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# Formation of leadership qualities among students using art therapy

**Abstract.** The research relevance is determined by the growing need to develop emotionally mature and responsible leaders who can effectively manage teams and make decisions in the current-day fast-paced world. Modern challenges require future professionals to possess not only technical knowledge but also a high level of emotional intelligence, creativity and teamwork. The study aimed to determine how art therapy can contribute to the development of these leadership aspects in the student audience and how it can be effectively integrated into the educational process. Methods of theoretical analysis, synthesis, generalisation and systematisation of scientific literature related to art therapy and leadership qualities were used in the study. The main results of the study demonstrated that art therapy is effective in raising emotional awareness among students. During classes on self-expression through art, students learned to better understand personal emotions and recognise their impact on decision-making, which directly improved their leadership skills. Furthermore, art therapy sessions helped students learn how to regulate emotional reactions through the creative process, which reduced stress and developed emotional resilience. Another important result was the improvement of communication skills and the ability to collaborate, as group art therapy tasks encouraged students to interact with each other, discuss their efforts and develop empathy. Art therapy was also substantial in the development of creative thinking, which helped students approach complex problems in a non-standard way and look for innovative solutions, which is important for leaders in the modern world. The practical significance of this study is determined by the promotion of the integration of art therapy into the curricula of various specialities to promote the development of emotional maturity and leadership skills

**Keywords:** social skills; group dynamics; empathy; interactive methods; personal growth

## INTRODUCTION

Modern society is facing new challenges that require future leaders to have not only managerial and organisational skills but also a high level of emotional competence, creativity and self-expression. The development of these qualities is becoming a priority in education, particularly among students preparing for future professional activities. Art therapy, as an innovative method of influencing the individual, is gaining popularity among educational and psychological institutions. It not only promotes the development of creativity and emotional expression but also helps to develop important social and leadership qualities that

are relevant in modern conditions. However, despite the potential benefits of art therapy, its role in developing students' leadership skills remains insufficiently studied.

One of the key issues in this context is the determination of the effectiveness of art therapy methods in developing leadership skills such as communication, decision-making, creative thinking and emotion management. The answer to the question is even more relevant in the context of traditional approaches to education, which may not provide a comprehensive development of these qualities. The research relevance is determined by modern

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students, as future leaders, facing new requirements of cultural sensitivity and adaptability in an uncertain environment. Recent studies confirm the significant role of artistic approaches in developing students' leadership skills. B. Wahrudin (2024) noted that the use of art therapy methods in education contributes to the development of creativity, which is an important component for future leaders. Involving students in creative tasks not only formed new ideas but also improved efficiency in solving problems, which developed initiative and responsible decision-making.

In contrast, the study by H. Leigh (2021) analysed pedagogical practices in art therapy that promote the development of emotional intelligence and communication skills. The use of specific approaches to learning through art improved emotional awareness and interaction with others among students. This is the basis for developing leadership skills, as emotional competence is crucial to leadership. An original approach to leadership through the arts was proposed by B. Sandberg *et al.* (2023), who defined it as a dance. The study demonstrated that art therapy stimulated the development of empathy and social skills, which helped students in leading teams. Thanks to these methods, leaders were able to better understand the needs of others and interact more effectively with them.

S. Holtham & M. Biagioli (2021) emphasised the importance of innovative approaches to learning, including the hybridisation of artistic and leadership practices. They concluded that the introduction of art therapy into leadership development programmes increases students' ability to think critically and make decisions, which are integral components of successful leadership. In turn, G.J. Puccio *et al.* (2020) emphasised how teamwork in art therapy sessions contributes to the creativity and effectiveness of leaders. The study proved that creative tasks in groups develop the ability to make collective decisions and leadership, which makes artistic approaches important in educational programmes for training future leaders.

A book by N.W. Brown (2023) described practical examples of creativity in group therapy that contribute towards the development of social skills and teamwork. These skills are critical for leaders as they can effectively communicate and collaborate with others. In contrast, L. Jackson (2020) highlighted the concept of cultural humility in art therapy, which helps therapists and their clients to better understand and respect cultural differences. This is especially important in the context of leadership, where the ability to accommodate diversity and create an inclusive environment are key success factors. With the development of technology, art therapy is also becoming a part of the digital world. A. Zubala *et al.* (2021) conducted an integrative review of the current practice of art therapy in the digital environment and possible directions for the development of this field. The use of digital technologies in art therapy creates new opportunities for creative expression and leadership development in distance learning. S.A. Malchiodi (2020) studied the impact of traumatic experiences on a person and the role of art therapy in the healing process.

The author emphasised that by art, it is possible to not only express emotions but also process them, which is beneficial for the development of emotional resilience, a requisite quality for leaders. A systematic review by M. De Witte *et al.* (2021) analysed therapeutic factors and mechanisms of change in creative therapies. Their study emphasises that the use of creative approaches in therapy can promote significant personal change, including the development of leadership skills.

The aforementioned studies insufficiently addressed practical approaches to the integration of art therapy into the educational process for the purposeful development of leadership skills among students. A lack of specific examples of art therapy methods used to develop such qualities as initiative, responsibility and decision-making skills in the context of leadership is also evident. The study aimed to analyse how the use of art therapy can contribute to the development of important management skills in students. The objective was to identify specific art therapy approaches that can effectively influence the development of such key competencies as emotional maturity, creative thinking, communication skills and self-control.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The first step was to conduct a detailed literature review to collect the necessary information and determine the state of research in this area. The selection of scientific literature for analysis was based on several criteria. Firstly, sources were required to be based on scientific evidence, confirmed by publications in established databases such as Scopus, Web of Science and others. The choice of literature was also based on the relevance to the research topic, i.e. the sources had to be related to both art therapy and leadership development. The search for the necessary literature was conducted using the following keywords: "art therapy", "leadership development", "emotional intelligence", "communication skills", "student leadership", "creativity in leadership", "group dynamics", "initiative in leadership". Studies that address the impact of art therapy on emotional and social development were also covered, as these aspects are directly related to the formation of leadership skills.

Scopus, Web of Science, ResearchGate, and Google Scholar were the main databases used to search for scientific articles, which was used to attract a wide range of relevant research. The choice of these databases is determined by their credibility and the large number of scientific publications related to the topic under study. The criteria for selecting the sources were the availability of peer-reviewed publications, modernity (publication date no earlier than 2020), and a focus on art therapy and leadership research. The next stage of the study was a systematisation of the information obtained and its detailed structuring by key leadership components: emotional intelligence, creative thinking, communication skills and self-regulation. This identified how different art therapy methods contribute to the development of each of these skills and was also used to compare their effectiveness in different educational

programme settings. In particular, the study analysed how creative approaches to student education can improve decision-making, teamwork, and emotional resilience. This approach described the impact of art therapy on leadership development in greater detail and laid the foundation for further research.

The impact of different art therapy methods, such as drawing, music, sculpture and drama practices, was analysed. The study of these methods identified changes that occur in students during art therapy. The benefits of each method were studied in the context of developing certain aspects of leadership, including emotional maturity, creative expression, and the ability to collaborate. The effect of different types of art on the development of personal qualities and psychosocial skills was determined.

At the final stage, a comparative analysis of the collected data was conducted, which concluded on the effectiveness of art therapy for leadership development. The analysis included an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of different art therapy approaches, their relevance to achieving the goals set, and their adaptability in different cultural and social contexts. This was used to identify the most effective approaches for different groups of students and draw relevant conclusions on the use of these approaches in educational programmes.

## RESULTS

Leadership is the process of influencing others to achieve a common goal, including the ability to inspire, motivate and direct the actions of members of a group or organisation. It is based not only on managerial skills but also on emotional competence, empathy and the ability to communicate effectively, addressing the individual needs and motivations of other participants in the process (Northouse, 2021). Art therapy, using creative processes such as drawing, sculpting, or music, helps people explore feelings and develop emotional competence. Through artistic expression, participants can gain a deeper understanding of personal emotions and conflicts, thereby rendering art therapy valuable not only for personal growth but also for developing the qualities necessary for effective leadership.

First, art therapy sessions raised emotional awareness. During sessions focused on self-expression through art, students could explore personal feelings and creatively express them. This provided a greater understanding of personal emotions, which previously could have remained unnoticed or suppressed. The use of artistic materials such as paint, clay or music created a safe space for experimenting with emotions, where students could freely express their feelings without fear of judgment. As a result, students were more aware of personal emotional states and identified the triggering events. One example of this awareness was the identification of anxiety and fear by students during creative tasks. Instead of avoiding these feelings, students could face these feelings through artistic expression (Beerse *et al.*, 2020). Hence, students not only identified personal emotions but also gained a better understanding

of personal nature. The growth of emotional awareness contributed to the development of the ability to separate emotional reactions from rational decisions, which is an important aspect of effective leadership.

Another important aspect of the changes was the improvement of the ability to regulate emotional reactions. During the art therapy sessions (namely drawing), students learned to use creative methods to release tension and manage stress. Instead of resorting to negative emotions such as anger or frustration, students found ways to express these feelings through art. This not only reduced emotional intensity, but also offered constructive ways to process them. For instance, during drawing classes, students could transfer their negative emotions to paper, creating paintings that reflected their inner state (Gladding, 2021). This process relieved emotional tension and provided peace of mind. This practice not only improved emotion management, but also contributed to the development of emotional resilience. Students learnt not to avoid emotional challenges but to find ways to process them, which is crucial for effective leadership, especially in times of stress or conflict. They acquired skills that helped them to better cope with emotional challenges while maintaining productivity and concentration on tasks.

In addition, art therapy contributed to the development of empathy among the participants. During the group sessions, students could discuss their artwork and share the emotions behind the creations. As such, participants could perceive the world from a different standpoint and experience the feelings and emotions of their classmates. Hence, students developed the ability to treat others with understanding and compassion. This experience contributed to the development of empathy, which is a key component of emotional intelligence and an important element of leadership. Art therapy is a substantial method for the development of creativity and imagination, especially among students seeking self-expression and innovative thinking. The use of art as a therapeutic technique enables participants to discover new horizons of personal capabilities and develop unconventional thinking, which is critical in the modern dynamic world. Different art therapy practices create a unique environment where students can experiment with different forms of expression without fear of making mistakes or being judged, which helps to develop their creative confidence.

One of the key aspects of art therapy is the creation of a safe space for self-expression. Contrary to traditional teaching methods, which can limit the creative process with clear rules or expectations, art therapy provides students with the freedom to use any medium and technique that corresponds to feelings. For instance, during an art therapy session, students can choose from a wide range of materials – from paints and pastels to clay and textiles – to create an artwork. This freedom of choice encourages participants to experiment with new forms of expression, which helps foster creative thinking. Students who may not have previously considered themselves creative discover

new talents and abilities, which contribute to their personal and professional growth.

Art therapy also promotes creativity through stimulating imagination (Table 1). By performing creative tasks, students move beyond conventional thinking patterns, which helps develop the perception of new possibilities and solutions to problems. For instance, during an art therapy session, students may be asked to create an abstract

painting that reflects personal emotions or moods. This process forces unconventional thinking on how to convey abstract concepts through specific shapes and colours, which requires the development of creative imagination. Such tasks not only contribute to the development of artistic skills but also help participants to develop the ability to think abstractly, which is important for solving complex problems in any field of activity.

**Table 1.** The impact of art therapy on the development of creative abilities and creativity among students

The direction of influence of art therapy	Description of the impact	Examples of effects
Creation of a safe space	Provides freedom for creative expression	Students experiment with different materials (paints, clay, textiles)
Stimulation of imagination	Encourages the use of imagination to create new images	Abstract drawing tasks help develop abstract thinking
Reflection and introspection	Promotes a deeper understanding of your own emotions and thoughts	Discussion of created works helps analyse creative solutions
Development of cooperation	Promotes interaction and exchange of ideas among participants	Group projects, such as collage making, improve teamwork skills
Overcoming creative barriers	Reduces the fear of failure and mistakes	The value of the creative process, not just the result, is emphasised
Use of metaphors and symbols	Can be used to express complex ideas and feelings	The use of symbols (e.g. a tree to express difficulties) develops associative thinking.

**Source:** developed by the author based on J. Jue & J.H. Ha (2020)

Furthermore, art therapy helps students develop creativity through reflection and introspection. After creating an artwork, participants are often invited to discuss the creations, which allows them to gain a broader understanding of personal emotions and thoughts. This discussion helps to develop the ability to self-reflect, which is an important aspect of the creative process. Students learn to analyse their creative decisions, understand what influenced their choices, and find new ways to express their ideas. This practice helps to develop critical thinking and the ability to see connections between different aspects of their experience, which is the basis for creativity.

Notably, art therapy also helps overcome creative barriers and fear of failure. Often students are afraid of experimenting and subsequent failure by doing an “imperfect” job. With Art therapy, students can overcome these limitations by emphasising the value of the process rather than the result. The therapy helps participants understand that creativity is not about perfection but about self-expression and exploring new possibilities. Finally, art therapy fosters creativity using metaphors and symbols, allowing students to express complex ideas and feelings that are difficult to put into words. It helps develop associative thinking and the creation of new concepts, which is crucial for innovative thinking.

Art therapy has proven to be effective in improving the communication skills of students, which is an important aspect of their personal and professional development. Communicating and interacting with others are key skills that are necessary for successful leadership and collaboration in any environment. These changes can be perceived through increased emotional expressiveness, improved listening skills, enhanced ability to collaborate and

stronger interpersonal relationships. One of the key changes observed after the art therapy sessions is an increase in students’ emotional expression. With art therapy, participants can express emotions through artistic means such as drawing, sculpting or music. This process helps students become more aware of personal feelings and discover new ways of expression, which directly affects the efficiency of communication. This can be achieved through art therapy techniques such as creating paintings that reflect their inner state or writing poetry that expresses their emotions. As a result, students became less withdrawn and fearful, allowing them to interact better with others.

Improved ability to cooperate is another important aspect of the changes observed after art therapy. In the process of performing creative tasks in groups, students are forced to cooperate to achieve a common goal. This can be the creation of a collaborative collage, a group performance, or the development of a large art project (Varii *et al.*, 2020). Such tasks require participants to communicate, coordinate actions and accept the opinions of others. During such activities, students learn to find compromises and distribute roles and responsibilities, which contributes to the development of their ability to work as a team. For instance, during the creation of a joint installation, students had to discuss and agree on their ideas, which helped them to better understand the importance of cooperation and mutual respect.

Thus, the strengthening of relationships is another significant outcome of art therapy. During the creative process, students can collaborate on projects, and share their thoughts and feelings, which helps build trust and support in the group. This is particularly relevant for students who may experience social isolation or communication difficulties. Art therapy helps to create a sense of community and

belonging in the group, which contributes to the development of deeper and more meaningful relationships. Participants in art therapy groups have noted becoming closer to each other and better understanding their classmates. This has a positive effect on the atmosphere in the study groups and helps to create a supportive environment. In addition, art therapy helps develop confidence in personal communication skills. Participants in art therapy sessions are often forced to step out of their comfort zone by expressing their ideas and opinions in front of others. This helps overcome the fear of public speaking and communication in general. Students who may have previously felt insecure or afraid of communication can practice these skills in a safe and supportive environment. As a result, they become more confident in their ability to communicate and interact with others, which is important for personal and professional development.

Student life is often accompanied by challenges that require young people to exercise self-control and effectively manage stress. By offering unique means of self-expression, art therapy helps students develop these critical skills that allow them to maintain emotional balance and effectively cope with stressful situations. Research shows that art therapy can be effective in reducing cortisol levels. One study conducted among students determined that participation in art therapy sessions for several weeks resulted in a significant decrease in blood cortisol levels (Beerse *et al.*, 2020). This confirms that the creative process has a calming effect and can be used for stress management. Through regular art therapy sessions, students can learn how to manage their stress and avoid its accumulation, which is important for maintaining mental health.

Art therapy can also train students in effective relaxation and stress management techniques that they can use in their daily lives. For instance, during art therapy sessions, students may be introduced to techniques such as meditative drawing or collaboration on a mandala. Providing focus and peace of mind. By practising these techniques, students learn to focus on the present moment and release negative thoughts, which is essential for managing stress. Group art therapy sessions can also help develop coping skills through social support and interaction. By collaborating on creative projects together, students can share experiences and support each other in difficult situations. This creates a sense of community and safety, which helps reduce stress levels. In group art therapy, students can discuss their problems and challenges, receiving support and advice from their fellow students. This interaction helps them feel that they are not alone in their experiences and find new ways to cope with stress.

An important aspect of art therapy is also the development of patience and the ability to accept the process as part of self-control. The artistic process often requires time and effort to achieve the desired result. Through art therapy, students learn patience and the recognition that results are not always immediate. This helps develop the ability to control impulsive reactions and understand the

importance of consistency in achieving goals. Completing a challenging art project can require extensive trial and error, which teaches students not to give up and to keep working towards their goals. Art therapy is not only a method of personal development and emotional healing but also a substantial technique for building key leadership qualities such as responsibility, initiative and decision-making. These qualities are critical for future leaders who seek to effectively manage teams, make informed decisions and inspire others to achieve common goals. Participation in art therapy classes allows students to develop these qualities through practical experience of self-expression, reflection and interaction.

First, art therapy promotes responsibility through creative projects that require students to be independent and self-controlled. During art therapy sessions, students are often tasked with the creation of personal artwork or collaboration. This requires responsibility for personal actions and results. Art therapy also promotes the development of initiative, which is another important leadership quality. The creative process encourages students to express themselves and experiment, which helps develop the initiation of new ideas and projects. For instance, in the process of a creative assignment, students may be invited to create something new that has not been predefined by the instructions (Drinkwater & Waghid, 2024). This encourages unconventional thinking and initiative in offering ideas. In one study that examined the impact of art therapy on the development of initiative among students, it was found that participants became more open to new ideas and ready to take responsibility for their implementation. They began to propose their ideas more actively in study and work groups, which indicates an increase in their initiative.

An important part of leadership is decision-making, and art therapy is instrumental in developing this skill. The creative process requires participants to make numerous decisions, from choosing materials and techniques to determining composition and colour. This experience helps students develop the ability to analyse and evaluate situations, make decisions and take responsibility for their consequences. For instance, during an art therapy session, students may be tasked with creating a piece that reflects a particular theme or concept. This requires decisions on how best to communicate their ideas through art. In the process, students learn to analyse situations, make choices and evaluate the outcomes of their decisions, which helps to develop their ability to make informed decisions. Art therapy also helps to develop decision-making through working under uncertainty and experimentation. The creative process often involves elements of uncertainty and risk, as participants may not know what the outcome of their work will be. This requires them to be able to make decisions with limited information and to be prepared to make mistakes. When experimenting with new techniques or materials, students may encounter unpredictable outcomes, requiring them to be flexible and adaptable (Caulfield *et al.*, 2021). This contributes to the development of the

ability to make decisions and take responsibility for their consequences, which are important for effective leadership.

In addition, art therapy promotes the development of responsibility, initiative and decision-making through group work and cooperation. By collaborating on creative projects, students can exercise leadership roles, coordinate group activities and make decisions related to teamwork. This contributes to the development of leadership skills, such as the ability to organise teamwork, motivate others and make informed decisions in the interests of the whole group. Such experiences help students develop responsibility, initiative and decision-making skills, which are essential for successful leadership. Notably, art therapy contributes to the formation of key leadership qualities through the development of self-reflection and self-knowledge (Long Lingo, 2020). Students engaged in art therapy

can better understand their emotions, motives and behavioural patterns, which contributes to the development of responsibility for their actions and decisions. This helps them become more conscious leaders who can effectively manage not only their actions but also influence others.

Art therapy, utilising a variety of art forms, offers a wide range of methods that can be effective for leadership development (Table 2). Drawing, music and drama are three popular art therapies used to promote personal growth and leadership development. Each of these methods has its unique characteristics and can influence the development of different aspects of leadership, such as responsibility, initiative, decision-making, communication skills and emotional intelligence. This text will discuss in detail how these methods help develop leadership skills and compare their effectiveness.

**Table 2.** The main methods of art therapy

Name of method	The main essence of the method	Example of implementation, potential benefits
Drawing	Use of visual images for self-expression and exploration of inner states.	Students can draw emotions or stressful situations, which helps them better understand and process personal feelings.
Music	Use sounds, rhythms and melodies to express yourself emotionally and relieve tension.	Participating in music groups or listening to and creating music individually can reduce stress levels and improve mood.
Dramas	Use of theatre techniques such as role-playing and improvisation to express and explore emotions.	Students can participate in role-playing games to practice communication, decision-making and empathy skills.
Modelling	Forming images from materials such as clay or plasticine to physically release emotions and explore the self.	Modelling can help students express complex emotions and develop patience and concentration.
Dance/Movement	Using body movements to express emotions and relieve physical tension.	Dance sessions can help students relieve stress, increase self-esteem and improve the connection between body and mind.
Writing	Use of words to express thoughts, feelings and experiences. Can include writing stories, poems or keeping a diary.	Writing can be effective for reflection, self-analysis and the development of self-knowledge and self-control.

Source: T. Shafir *et al.* (2020), M. Eddy *et al.* (2021)

Drawing is one of the most common art therapies that allows participants to express their emotions, thoughts and experiences through visual images. This is especially relevant for students who may have difficulty verbalising their feelings or thoughts. Drawing can be used to explore feelings in a safe and creative environment. Research has shown that drawing can help develop leadership skills such as responsibility and initiative. For instance, when drawing, students are free to choose topics, materials and techniques, which helps them to take initiative and responsibility for their creative decisions. Students also learn to plan their actions and manage their time, which are important skills for leadership. One study conducted among students who participated in drawing as art therapy found that they became more confident in their creative abilities and more willing to take responsibility for their actions (Meltzer & Schwencke, 2020). This study also demonstrated that drawing helps students develop their ability to reflect, as they often reflect on their work and its meaning. This contributes to the development of self-awareness and the ability

to make informed decisions, which are important for effective leadership.

Music is a substantial channel for emotional expression and communication, effective in leadership development. Music can help participants reduce stress, improve mood and develop emotional intelligence. Music art therapy sessions often involve listening to music, performing music, or improvisation, allowing participants to express their feelings and moods. Research shows that music can help develop leadership skills such as emotional intelligence and collaboration. Participation in music groups or ensembles requires participants to coordinate, listen carefully and interact with other musicians, which helps to develop collaboration skills.

Drama is one of the most active art therapies, which involves the use of theatre techniques such as role-play, improvisation and stage performance to explore and express emotions and experiences. Drama allows participants to assume different roles, developing understanding and empathy with others. This contributes to the

development of leadership qualities such as communication skills, self-confidence and decision-making. Participants in drama therapy sessions learn to communicate effectively, express their thoughts and emotions, and interact with other participants. One study that examined the impact of drama on leadership development among students found that participants became more confident in their ability to speak in front of an audience and interact with others (Gkintoni *et al.*, 2022). They also learned to make decisions in the face of uncertainty, as role-playing often requires quick decision-making and adaptation to new situations. This contributes to the development of leadership skills, as participants learn to take responsibility for their actions and influence others.

Each of the art therapies discussed has unique benefits and can contribute to the development of different aspects of leadership skills. Drawing is effective in developing responsibility and decision-making as it encourages self-expression and reflection. Music, due to its ability to influence emotions and create a sense of community, is particularly effective in developing emotional intelligence and the ability to collaborate. Drama, as an active and communicative method, contributes to the development of communication skills, self-confidence and the ability to make decisions in conditions of uncertainty. The introduction of art therapy practices into educational programmes opens new opportunities for students to develop leadership skills. Modern education is increasingly focused on training not only qualified professionals, but also leaders who can effectively manage teams, make responsible decisions and implement innovations. Art therapy, with its creativity stimulation, emotional intelligence and personal growth potential, can be an important element of the educational process.

Research shows that art therapy can significantly improve students' emotional intelligence, which is critical for leadership. For instance, a study of university students demonstrated that participation in scheduled art therapy sessions improved their ability to understand and manage their emotions. Students who participated in such sessions became more aware of their emotional reactions, which helped them to cope better with stressful situations and conflicts (Kilag *et al.*, 2023). The ability to manage emotions and understand the feelings of others is important for effective leadership, as it helps create a positive work environment and maintain team spirit. Art therapy can also promote creative thinking and initiative among students. Creative tasks encourage students to find non-standard solutions and experiment with new ideas. This helps develop the ability to think innovatively, which is important for leadership in today's dynamic world. For instance, during art therapy sessions, students can be invited to create a project that reflects their vision of solving a particular problem. This approach helps develop their initiative and willingness to take responsibility for the implementation of their ideas.

Communication skills are another important component of leadership, and art therapy can significantly contribute to their development. During art therapy sessions,

students work in groups and discuss ideas and creative solutions, which develops communication and collaboration skills. They learn to listen and appreciate the points of view of others, which is important for effective communication. Participants in the art therapy sessions can also deliver presentations to the group, which helps develop confidence in communication skills. There are also prospects for using art therapy in distance learning. Modern technologies allow for online art therapy sessions, which expands the possibilities for using this approach in education. Online art therapy can include drawing, music, writing, or video assignments, allowing students to work on their projects independently and share the results with their classmates and teachers. This helps develop creative expression and communication skills even in a remote format.

The successful implementation of art therapy practices in educational programmes requires the training of qualified teachers and therapists who have experience in working with art and psychology. Teachers should be trained to support students in their creative process, encourage self-expression and create a safe and supportive environment. In addition, it is necessary to ensure the availability of materials and resources for art therapy sessions, allowing students to experiment freely with different art forms. Several areas can be suggested to further improve the use of art therapy. Firstly, it is advisable to develop individual art therapy programmes that address the characteristics of each student and their level of emotional development. Secondly, more research is needed to assess the impact of different forms of art therapy (drawing, music, drama, etc.) on the development of certain aspects of leadership. Thirdly, it is worth investigating how art therapy affects different age groups of students and representatives of different academic disciplines to determine how these methods work in different educational contexts.

## DISCUSSION

Several areas can be suggested to further improve the use of art therapy. Firstly, it is advisable to develop individual art therapy programmes that address the characteristics of each student and their level of emotional development. Secondly, more research is needed to assess the impact of different forms of art therapy (drawing, music, drama, etc.) on the development of certain aspects of leadership. Thirdly, it is worth investigating how art therapy affects different age groups of students and representatives of different academic disciplines to determine how these methods work in different educational contexts. In particular, the results of this study are consistent with the findings of E. Gkintoni *et al.* (2022), who point to the significant role of emotional competence in leadership skills. The authors emphasised that the development of emotional intelligence is key to successful leadership, especially in educational institutions. They emphasised that the ability to understand and manage emotions has a positive impact on decision-making and teamwork. The results of this study, including the improvement in students' ability to manage

their emotions after art therapy, confirmed these findings and demonstrated the practical benefits of introducing art therapy into educational programmes.

Regarding the cooperation and communication skills of the students, the study revealed significant improvements in these skills after the art therapy sessions. During the creative tasks, students were tasked with active interaction with each other, exchanging ideas and finding common solutions, which significantly influenced their ability to communicate effectively and work in a team. This is especially evident in group projects, where each participant played a different role, learned to listen to others, express their own opinions and cooperate to achieve a common goal. These results are consistent with the research by J.D. Fair & A.E. Kondo (2020), which studied the impact of team projects on the development of communication skills among students. The study emphasised that teamwork encourages students to actively collaborate, understand each other, and build effective communication strategies. The present study confirmed these findings: art therapy, in particular group sessions, creates conditions for open discussion and exchange of emotions, which helps students not only improve their communication skills but also develop empathy and the ability to understand others. It is also worth noting that this approach contributes to the development of leadership skills, as students learn to take responsibility for the outcome of group work and manage the communication process.

One of the important aspects of the study is the development of initiative and creative thinking among students. Art therapies encourage participants to experiment with new ideas, take initiative and take responsibility for the implementation of creative projects. This finding correlates with the results of J. Brooks (2022), highlights the importance of developing creative thinking in leaders. The author stressed that the ability to generate new ideas and implement them is one of the main characteristics of a successful leader. The results of this study show that art therapy can contribute to the development of this quality by creating a safe space for creative expression.

The results of this study also indicate a significant impact of art therapy on the development of responsibility in students. During the art therapy sessions, participants were given tasks that required them to be independent and responsible for the result. This correlates with the study by F.S. Andreu *et al.* (2020), where the authors emphasised the importance of engaging students in responsible learning experiences that allow them to develop responsibility and autonomy. The present study demonstrated that students who participated in art therapy improved responsible decision-making skills, which confirms the benefits of this approach for leadership development. Equally important is the development of decision-making skills, which was also observed in the study. Art therapy creates an environment for students to make choices on creativity, training decision-making in the context of uncertainty. This correlates with the study by B.E. Bartels &

C.E. Jackson (2021), which highlighted the importance of meaningful leadership and the ability to make important decisions in difficult circumstances. Art therapies demonstrated effectiveness in developing this skill, as students can engage in multiple-choice situations.

It is necessary to investigate in detail the possibilities of introducing art therapy into various curricula, covering adaptation to different academic disciplines and the specific needs of students. The study has demonstrated that art therapy methods positively influence the development of leadership qualities such as responsibility, initiative and the ability to collaborate, making this approach a valuable tool for educational institutions. C. Friendly *et al.* (2021) emphasised the need to develop specialised curricula that include modules aimed at developing leadership skills through creative methods. The results obtained in this study confirmed the feasibility of integrating art therapy into educational programmes, as it helps students better understand their emotions and make informed decisions in difficult situations. Adapting art therapy to different disciplines can be widely used. For instance, in the humanities, art therapy can be used to develop emotional intelligence and self-expression, while in technical disciplines it can help develop creativity and out-of-the-box thinking. Art therapy has the potential not only to enhance the personal development of students but also to create conditions for deeper learning. This is confirmed by the results of this study, where students involved in art therapy sessions demonstrated an increase in emotional maturity and initiative, which are critical for effective leadership. C. Friendly *et al.* (2021) also emphasised the importance of an individual approach to learning, which is achieved through the introduction of art therapy practices. Students should be allowed to work in a creative environment where they can discover new approaches to solving problems while developing their leadership skills.

It is necessary to address cultural and social differences that may affect the effectiveness of therapeutic approaches. E. Leffler (2020) emphasised that leadership development varies according to individual, national and cultural characteristics. This challenges the universality of certain art therapy methods and creates prospects for studying their adaptation in the context of multicultural environments. Research on the impact of art therapy in international and diverse social contexts may reveal new opportunities for its application, allowing for more flexible leadership development programmes that consider the unique needs of each group.

The results of this study show that art therapy methods significantly influence the development of key leadership qualities in students, such as emotional intelligence, ability to cooperate, initiative and responsibility. Art therapy improves emotional awareness, regulation of emotions, and teamwork skills. Students developed a better understanding and emotion management, which had a positive impact on their leadership skills and ability to make responsible decisions. The analysis confirmed that art

therapy methods can be effective for leadership development, which is consistent with the findings of other studies. It also emphasised the importance of adapting art therapy to different social and cultural contexts, as the effectiveness of these methods may depend on the individual characteristics of students.

### CONCLUSIONS

The results of the study demonstrated that art therapy is an effective tool for developing key leadership qualities in students, such as emotional intelligence, communication skills, responsibility and initiative. Those who participated in art therapy sessions showed significant improvements in their emotional awareness, and ability to cooperate and make decisions, which are important components of effective leadership. This leads to the conclusion that it is advisable to include art therapy in the curriculum for students aimed at developing leadership skills.

The analysis of the results showed a significant increase in the level of emotional competence among students who have undergone art therapy. Students developed a better awareness of personal emotions and more effective control over them, which, in turn, increased their ability to manage emotional reactions in stressful situations. This is a significant indicator of the development of emotional intelligence, a key factor in the development of leadership skills. Furthermore, a significant improvement in communication skills and collaborative capacity was recorded:

students became more open to interacting with others, expressed opinions more effectively and actively participated in teamwork. Improvements were also noted in the development of initiative and responsibility. Students became more proactive, offering new ideas and solutions in academic and extracurricular projects, taking responsibility for tasks and becoming more confident in their actions. These changes indicate that art therapy stimulates not only creativity but also contributes to the development of important leadership skills that help students prepare for future professional activities.

Further study should address the long-term effects of art therapy on the development of leadership skills. It is also necessary to investigate how regular use of art therapy practices affects students' ability to manage emotions, make decisions, and work in a team. Of particular interest is the study of the possibilities of remote implementation of art therapy, which would allow the development of leadership skills even in virtual learning environments. Further research could also focus on the impact of art therapy in different cultural and social contexts to better understand the universality of these approaches.

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### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

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## Формування лідерських якостей студентів засобами арттерапії

**Анотація.** Актуальність даного дослідження обумовлена зростанням потреби у формуванні емоційно зрілих і відповідальних лідерів, здатних ефективно управляти командами та приймати рішення в умовах сучасного швидкозмінного світу. Виклики сучасності вимагають від майбутніх фахівців не лише технічних знань, але й високого рівня емоційного інтелекту, креативності та здатності до співпраці. Метою дослідження було визначити, яким чином арттерапія може сприяти розвитку цих важливих аспектів лідерства в студентській аудиторії та як її можна ефективно інтегрувати в освітній процес. У ході дослідження було застосовано методи теоретичного аналізу, синтезу, узагальнення та систематизації наукової літератури, пов'язаної з арттерапією та лідерськими якостями. Основні результати дослідження показали, що арттерапія є ефективним інструментом для підвищення емоційної свідомості студентів. Під час занять, орієнтованих на самовираження через мистецтво, студенти навчалися краще розуміти власні емоції та усвідомлювати їх вплив на прийняття рішень, що безпосередньо покращувало їхні лідерські якості. Крім того, арттерапевтичні сесії допомогли студентам навчитися регулювати емоційні реакції через творчий процес, що сприяло зниженню стресу і розвитку емоційної стійкості. Іншим важливим результатом було покращення комунікативних навичок і здатності до співпраці, оскільки групові арттерапевтичні завдання спонукали студентів взаємодіяти один з одним, обговорювати свої роботи та розвивати емпатію. Також значну роль арттерапія відіграла у розвитку креативного мислення, яке допомогло студентам підходити до вирішення складних завдань нестандартно та шукати інноваційні рішення, що є важливим для лідерів у сучасному світі. Практичне значення цього дослідження полягає у сприянні інтеграції арттерапії в навчальні програми різних спеціальностей задля сприяння розвитку емоційної зрілості та лідерських якостей

**Ключові слова:** соціальні навички; групова динаміка; емпатія; інтерактивні методи; особистісний ріст