

The project “Colour Made Inclusive” as an example of creative education for youths

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ABSTRACT:

The purpose of this study is to present the program of working with socially maladjusted youngsters, which is tailored to the special needs of youths in one of the residential childcare institutions. The theoretical background of the program under discussion is based on cognitive-behavioral theory. The example in question consisted of several different types of classes including art classes and psychological support. Using qualitative methods, semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data as this study analyzed the participants' changes in their behavior. The most significant results of this study are the following conclusions: 1. the new programs of working with youths based on the cognitive behavioral theory (CBT) concept are necessary for the effective social rehabilitation process and restore these young people to society, 2. social rehabilitation institutions for young people should provide them with the possibilities of changing their behavior in the society as in the example presented in this paper.

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cognitive-behavioral theory, social rehabilitation process.

INTRODUCTION

This article describes the example of a new program, an element of the model of social work with teenagers, as a project called *Colour Made Inclusive*. This program was run in the Youth Educational Centre in Poland. This center is an educational and therapeutic institution for socially maladjusted students, placed in such institutions by the court decision. The pupils with special educational needs, requiring specialized interventions and therapy, and exhibiting behavioral and emotional disorders, are aged between 12 and 18. By social work, the author means: empowering, activities based on interpersonal relations and cooperation with the social environment. The above-mentioned project is based on [...] the concept of creative resocialization understood as the construction of a higher level of relations of the personal structures of the socially maladjusted linked to the concept of 'I' as the integrator of these structures. This idea is strictly connected with a cognitive and behavioral theory that has been broadly researched and firmly supported by evidence (Sheldon, 2011).

METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH

General Background of Research

In brief, the main theoretical assumptions of the CBT model are: (1). the cognitive perspective of a human being and their personality which collects information about the world, including the information about one's self and others, (2). each person behaves in accordance with his or her thoughts, so a cognitive change is the beginning of behavioral change, (3). the main and most important sources of information for each person are new experiences, situations, and tasks. CBT empowers people to use the empirical approach for themselves; to test for evidence against their long-held beliefs and assumptions rather than simply accept them as true. Therefore, this model advocates that dysfunctional thinking is common to all psychological disturbances (Beck, 2011). CBT has been extensively tested since the outcome of the first study was published in 1977. Thus, there are numerous descriptions of research based on that theoretical background. One such example is the application of CTB to obsessive-compulsive disorder (Clark, 2004).

Table 1. The project participants

ordinal number	first name	age	family town	the period of staying*	hobbies	strong points of the boy
1.	Julian	16	Sopot	3	history, technology	high level of personal culture, well self-organised, cheerful, wide knowledge of history
2.	Jakub	17	Giżycko	4	drawing, rap music, computer games	good at languages (German, English), good communication skills
3.	Tomasz	16	Grudziądz	5	sport – football reading books	cheerful, good pupil, active person, takes his duties very seriously
4.	Jakub	16	Kamieniec	8	sport – football history automotive	calm and balanced. non-confrontational, good pupil, helpful
5.	Sebastian	17	Tczew	9	automotive sport	general wide knowledge, conscientious young man, can cooperate with others
6.	Michał	15	Gdańsk	10	cooking, volleyball	calm, ready to cooperate, likes new things and situations
7.	Paweł	16	Elbląg	11	football volleyball	talented in drawing. ready to cooperate, easily finds new friends, optimistic
8.	Krystian	16	Działdowo	12	sports drawing car mechanics	talented in drawing and art, ready to help. calm and optimistic, conscientious young man.

source: author's collection

* the length of stay in the centre (in months)

The meta-analysis by Lipsey, Landenberger, and Wilson (Lipsey et al., 2007) confirmed the findings of positive CBT effects on the recidivism of offenders. The research presented by J. Walsh indicates that social phobia can be overcome with cognitive learning and behavioral interventions (Walsh, 2002). CBT is also a well-established treatment for anxiety disorders in children and adolescents. Meta-analyses have shown that approximately 60% of youth recover from their anxiety disorders and experience significant symptom reduction following treatment (James et al., 2013, Warwick et al., 2017). Kodal and colleagues (2018) demonstrate in their study the long-term effectiveness of CBT for mixed anxiety

disorders in youth. These findings encourage the wider use and implementation of CBT in community mental health clinics.

Sample of Research

This program aims to present potential directions for changes in social-rehabilitation work and suggestions for activities that can lead to them. This type of conducted research was the evaluation research which looked at the merit of social programs. Understanding the value of rehabilitative methods in residential child care can help to determine which methods are more efficient in working with juvenile delinquents and their families. The rehabil-

Table 3. The schedule of activities

number of hours	The description of activities
12	The organizational classes (three meetings): preparation, presentation of ideas and graphic designs drawing their own project by each participant creation of a Hip-Hop song sang for the first time in the professional studio of Radio Malbork by the boys the song to be broadcast in the Radio Malbork station soon. Team - building activities organised by the tutor
4	The art classes nr 1: drawing a graphic design on the canvas by each participant focus on the character as the main idea providing the image from the projector giving each participant enough time to make a reflection as a preparation for painting.
4	The art classes nr 2: painting figures using acrylic paints, discussion about the art work, description of the participants' emotions connected with it.
4	The art classes nr 3: continuation of the portrait painting by all participants offering instructor assistance to those who need more time,
6	The art and photography classes nr 4: preparation for the photo session. taking professional photos of participants. presentation of these photos during the display session (vernissage) giving the participants the opportunity to watch the photos, comment on them as well as to present their art work and discuss their feelings connected with it.
4	The art and photography classes nr 5: creation of a final background preparation of a template on canvas and painting it over
4	The art and photography classes nr 6: completion of images by the participants Sending images to an advertising agency to be printed in large formats, about 2.5 m x 1.5 m.
4	Exhibition exhibition of the pictures painted by the boys in the public place: The Centre of Culture and Education in Malbork for two weeks.
psychological support (individual and group)	
the additional classes 8 plus individual support 10 hours per each participant	explaining what human motivation is and what kind of factors determine it empowering the participants regularly identifying and caring for participants' potential considering the importance of being recruited for the program giving the strategies of coping with difficulties training participants how to give the feedback

source: author's collection

itative methods that were examined in this inquiry were therapeutic ones and included art classes, group sessions as well as psychological support. The participants were chosen purposefully and participated in this study voluntarily. These methods, as mentioned earlier, are based on cognitive-behavioral theory. Table 1 shows the participants of the research group while table 2 demonstrates the schedule of activities and tasks for participants.

All these boys came into the juvenile justice system with an array of problems that had caused them to commit delinquent acts. These adolescents have been residing in the Youth Educational Centre in Poland from 3 to 12 months. In Poland, this kind of institution cooperates strictly with the Court which makes the ruling. Then, a juvenile is sent to one of these institutions. In June 2022, there were 92 Youth Educational Centers in Poland, including 54 centers for boys. The majority of them are state-run institutions.

The description of the activities in the program is presented in the table below. This program lasted for 6 months, approximately 2-3 hours a week. Additionally, it was important to carry out this program outside the institution, in society (open environment).

Instrument and Procedures

Qualitative methods were used in the presented research. Qualitative research is the most suitable for studying contexts of the social rehabilitation process. "[...]qualitative research helps people to understand the world, their culture, and its institutions. The qualitative methodology can provide knowledge that targets societal issues, questions, or problems and therefore serves humankind" (Tracy, 2019, p. 4-8).

The main purpose of this inquiry is to examine the example rehabilitative program (Colour Made Inclusive) which can assist juveniles in re-entering mainstream society. The following research questions underlined this inquiry:

1. How do juveniles adjust to their lives and cope with the consequences of their actions before and after this project?
2. How do they describe their new experience – the task in the project?
3. What kind of changes can they identify in their behavior on completion of the project?

The research goals can be defined as first, the description of particular tasks, second, presenting the new model of work with socially maladjusted, and finally, its effectiveness.

The semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data: research number 1 – before the program started

and research number 2 – after its completion. The total number of interviews was 16, eight before the program and eight after it. The participants were also observed in situations where they did the artwork at their own pace.

Answering the following questions, in the form of a structured interview, has become the basis for analysis and conclusions:

1. What do you usually do in your free time? How and with whom do you spend your time after school? What are your interests and hobbies?
2. What strengths can you identify in yourself? How do you evaluate your effectiveness?
3. What weaknesses can you identify? Do you sometimes feel inferior to other teenagers?
4. How often do you participate in social activities?
5. How often do you withdraw from peer and/ or adult contact?
6. Are you able to initiate or maintain relationships or are you reluctant to do so? How do you assess yourself as a member of a social group?
7. How often do you choose individual activities or does someone make you do things individually?
8. What are your usual emotions? Are they appropriate or distorted in your opinion?
9. What emotions you can recognize in others?
10. How do you accept responsibility for your behavior or how often do you project blame on others?
11. How often do you worry or are preoccupied with unjustified doubts about the loyalty or trustworthiness of your friends?
12. How do you assess the control of your behavior? How much is your behavior strictly connected with your thoughts?

One extra question was added in research number 2: What kind of changes can you identify in your behavior? What new did you learn about yourself? [...] While all interviews are used to get to know the interviewee better, the purpose of that knowledge varies according to the research question and the disciplinary perspective of the research (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Hence, in the presented research a priori hypotheses were not tested although a very structured interviewing format was used, in which the stimulus (questions) and analysis were standardized. Qualitative data analysis concurred with data collection so that investigators could gain a gradual understanding of research questions, which in turn informed both the sampling and the questions asked. This process of data collection and analysis eventually leads to a point where no new categories or themes emerge. This is referred to as saturation, signaling that data collection

is complete (Bleakley, 2005). The analysis was based on the grounded theory elements (Charmaz, 2008). The methods for recording interviews for documentation and later analysis included audiotape recording and note-taking.

Ethical considerations

The author of this article carefully followed the ethical principles and guidelines of the University of Gdansk, Poland. The researcher obtained the informed consent of all participants in the study and their caregivers. Each participant was informed that he had the option of withdrawing from the study at any time.

RESULTS OF RESEARCH

The purpose of this analysis, discussion of the literature, and presentation of the project framework mentioned in the sections above in this article are to obtain a deeper understanding of the example rehabilitation method. Many young offenders are also victims with complex needs, requiring public health assistance, which requires a balance of welfare and justice system models. However, around the world, there are variable and inadequate legal frameworks and a lack of specialist workforce (Young et al., 2017). For this reason, studies such as those presented in this article are extremely important for practice.

This section presents summaries of the research findings, conclusions, and recommendations based on the specific objectives of the study.

The presentation is divided into three parts relating to the research problems. It has been presented as follows:

Research number 1 and 2 – the changes in youths' behavior

One important comment should be highlighted that it is not possible to assess the effectiveness of a single task in the social rehabilitation process. This is also the case in the discussed research, which analyzes the program consisting of many tasks (see table 2). The program Colour Made Inclusive is part of the whole program of social rehabilitation in Youth Educational Centres. There are two possible options for youths' development, one prosocial and the other one, antisocial interaction. These interactions would shape the youth's involvement in activities, social bonds, and moral beliefs. If kids could be directed early in life into prosocial activities, they would likely develop prosocial bounds and prosocial attitudes to the environment (Farrington, 2011). In order to keep on a prosocial pathway, the participants had to find the

experience rewarding, that is they had to be positively reinforced. To receive reinforcement, they needed the appropriate skills for communication and interaction. Consequently, the participants took part in several sessions with a psychologist: individual and group ones (see table 2) to enhance their social and emotional skills, including communication, problem-solving, conflict resolution, and learning to resist the temptation to misconduct. This was accomplished through a cognitive and social skills curriculum. It was essential to find something in each participant that they were good at, something which gave them the advantage over the others, such as strength, courage, determination, endurance, patience, agility, or even artistic talent. It is evident from the participants' replies that their level of self-esteem has increased considerably. Before the program, they were not active members of a community, unable to actively participate in group work or organize anything for themselves and others. We can look at the example answers (obtained in the interview- pretest) (Jakub, 16): "I did not want to do anything, especially anything new because I thought I could not do anything, I considered myself an inferior person to other teenagers", (Michał, 15): "I did not know how to do something in a group, so I thought that I would not be able to do something well. I used to hear from my teachers from my previous school that I was useless, so I behaved accordingly". The analysis of the participants' answers to questions 1 – 4 in the structured interview seems to demonstrate numerous assumptions. First, they could not identify their strengths and they were not able to find them in themselves, secondly – they described themselves as inferior to their peers, thirdly – they could not talk about their interests and free time activities even though most of them did not attend school so they had plenty of free time.

Their stay in the center and participation in the project Malbork Made Inclusive has helped them to develop the following skills:

- ✓ Forming open questions to the others
- ✓ identifying and describing their feelings
- ✓ controlling their behavior (in more effective ways than before)
- ✓ feeling comfortable (safety) in a group
- ✓ self-monitoring, directing, and regulating their actions
- ✓ understanding other people's behavior, especially of their peers.

In addition, one more conclusion can be highlighted: this experience has had a great impact on the participants' self-concepts and their self-esteem. However,

"this experience does not guarantee that they like themselves constantly. In fact, their increasing accuracy in understanding themselves permits them to see themselves fully – warts and all. It is what they do with these perceptions that lead adolescents to develop a sense of their self-esteem" (Feldman, 2018).

The project – the new experience and its value for youths' psychosocial development

The project in question allows presenting specific activities realized during the process of social rehabilitation of juveniles in the environment in which those activities are performed along with other circumstances and educational facts that accompany the process.

As a consequence of the above-mentioned activities, the participants have gained considerable experience, which according to cognitive psychology, is crucial for personal development. Additionally, this experience is a source of self-knowledge and therefore is strictly connected with building their self-esteem. All the boys underlined the personal value of positive feedback received during the program. In the beginning, it was not an easy experience for them. Some of the participants told the researcher that they had not taken the opinion seriously.

(Julian, aged 16): "I was sure that my teachers provided positive information about my activities because it was part of this program. It took me some time to understand that". The same participant underlined that: "... after getting some disapproving comments on my behavior and activity during the classes I finally got the point. The individual meetings with the psychologist helped me a lot with that". The project under discussion aimed at modifying participants' old core beliefs and developing new ones. "Core beliefs are typically placed into three categories: helplessness, worthlessness, and unlovability" (Beck, 2011, p. 232). "As would be expected, sometimes clients have negative core beliefs that fall into one category, while others have such that fall into multiple categories. In addition to these three categories, core beliefs are typically expressed through at least one of three lenses: self, other people, and the world" (Volungis, 2018, p. 210). It is important to note that the CBT theoretical approach recognizes the fundamental significance of early childhood experience.

As the participants began to change their behavior, it could be noticed that their original negative core beliefs started to weaken while their new ones became stronger. The completed tasks have helped the participants to identify, evaluate and modify their negative automatic thoughts and corresponding behavior. Julian (16) "I have

started thinking about my thinking, I had never done it before because, in my opinion, it was ridiculous. Now, I am convinced it can prevent me from doing something wrong". All the participants emphasized that they understood the connection between their thoughts and behavior. Julian (16) went on to describe his feelings about this new experience: "It was something amazing and wonderful, I felt comfortable even though I had made a mistake, I liked the art classes. I have to admit I am proud of my activity during the project, I can tell myself: you can be good at something".

Sense of control and effectiveness

Developmental psychology indicates that the early stages of one's life are extremely important for self-control and self-confidence, and the participants, as was mentioned earlier in this article, have significant deficiencies in them. The project under discussion promoted a positive behavioral transition among the participants. They could learn from each other moreover, it might be said that they could have followed each other. This type of experience has a considerable impact on teenagers. "Peers become more important in adolescence for several reasons. For one thing, they provide each other with the opportunity to compare and evaluate opinions, abilities, and even physical changes – a process called the social comparison" (Feldman, 2018, p. 410-411). One of the participants, Krystian (16) mentioned: "I used to feel very well when one of my colleagues told me: your picture was really good, well done! Of course, the teachers repeatedly told us that but from another participant, it would be something really great and important". The participants were encouraged to give feedback to each other. This is one way they could develop their independence and sense of control. Youths seek autonomy as it is essential for their psychological development to get a sense of control over their lives. However, the participants did not receive only positive feedback about their artwork and their behavior. Some participants reported not having good feelings about working in the group. Michał (15) describes this kind of situation as a "horrible one", "at the beginning of the program I really wanted to give up, I almost lost my motivation to do anything after hearing a negative comment from one of the boys". The participants were still in their transition. The transition has not been completed yet but a few important changes, mentioned above, could be observed. Psychological support and individual treatment were the most important factors determining the participants' transition.

DISCUSSION

Many difficulties linked to delinquency are rooted in earlier childhood, making it critical for researchers to investigate a multi-developmental time. In reviewing key risk prevention and intervention programs for children and adolescents, this article differentiates between childhood and adolescent life stages (Mallet & Tedor, 2019). This way of working with socially maladjusted young people is challenging but effective as well. One of the strong points of this project is social-emotional education which focuses on the behavioral needs of the participants, monitoring their engagement, and developing skills to avoid escalating conflicts between one another. These project efforts not only encourage the participants to be better to themselves and to others, but also to develop emotional interventions, build their skills to recognize and manage their emotions and establish positive relationships. This project has had a significant impact on building youths' social and emotional skills, and reducing aggression and behavior problems. The components of the program under discussion (see table 2) such as mentoring, group discussion, individual psychological support, and art classes were found to be effective as the majority of youths' statements testify. Examples of similar programs can be found in the following authors' publications (Losen et al., 2014; Skiba et al., 2014; Berkowitz & Bier, 2005; Person et al., 2009). There are just a few programs which are strictly addressed socially maladjusted young people in residential child care.

Positive behavioral protocols – this is another element that can be identified in the project under discussion (Jolivet et al., 2019). Typically, these programs use

student (or other) leaders to engage students in daily or weekly social skill-building exercises, including interactive activities designed for improving anger management, conflict resolution, and social skills (Mallet & Tedor, 2019). The innovativeness of this project should be highlighted. It involves different kinds of methods in the social rehabilitation process which can bring youths back to society.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that this kind of program has a definite positive effect on pupils' psychosocial functioning. It is worth noting the importance and role of these specific activities in strengthening their potential and self-esteem. All respondents reported that participation in the program under discussion was an important and positive experience in their lives. The youngsters were able to get feedback from others which helped them build their self-efficiency. Conclusions from the presented study unequivocally indicate that it is essential to organize such programs in the process of young people's social rehabilitation and extend their scope in the future.

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