). Slavík (2000) defines art therapy as a psychotherapeutic and psychodiagnostic discipline, using forms and means adequate to art forms (in a narrower sense, forms of visual art, in a broader sense, forms of other artistic disciplines) for therapeutic purposes. Art therapy involves both therapeutic and diagnostic elements, which are distinct, yet often intertwined in practice. The point is that art therapy, as a psychotherapeutic discipline, focusses mainly on the process of making, which is self-healing for the client, and the creation is not further interpreted. Art therapy as a psychological discipline works with the creation and the process of creation itself (Potměšilová & Sobková, 2012).

Defining who an **art therapist** is not as easy as it may seem. Currently, the profession of art therapist is not anchored in legislation in the Czech Republic. However, if we think about who an art therapist is, we can define a few basic personality traits: empathy, communication, and the ability to establish, maintain, and end the client-therapist relationship. Communicativeness is then a very important personality trait for a therapist. However, the therapist should realise that communication is verbal and non-verbal, and there should be harmony between these two components. He or she should create an environment for the client so that he or she feels safe in it and can solve his or her

problems (Potměšilová, 2013). According to Hauschková (2020), the therapist must experience the difference between art and healing art. The artist is interested in the artwork, whereas the therapist focuses on the client.

The education of the art therapist should be in the field of psychology or special education because of the knowledge of the functioning of the human psyche. Graduates of these fields are also familiar with the different types of potential clients, as they are exposed to information about different types of disabilities during their studies and are thus equipped with the knowledge and skills to work with these clients. It is also good if the art therapist is educated in fine arts or art history. They can take advantage of this in their work and work with different art techniques and styles and concepts that have emerged in art over the years (Potměšilová, 2013). However, studying the abovementioned areas does not make one an art therapist. Art therapy training is also necessary, during which the future therapist himself becomes familiar with various art therapy techniques.

The research will take place in CEC regulated by Act No. 109/2002 Coll., on the Provision of Institutional Education or Protective Education at School Facilities and on Preventative Educational Care at School Facilities and on the Amendment to Some Other Acts. Since 1991, they have been part of the network of preventive educational care facilities. Their aim is to prevent the emergence and development of negative manifestations in children or to mitigate or eliminate the causes and consequences of BD and negative phenomena in social development. Among other goals, we can also include contributing to the healthy personal development of the child (National Institute for Education). CEC is one of the institutions that specialise in educational problems of children and youth. It primarily accepts clients who show signs of BD but have not yet been ordered to institutional or protective education (Hutyrová, 2020). They focus on preventive educational, counselling, and therapeutic care for clients. Clients of the CEC can be children aged 3 years up to the end of vocational education (no older than 26 years old). Centres provide information and assistance to clients with BD, but also with negative manifestations in social development, and help them integrate into society (National Institute for Education).

The basic symptoms of **behavioural disorders** can be found in ICD-10 (-11) or DSM-5. A behaviour disorder can be observed in early childhood and may or may not persist into adulthood. It manifests itself in antisocial and aggressive behaviour (Paclt, 2007). The term BD should be defined by uniform criteria. Under this term, we usually imagine negative behaviour that deviates from the norm (Hutyrová, 2019). An individual with a behavioural disorder is defined as someone unable to respect the norms given at a level appropriate to his or her age or intellectual abilities and deviates in the area of socialisation. It is a condition that lasts for at least six months (Vágnerová, 2012).

Furthermore, it is necessary to define **problem behaviour** as an individual who behaves in a risky way. It is the sum of **risky behaviours** that together constitute problem behaviour. The consequences of problem behaviour can be of a health, social, psychological or educational nature and threaten the individual and society (Širůčková, 2015 in Miovský, 2015).

We might ask where the line is when a child is behaving at risk or showing BD. The boundary is somewhat ambiguous. Every child occasionally behaves disobediently, but it is the duration and intensity that matter for us to label such behaviour as problematic.

2 Research plan

As the title suggests, we would like to find out how and if CEC in the Czech Republic uses art therapy techniques and how these techniques affect their clients. We assume that not all CEC will offer expressive therapies, and it does not always have to be art therapy in the strict sense of the word. Therefore, the first thing we will do is to find out what services the CEC offers. We have begun by examining how CEC presents their services on their websites. After that, we will contact the CEC themselves and ask for more information about the activities they implement. We will find out if the CEC are already using art therapy techniques and how this is reflected in the attitudes and status of the CEC clients. If they are not using these techniques, we would like to find out if there are differences after their inclusion and what the benefits are.

The main aim of this research is to find out to what extent art therapy techniques are used in the CEC in the Czech Republic and to give specific examples of the techniques used. Furthermore, we will focus on the experience of art therapists with the use of art therapy techniques in CEC. We will also be interested in the self-experience of CEC clients with art therapy. We will focus on their feelings, thoughts, and attitudes in relation to the use of art therapy techniques.

3 Research methods and design

For a more holistic insight into the issue, a mixed research design is chosen, i.e., using qualitative and quantitative methods simultaneously (Dures, 2011). In the initial phase, we will analyse CEC across the Czech Republic. We will identify in which CEC art therapy is used. In the next phase we will contact specific CEC with which we would like to establish cooperation. The qualitative part of the research will consist of interviews with professional staff of the CEC, art therapists. The quantitative part will be carried out with CEC clients in cooperation with art therapists, when self-assessment questionnaires will be presented to the participants, which will allow us to self-assess feelings, thoughts, and attitudes.

In the first phase, which has already been partly carried out, we analysed the CEC across the Czech Republic. We were interested in what their services offer, mainly whether they offer art therapy. In the next phase, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with art therapists working in the selected CEC. We will be interested in their motivation for this work and their personal attitudes toward the issue. Also, their subjective opinions on whether they think art therapy intervention differs between clients with BD and other clients. For example, if they also work with other clientele, whether and what differences they see. Furthermore, how art therapy is used in the CEC (length of sessions, frequency, number of clients, etc.). An important part of the interview will be about the methods and techniques used that have been successful in their art therapy practice with this clientele.

This will be followed by a questionnaire survey with the CEC clients. Clients will be given a self-assessment questionnaire, specifically the ABI, see below. We would like to compare these results with those from Israeli research in 2022 (Snir, 2022). After the questionnaire survey, focus groups will be held with the CEC clients, which can shed more light on the information we have collected in the questionnaire survey. Through interaction and group dynamics, interesting topics can be discussed that could bring new insight.

The research population will consist of art therapists and CEC clients in the Czech Republic. The selection of the research population depends on the willingness to cooperate. We would like to continue until the research sample is saturated. As for clients, we will be interested in the age group corresponding to the second grade of primary school (11-16 years old). We anticipate at least fifty participants.

4 Description of methods

Semi-structured interviews are a combination of unstructured and structured interviews. We will create a schema, types of questions and headings to stick to and participants (in this case, art therapists) will be able to develop and move the topics further. Another advantage is that the questions do not have to be in order, but the interviewer can adjust the order and the time focused on the question as needed. The interview usually lasts until the interviewee has exhausted their responses. At the beginning, we define the core, which is the minimum of questions to be asked. This will ensure that the topics are covered, even if the order or terminology differs. The analysis works with this information. However, if some information seems irrelevant in this type of interview, we can omit it (Miovský, 2006).

Self-report questionnaires are one of the most common procedures for assessing one's own experience and collecting data about individuals in psychology, as well as other human-related sciences (Fernandez-Ballesteros, 2003). Self-report questionnaires document the client's perceptions and direct experiences, which can illuminate important issues and confirm or refute theoretical aspects believed to be effective in art therapy. They allow researchers to ask individuals about their perceptions, thoughts, preferences, desires, beliefs, habits, and behaviours. Furthermore, we can purposively explore theoretical questions by analysing correlations or making comparisons (Snir, 2014). For our investigation, then, we specifically chose the Art Based Intervention Questionnaire (ABI). This questionnaire explores individuals' creative work experiences with art therapy. Respondents indicate on a Likert-type scale (1-7) the extent to which they identify with the statements and what corresponds to their just-lived experience of art therapy. The questionnaire has a total of 41 items in 4 categories:

1. Feeling and thoughts preceding the artistic process.
2. Feelings and thoughts during the artistic process.
3. Attitudes towards the artistic product.
4. Attitudes towards the material.

5 Analysis of the centres of educational care

In order to carry out the research, we had to carry out a pre-survey, which involved an analysis of CEC across the Czech Republic. We were interested in what their service offerings were, specifically whether they offered art therapy specifically. Databases of centres already exist, but we believe they are often not up-to-date and comprehensive. Also, some centres do not have all the information on their websites about exactly what services they offer, so we would like to contact them and find out information that might be desirable for our research.

According to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports database on institutional care, there are 32 CEC in the Czech Republic. According to the database of the National Institute for Education, there are 37 CEC. We have to take into account that CEC are

usually established by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, at diagnostic institutes, schools or educational establishments, and many of them have additional detached workplaces. In our research, we counted the detached CEC as separate because the services offered in one facility are often not identical to those offered in the other. We also take into account the fact that CEC, even if they have one director, have different staff and, most importantly, clients.

The research was carried out by finding out how many CEC were located in each region and then browsing their websites to find information about the services offered. The largest number of CEC is located in the Moravian-Silesian region, that is 12. Most of the CEC are under the administration of the Ostrava CEC, but they still have their own websites. On the other hand, the Olomouc Region has the fewest CEC, with only one. There are 4 CEC in the capital city of Prague. The South Bohemia, Pardubice, Central Bohemia and Karlovy Vary regions have 3 CEC each. The South Moravian Region has 8 CEC. The Liberec, Ústí nad Labem and Vysočina Regions have 4. The Zlín and Hradec Králové Regions have 5. The Pilsen Region has 2. In total, there should be 61 CEC in the Czech Republic. We assume that this number is much higher than the numbers given by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and the National Institute of Education because we have included detached workplaces in the list.

We were also interested in whether CEC included art therapy among the services offered on its websites. Their number is very low, only 4 CEC out of all the above-mentioned. The Klíčov centre in Prague offers group programmes and mentions art therapy. In Český Krumlov, the Spirála centre (South Bohemia Region) also offers art therapy in its range-of therapeutic activities. In the Hradec Králové Region, art therapy is provided in two CEC, in Náchod and Trutnov. On the other hand, we were interested that the centre in Hodonín does not explicitly offer art therapy on its website. However, the small number of CECs offering art therapy does not necessarily reflect the full extent of its availability or usage. For most of the CEC, the website mentions therapies in general. However, they usually mention therapeutic work in groups, family, or individual therapy. Our attention was also drawn to the centre Čtyřlístek in Buškovice (Ústí nad Labem region), which uses the therapeutic method of EEG Biofeedback. This is a non-invasive therapy that focuses on biofeedback, using computer games. On the contrary, 13 CEC do not mention the therapy on their websites.

We expect that after contacting the CEC themselves we will learn more about the services offered and their use, and then we will be able to carry out the next part of the research. A purposive sample will be used to contact the facilities where art therapy is provided.

6 Conclusion and discussion

Below, we present several researches concerning the use of art therapy for people with different types of disabilities, both in the Czech Republic and abroad. For example, we can mention a study from 2004 that used drawing to identify thought disorder in children with emotional and behavioural disorders. It confirmed that children's drawings can be an important tool for diagnosis (White et al., 2004). Another example is a quantitative longitudinal study in Israel in 2022, in which primary school students underwent a year-long art therapy intervention and completed the ABI Questionnaire. We plan to adapt this questionnaire for use in our research. The purpose of this study was to understand better the associations between art-making experience and emotional state and treatment

success. The results of this study revealed changes in the participants' experiences before and after undergoing therapy during the first month. There was found to be a link between the experience of art making and the improvement of psychological state (Snir, 2022).

We found several theses on art therapy interventions for people with specific behavioural disorders, implemented in institutional and preventive care facilities in the Czech Republic. Smolenová (2009) focused on non-traditional programmes in working with children at risk in CEC. Specifically, it was the use of drama therapy, projective techniques, non-traditional sports, as well as art therapy. During the research, it was found that these non-traditional techniques when working with clients, contribute to the overall development of the client, but also to improve communication with the environment. Furthermore, we will mention a thesis that dealt with special education intervention with individuals with specific BD in the CEC. Specifically, it focuses on art therapy intervention in these individuals. The author indicates that she finds using art therapy with these individuals beneficial. She also mentions specific cases where she observes the benefits of art therapy in better coping with a challenging life situation, understanding oneself or improving communication with the environment. She points out the possibilities of wider use of art therapy in individuals with specific BD (Pohořská, 2018). We also searched for other theses that deal with similar issues. Often, these are implementations of certain therapeutic techniques in a specific setting or some form of overview. We find these to be a good bridge for our study, but we also see that there is only a small amount of research on this topic.

A possible outcome of this research investigation could be the creation of a therapeutic methodological manual for staff working with clients at risk or diagnosed with BD. Therefore, we will mention some publications that are already available. There are several art therapy manuals with specific techniques that an art therapist can use. For example, the authors Lhotová and Perout have published a book *Praktická arteterapie - Metody a aktivity (Practical Art Therapy - Methods and Activities)*, which offers both insight into the theoretical foundations of art therapy and specific ways of working with expressive expression. Author D'Amico Dawn has published *101 mindful arts-based activities to get children and adolescents talking* to help therapists working with children who have suffered serious trauma. In addition, we also find the existing methodological manuals to be very useful. *Metodika expresivních přístupů u žáků se specifickými vzdělávacími potřebami v inkluzivním vzdělávání (The methodology of expressive approaches for pupils with special educational needs in inclusive education)* by Müller and his colleagues offers a possible use of art in the educational process. The chapter entitled *Methodology of expressive art approaches* also includes a subchapter entitled *Methodology of expressive art approaches for pupils with behavioural disorders*. It recommends creating a calm and safe environment to work with these children, as calming them down and making them feel safe is often a long-term process. Potměšilová (in Müller, 2023) also gives importance to patience at work, motivating children, but also to the establishment of healthy social relationships because of possible mistrust or, in contrast, too much trust in other people. She also gives some possible art therapy techniques for children with BD. Finally, we would like to mention the methodological manual written by Valenta, *Metodika práce asistenta pedagoga – Artbrut a artefiletika (Methodology of the work of the teaching assistant - Artbrut and artephiletics)*, where artephiletics is considered in a broader concept. It deals with the application of art and dramatic practices.

The literature indicates that art therapy is a valuable approach for working with diverse clientele. Many professional publications and research investigations have been and are still being produced on this topic. We can come across several theses or methodologies in the Czech Republic. We believe that this research, while similar to existing studies, could advance the field of art therapy, especially in its application for clients with BD. We see the contribution mainly in the consolidation of the framework and experience of art therapists who work with this clientele, and subsequently the development of methodological recommendations for further practice.

The paper presented a research plan to find out how and whether CEC in the Czech Republic uses art therapy techniques. We will also find the qualitative part of the research useful when working with clients. By working directly with them, we will be able to see how the techniques affect individual clients. However, we are aware that not all techniques are applicable to everyone. However, we will try to work with a wide range of options so that as many professionals as possible can use it. Another limitation of the research we see is the availability of information, and we may not be able to work with all sites to provide all the data. However, research will benefit from the methodological guide that might be produced. There are already publications that describe methods and techniques of art therapy, but we would like to take into account the mentioned clientele of the CEC.

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