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Expresivita v multisenzorických prístupoch

Expressiveness in Multisensory Approaches

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Abstract

The paper presents partial results of research carried out in the field of multisensory approaches. It deals with the issue of expressiveness in relation to the sensory potential of a person with multiple disadvantages. The contribution is a partial output of the KEGA project no. 002-UK-4/2020 Support for a child with sensory processing disorder through a multisensory environment.

Keywords: Expression. Multisensory approaches. A person with multiple disadvantages.

Introduction

Multisensory environment is an increasingly used environment not only for therapeutic action, but also as a space for assessment processes. The environment is specific in that it has a relaxing, activating, stimulating effect on the client, depending on the type of multisensory approaches used. The space in which the client receives multiplied stimuli / stimuli at the same time creates penetrations for stimulating activity in both individual and group expression, provides a wide range of possibilities for the client's expression in a way that is easy to understand.

Expression plays an important role especially in the client's expression in a natural way, despite the client not using traditional forms of communication including alternative vocabulary. In the prepared multisensory environment, the client's expression is directly provoked by various sensory stimuli – visual, auditory, olfactory or tactile. Expression can also be manifested through the experience and implementation of specific activities within a specialized intervention, where the mode can be drawing, movement, vocal expression, puppet animation or playing a musical instrument (Slavík, 2009).

Expression is an emotional response to surrounding stimuli, and can be both positive and negative. Multisensory environment offers a person who has communication difficulties due to a severe, combined form of disability the opportunity to actively participate in events and be an authentic part of relationships and the social environment (Fábry Lucká, 2014).

During an expressively oriented activity, “a person (regardless of age and health status) presents their emotions (and clearly uses expression in their activity, Chanasová et al., 2020). At the same time, emotions that are considered stressful or demanding for them in terms of survival can be ventilated in this way” (Kováčová, 2021, p. 150).

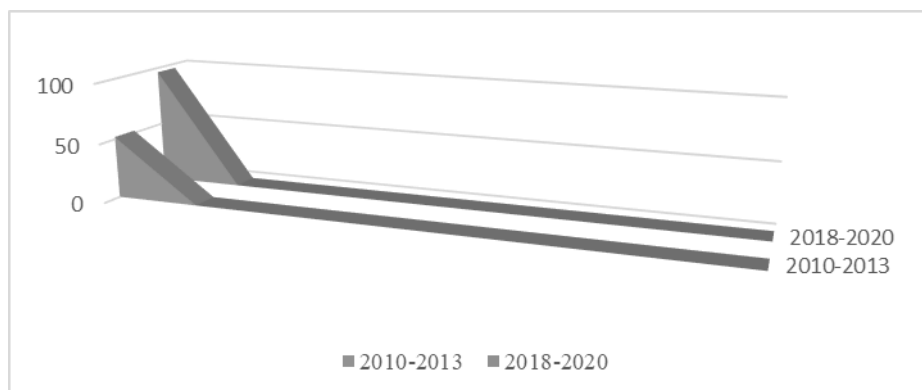
Even with a limited ability to express oneself, for example in the case of health restrictions, expression is a specific expression (Friedlová, 2011). Examples of expressive manifestations in individuals with multiple disadvantages are illustrated in Tab. 1.

Table 1: Expression specifics (Fábry Lucká, 2019)

EXPRESSION	• deep breathing, sighing, groaning
	• eye and mouth opening
	• smile
	• relaxation of muscle tone, facial expressions and movements
	• calm observation of the surroundings and the stimulus elements provided
	• closing of eyes and mouth, fading
	• crying, screaming, moaning
	• increase in muscle tone, spasmodic posture, spasmodic facial expressions and movements
	• reactions signalling defence, deterrence and gestures against persons, objects
	• general motor restlessness and stereotypical behaviour
	• manipulation of one's own body and self-harm, and more

Multisensory approaches are a used form of intervention in Slovakia. However, they are not always directly related to professional expertise in their use. Given the above, we focused on the frequency of use of multisensory approaches in the two monitored periods. In the comparison of two monitored periods, in the second monitored period (2018-2020) the preference for the use of multisensory approaches increased (Graph 1), experts from social service settings reported their use in a higher number ($\bar{x} = 96.30$), in the first monitored period the frequency was significantly lower ($\bar{x} = 51.85$).

Graph 1: Multisensory approaches (use by professionals in social service settings aimed at individuals with multiple disabilities) (Fábry Lucká, 2019)



Multisensory environment is a space for connecting methods and techniques from other expressive therapeutic interventions. As an example, connection with music therapy can be demonstrated, where the multisensory environment is supported by musical experience and becomes a space for so-called rhythmic movement with rhythm. According to Habalová (2021), the same music can have a different effect on an individual, both stimulating and calming. In the results of their study on the effects of music therapy on individuals with multiple disadvantages, Thompson and McFerran (2015) presented in particular a change in the initialization of communication by the participants towards the expert. Thye et al. (2018) addressed the issue of multisensory approaches in individuals with multiple disabilities in terms of supporting the processing of sensory sensations that facilitate communication and understanding. Multisensory approaches to the use of sensory strategies were also investigated by Lessner Lištiaková (2019).

The expression of a person with a combination of disadvantages has its specifics in a multisensory environment that need to be taken into account, such as specific peculiarities of communication, health condition, possibilities of movement and expression through one's own body. The use of this type of environment is a great success in Slovakia, and even in settings where it is not possible to create such a room due to financial demands, at least individual components or resources are used in order for the environment to stimulate more senses (e.g., to create different tactile and sound boards).

Based on the results of research conducted in a multisensory environment, we identified the specific needs of a multisensory environment focused on the motor-sensory system as a system in which specifics in communication and interactions with the environment and other people manifest themselves. In a motor-sensory system, it is equally important to support tactile perception, proprioceptive and also vestibular system. In Table 2 we present the conditions for the environment supporting the locomotor

system of an individual with a disadvantage in the context of multisensory approaches, aimed at activating physical activities.

Table 2: Motor-sensory system (Fábry Lucká, 2019)

MOTOR-SENSORY SYSTEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if the terrain does not allow it, artificially create obstacle courses (leads to independence, and the child has the opportunity to experience a sense of success)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use the child's magical thinking, creativity and imagination in activities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure orientation not only in space but also in time
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use the child's verbal expression – poems and songs that the child knows, learns (using the child's own potential)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure the separation of the child's reality and imaginary experience
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set rules together with the child or establish group rules and compliance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify common sanctions for breaches of agreed rules (the child learns through this)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to enable the child to express themselves in a way other than by movement – for example by drawing, painting

The multisensory environment also has its specifics with regard to the creation of social interactions. Due to its specificity, it is a suitable environment for establishing a therapist-client relationship. In the context of this environment, we have identified the following variables:

- building relationships
- activity versus passivity
- lack of interest in establishing social relations and ties
- apparent interest in establishing social relations and ties

Part of social interactions is building relationships, establishing them and maintaining them. Relationship building is a social competence that people who have long received one of the social services in an institution as one of the limits of their disadvantage often do not have the opportunity to address. Individuals often accept relationships passively and wait for who will "find a way" to them.

The category of passivity eventually turns into lethargy and a lack of interest in establishing new relationships and social ties. There is a passivity in one's own active communication, but also in the receptivity of communication in the intervention process.

The relationship with the surrounding people is absent, the lack of interest in creating relationships is reflected in the establishment of relationships, their maintenance and stability.

The opposite of passivity is an exaggerated activity on the part of a person with a disadvantage, who is not able to perform any activity unaccompanied.

As another variable, we also identified a lack of interest in the social environment in the circle in which the person moves within the institution. This is a low to absent level of activity related to interpersonal relationships around. Rigidity in establishing relationships persists in the behaviour of clients. Prioritizing loneliness proved to be a problem area. Therefore, if there is the opportunity to stay alone with their thoughts – in a safe environment, in most cases the individual chooses this option. For this reason too, an individual form of work is a suitable choice. In particular, a client receiving one of the residential forms of service in a social services facility may be obstructed by noise and loud speech of other clients of the facility, which cannot be eliminated.

Obvious problems arise in the low degree of acceptance of the client's autonomy as a partner. The promotion of one's needs in social interaction proved to be an important phenomenon. In this area, there is also a sporadic interest in the client's needs as a partner, the client is perceived only as a subject of care, but their living needs, important for maintaining the client's autonomy, are in the last place. This manifests itself in such way that the client has minimal opportunities to choose their daily activities. In a specific multisensory environment, there is a choice of all available options. There is no incentive that they would not be able to use. One of the advantages of a multisensory environment is in its accessibility.

Social interactions are important for the creation, maintenance and stability of respondents' relationships. Interactions require a longer period of time than usual. If a person is to show their autonomy and engage in social interactions, it is necessary to respect the time factor and adjust the possibilities so that the person is provided as much space as possible.

The institutions or facilities of social services that we explored in research are often the first choice for a person from target group of individuals with multiple disabilities, taking into account in particular the fact that comprehensive diagnostics, intervention is provided in one place, but also, if necessary, health care.

Even with today's inclusive awareness, there are still social service facilities in our society that provide up to a year-round form of care. They are still a sought-after form of help, some families use various forms of residential care to gain new strength in caring for a family member, others use this time for work or as insurance for the future. This factor is also related to the readiness of the environment to support individual areas of life of a person with a disability and their family environment. This is often reflected in the family's high level of expertise in matters of social security or social entitlements that the family has acquired through continuous and intensive cooperation with state social authorities.

The institution has its own characteristics, one of which is the high staff turnover of the facility, often due to low salaries. This factor is significantly limiting, as a longer period of time is usually required to understand a specific communication system. If there are several disadvantaged

people in the institution with different communication dictionaries, it is time-consuming for professional staff to abstract them all. The communication vocabulary, especially if it is very specific, is not only important to understand, but also to learn to use it in the context of diverse situations so that the expert provides the disadvantaged person with autonomy and authenticity as much as possible. Multisensory environments provide a space that facilitates communication and expression through embracing the alternative vocabularies, therefore based on the research results its use is encouraged.

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