



THE ROLE OF ART THERAPY TECHNOLOGIES IN ENHANCING CORRECTIONAL PEDAGOGY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

EL PAPEL DE LAS TECNOLOGÍAS DE ARTETERAPIA EN LA MEJORA DE LA PEDAGOGÍA CORRECCIONAL EN LA EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR

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ABSTRACT

The current situation in Russian and international education orients modern universities toward creating conditions that ensure equal educational opportunities for all categories of citizens. This article examines modern art therapy technologies and their application in correctional pedagogy in higher education. The aim of the article is to determine the effectiveness and prospects of using art therapy technologies in this field. The study analyzes the theoretical foundations and practical aspects of art therapy methods, including isotherapy, dance movement therapy, and phototherapy, in work with students with disabilities. Special attention is paid to an integrative approach that combines different techniques to support social adaptation, emotional balance, and cognitive development. The materials and methods include the analysis of scientific literature, regulatory legal acts, educational and methodological materials, and experimental work in educational institutions. The methodology is based on historical-pedagogical, psychological-correctional, and empirical approaches. The research results confirm the effectiveness of art therapy in the educational environment and emphasize its potential for training specialists in correctional pedagogy. Art therapy is considered an innovative approach that can improve the educational process and promote the social integration of students with disabilities.

Keywords:

Art Therapy, Correctional Pedagogy, Higher Education, Students With Disabilities, Educational Technologies.

RESUMEN

La situación actual de la educación rusa e internacional orienta a las universidades modernas hacia la creación de condiciones que garanticen la igualdad de oportunidades educativas para todos los sectores de la ciudadanía. Este artículo examina las tecnologías modernas de arteterapia y su aplicación en la pedagogía correctiva en la educación superior. El objetivo es determinar la eficacia y las perspectivas de su uso en este ámbito. El estudio analiza los fundamentos teóricos y los aspectos prácticos de los métodos de arteterapia, incluyendo la isoterapia, la terapia de movimiento y danza y la fototerapia, en el trabajo con estudiantes con discapacidad. Se presta especial atención a un enfoque integrador que combina diferentes técnicas para apoyar la adaptación social, el equilibrio emocional y el desarrollo cognitivo. Los materiales y métodos incluyen el análisis de literatura científica, normativa legal, materiales didácticos y metodológicos, y trabajo experimental en instituciones educativas. La metodología se basa en enfoques histórico-pedagógicos, psicológico-correccionales y empíricos. Los resultados de la investigación confirman la eficacia de la arteterapia en el entorno educativo y destacan su potencial para la formación de especialistas en pedagogía correctiva. La arteterapia se considera un enfoque innovador que puede mejorar el proceso educativo y promover la integración social de los estudiantes con discapacidad.

Palabras clave:

Arteterapia, Pedagogía Correccional, Educación Superior, Estudiantes con Discapacidad, Tecnologías Educativas.



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INTRODUCTION

Art therapy has gained an increasingly prominent place in contemporary pedagogical research due to its potential to support the cognitive, emotional, and social development of learners with disabilities. Examining art therapy technologies provides valuable insights into the sociocultural, pedagogical, and psychological processes that shape inclusive educational practices and the provision of support services within higher education.

Art therapy represents an innovative pedagogical approach that plays a central role in the rehabilitation, social adaptation, and emotional development of students with disabilities (Shi & Yin, 2025). The methodological foundations of art therapy emerged as a distinct field of educational practice during the mid-twentieth century and have continued to evolve through interdisciplinary research in psychology, education, and health sciences. The integration of art therapy into correctional and developmental educational programs contributes to personality development, strengthens emotional regulation, expands opportunities for social participation, and creates favorable conditions for successful inclusion and long-term well-being.

Recent transformations in higher education have further strengthened the relevance of student-centered pedagogical approaches that promote both academic achievement and psychosocial development. Beyond the incorporation of digital technologies and artificial intelligence, universities are increasingly expected to foster inclusive environments that prioritize emotional well-being, creativity, and equitable participation. In this regard, Cáceres-Mesa (2026) emphasizes that contemporary higher education should integrate innovative pedagogical strategies with evaluation practices and institutional policies that support students' holistic development and well-being. Within this educational framework, art therapy represents a valuable resource capable of complementing technological innovation through human-centered learning experiences that enhance emotional expression, resilience, and inclusion.

At the same time, the internationalization of higher education has expanded opportunities for collaborative and virtual learning environments involving increasingly diverse student populations. According to Sadri-Damirchi (2026), global learning and virtual mobility require flexible pedagogical models that facilitate meaningful participation, intercultural interaction, and inclusive educational experiences regardless of geographical boundaries. Art therapy technologies align with these emerging educational demands by providing creative forms of communication and emotional support that can strengthen students' adaptation, participation, and sense of belonging in both face-to-face and virtual higher education settings.

Despite the growing scholarly interest in art therapy during recent decades, its application within higher education remains comparatively underexplored. Although international and Russian studies have documented the corrective, therapeutic, and developmental potential of art therapy, further research is needed to understand how these approaches can be systematically integrated into university curricula, disability support services, and the professional preparation of correctional educators. A comprehensive review of the existing literature is therefore necessary to synthesize current evidence, identify research gaps, and identify promising directions for future research and educational practice.

The analysis of the available literature demonstrates that contemporary research on art therapy in correctional pedagogy has evolved along several complementary lines, including the theoretical development of art therapy models, their practical implementation in educational settings, and their influence on the emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and social development of students with disabilities. Collectively, these studies indicate that art therapy constitutes an increasingly relevant component of inclusive higher education, particularly as universities seek to combine technological innovation with pedagogical practices that promote accessibility, well-being, and equal educational opportunities for all learners.

Adrian Hill made a fundamental contribution to the theoretical basis of art therapy, introducing the term "art therapy" itself in 1938. His works laid the foundations for understanding art as a means of emotional and psychological healing. Later, researchers substantiated the use of art therapy technologies within the framework of humanistic pedagogy, which focuses on the individual needs of the child and their creative potential (Podborsky, 2019; Savluchinskaya & Pavlova, 2016).

The authors showed in their studies that art therapy is an effective tool for correcting emotional and cognitive disorders in students with developmental delay. They emphasized that influence through images, movements, and rhythms contributes to the harmonization of brain functioning and the improvement of adaptive abilities (Ibragimova & Muratova, 2015; Zamelyuk & Mahdysiuk, 2021).

Modern studies focus on the diversity of art therapy techniques and their adaptation to different categories of students with disabilities. Thus, Feoktistova (2015) emphasized the use of isotherapy, which allows students to express inner experiences through drawing, which is especially effective when working with students who have speech and intellectual impairments.

The authors substantiated the use of dance movement therapy as a means of relieving psycho-emotional tension and correcting motor functions. They note that dance

helps students with cerebral palsy improve movement coordination and increase self-confidence (Podborsky, 2019).

Numerous studies confirm the positive impact of art therapy on the psychological and social development of students. For example, Savluchinskaya & Pavlova (2016) showed that art therapy classes contribute to reducing anxiety levels, increasing self-esteem, and improving emotional stability.

The works of Smith (2021) and his colleagues analyze the influence of modern technologies, such as virtual reality, on correctional pedagogy. The use of VR in combination with art therapy makes it possible to create unique conditions for working through fears and developing skills of interaction with the surrounding world.

Despite significant achievements, there remain areas that require further study. For example, the integration of art therapy technologies into the higher education system for the training of correctional specialists is considered superficially. More research is also needed on the long-term influence of art therapy on the socialization and professional adaptation of students with disabilities (Soliev et al., 2021).

Research hypothesis: the application of art therapy in correctional pedagogy in higher education can significantly increase the effectiveness of correctional work with students with disabilities, contributing to their socialization, the development of emotional intelligence, and the disclosure of creative potential. However, to realize this potential, further theoretical development and practical adaptation of methods to educational conditions are required.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study is based on historical-pedagogical, psychological-correctional, and empirical approaches. The analysis includes the study of scientific works, regulatory legal acts, educational and methodological materials, as well as the conduct of experiments in educational institutions. Historical-analytical, comparative, and experimental methods were applied to work with the accumulated scientific material. The methodological principle of the study is the principle of systematicity and an integrative approach, which makes it possible to consider art therapy as a complex technology.

Thus, the choice of these methodological tools is determined by the need for a comprehensive analysis of the possibilities and limitations of art therapy technologies in the educational practice of higher education. The expected results of the study consist in substantiating the need to integrate art therapy into the system of teacher training

and in creating recommendations for its practical application in educational institutions.

To test the hypothesis that the application of art therapy in correctional pedagogy makes it possible to significantly increase the level of socialization, emotional development, and creative activity of students with disabilities, a theoretical and practical study was conducted. The work was based on the analysis of existing scientific publications and practical data, as well as on the author's own pedagogical experience (Savchenko et al., 2018).

At the first stage of the study, a classification of art therapy technologies used in correctional pedagogy was carried out. The analysis was based on the works of such authors as (Ibragimova & Muratova, 2015; Podborsky, 2019; and Zamelyuk & Mahdysiuk, 2021). Special attention was paid to the techniques of isotherapy and dance movement therapy as the most accessible and effective methods of working with students with disabilities.

Table 1: Main Art Therapy Methods and Their Effects.

Art therapy method	Purpose of application	Effects
Isotherapy	Expression of emotions through artistic images	Reduction of anxiety, development of emotional stability, improvement of cognitive skills
Dance movement therapy	Relief of psycho-emotional tension, improvement of movement coordination	Improvement of movement coordination, increased confidence, development of social skills
Phototherapy	Development of self-expression and observation skills	Strengthening of confidence, improvement of communication skills, development of creative self-expression
Music therapy	Use of music to improve the emotional state	Reduction of stress levels, improvement of emotional stability, development of creative abilities
Sand therapy	Creation of models with sand to express emotions and experiences	Improvement of self-expression, development of cognitive and emotional skills, stress relief
Art pedagogy	Application of visual art for personal development	Development of creative and cognitive skills, strengthening of self-esteem and confidence
Literary therapy	Use of literary texts for understanding and expressing experiences	Development of reflective skills, deepening of emotional awareness, improvement of communication

Isotherapy allows students, as shown in Table 1, to express inner experiences through artistic images, contributing to a reduction in anxiety levels and the development of emotional stability. According to Feoktistova (2015), this method is especially effective when working with students who have speech and intellectual impairments. Art therapy, according to Zabara & Yakina (2017), contributes to the development of communication skills, the formation of



positive self-esteem, and reflective abilities. This is especially important for students with autism. Dance movement therapy, studied by Podborsky (2019), helps improve movement coordination and reduce the level of psycho-emotional tension in students with motor impairments.

Within the framework of the practical study, classes were conducted with students with disabilities aimed at developing their social, emotional, and cognitive skills. Each session was organized using an integrative approach that combined elements of isotherapy, dance movement therapy, and phototherapy.

At the first stage, students participated in isotherapy classes, where they were asked to create drawings reflecting their inner states and emotions. Materials such as finger paints, pastels, and watercolors were used. The main emphasis was placed on the creative process rather than on the result. The teacher gently guided the participants, helping them express their feelings through colors and forms. For example, students drew "their emotions" in the form of images of nature, such as the sun, rain, or trees. After the work was completed, the drawings were discussed, which contributed to the development of communication skills and understanding of their own emotions.

Dance movement classes were conducted with musical accompaniment, where students performed smooth, simple movements synchronized with the rhythm. These exercises were developed taking into account the individual characteristics of each child. Students learned to coordinate their movements, interact with each other in pairs and groups, and express their emotions through dance. For example, they depicted different states, such as joy or surprise, through movements of the hands, body, and steps. This form of work helped students relax, reduced their anxiety, and increased their self-confidence (Behas et al., 2019).

Phototherapy classes included the creation of photographs in which students depicted themselves, their families, or their favorite places. In one of the exercises, each participant was asked to choose an object that was especially dear to them and show it in a photograph. After the photo session, a discussion was held in which students shared their stories and emotions related to the selected objects. These classes helped develop self-expression skills and observation skills and strengthened a sense of confidence (Castro & Gould, 2018).

Throughout the entire course of classes, supporting techniques were used, such as discussing the results of work in a group and creating collective projects, for example, drawings or photo stories. Such activities contributed to group cohesion, improved interaction skills, and created

an atmosphere of acceptance and trust (Abilmazhinova et al., 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study showed changes in the indicators of social interaction, emotional stability, and cognitive skills, which were assessed through observations of participants in art therapy classes. The methodology used made it possible to identify the dynamics of development in these areas (Figures 1, 2, and 3).

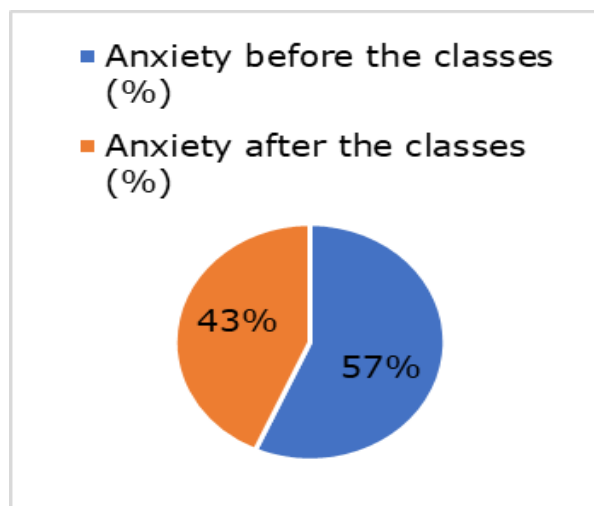


Figure 1: Changes in the Level of Anxiety.

can be seen from Figure 1, the indicators of social adaptation were distributed as follows: a high level of interaction with teachers and peers was observed in 80% of students, an average level in 15%, and a low level in only 5% of the subjects. High indicators testify to the formation of students' interaction skills, such as the ability to make contact, adequately express emotions, and maintain dialogue. This confirms the conclusions made by Savluchinskaya & Pavlova (2016) about the high effectiveness of art therapy for social adaptation.

Thus, it can be stated that the use of art therapy techniques, such as phototherapy, contributed to a significant improvement in social skills in the majority of participants. Based on the data of the emotional state assessment methodology, which makes it possible to diagnose the level of anxiety, the participants' results are presented in Figure 2. A high level of emotional stability was recorded in 70% of students, an average level in 20%, and a low level in 10%. Comparative analysis showed that the reduction in anxiety levels is associated with the active use of isotherapy and dance movement therapy.

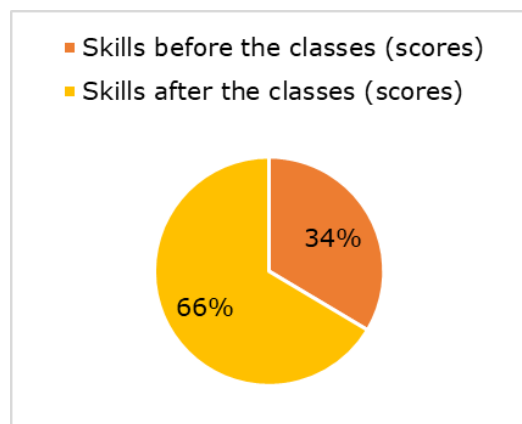


Figure 2: Improvement of Social Skills

High indicators of emotional stability in the majority of the subjects indicate the successful mastery of techniques of self-regulation and expression of emotions, which confirms the data of studies by Ibragimova & Muratova (2015).

The distribution of participants according to the level of cognitive skill development is presented in Figure 3. High indicators were noted in 60% of students, an average level in 30%, and only 10% of the subjects demonstrated a low level. Tasks that included drawing mandalas, creating crafts, and working with sand therapy made it possible to improve concentration and develop creative abilities in the majority of students. These data confirm the conclusions previously made by Feoktistova (2015) about the significant therapeutic and correctional potential of art therapy.

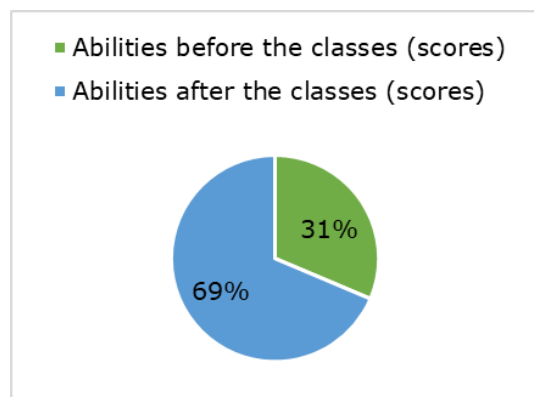


Figure 3: Development of Creative Abilities

The comparison of all indicators makes it possible to identify the following groups of subjects:

- Students with a high level of all the studied parameters – 65%;
- Students with moderate improvements – 25%;
- Students with insignificant changes – 10%.

Thus, it can be stated that art therapy is an effective tool for working with students with disabilities, ensuring their comprehensive development. These results support the need for further implementation of art therapy programs in educational institutions.

Studying the application of art therapy in correctional pedagogy in higher education, it is possible to note its high effectiveness and wide range of possibilities. The analysis of the conducted studies and practical classes shows that the integration of art therapy technologies contributes to the development of social, emotional, and cognitive skills in students with disabilities (Feen-Calligan & Matthews, 2016).

The application of isotherapy allowed the participants to express their emotions through artistic images, which contributed to a reduction in anxiety levels and the strengthening of emotional stability. This corresponds to the conclusions of Feoktistova (2015), who notes the therapeutic potential of isotherapy when working with students who have speech and intellectual impairments.

Dance movement therapy classes showed significant improvements in movement coordination and a reduction in psycho-emotional tension, which is confirmed by the studies of Podborsky (2019). The combination of motor exercises with musical accompaniment stimulated the development of self-regulation skills and increased self-confidence.

Phototherapy, in turn, contributed to the development of observation skills and self-expression, strengthening a sense of confidence and positively influencing students' self-esteem. This method proved to be especially effective for improving communication skills and forming positive relationships in the group (Gray et al., 2019).

The study data indicate significant progress among the participants in social adaptation. As can be seen from the analysis, 80% of students improved their communication skills by actively interacting with peers and teachers. This confirms the conclusions of Savluchinskaya & Pavlova (2016) about the high effectiveness of art therapy for social integration.

A reduction in anxiety levels was recorded in 70% of the participants. The active use of techniques such as isotherapy and dance movement therapy showed that creative activity and movement contribute to the harmonization of the emotional state, which is confirmed by the studies of (Ibragimova & Mikhalkhenkova et al., 2020; Ibragimova & Muratova, 2015).

The development of cognitive skills, including concentration and creative thinking, was noted in 60% of students. Such results were achieved through classes that included drawing mandalas, creating crafts, and working with

photographs. This approach also confirms Feoktistova's data (2015) on the correctional potential of art therapy.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of the final diagnostic assessment, in comparison with the results of the conducted experiments, showed positive changes in increasing the level of development of the components of cognitive activity and in mastering skills in various areas of artistic activity. After completing art therapy programs, students demonstrate positive dynamics in the development of visual memory, visual perception, imagination, logical thinking, speech expression, and motor response. Despite the successes achieved, there remain areas that require further study. For example, it is necessary to develop adapted methods for using art therapy in the system of training correctional specialists, as well as to study its long-term influence on the socialization and professional adaptation of students with disabilities.

The practical significance of the conducted study lies in the fact that the work analyzes and systematizes material on the problems of using art therapy tools in direct work with students. The data obtained in the course of the study can be applied in pedagogy, psychology, medicine, as well as in special guidelines on psychological health, by psychotherapists who engage in art therapy and are recognized as independent practitioners contributing not only to the treatment process but also to the study of personality.

Thus, art therapy in correctional pedagogy in higher education demonstrates its significance as an innovative approach that makes it possible to increase the effectiveness of the educational process and the social integration of students with disabilities. However, further theoretical development and practical adaptation of methods are necessary for its wider application.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest