ART THERAPY IN SOCIAL AND HEALTH INSTITUTIONS AND ITS ECONOMIC SIGNIFICANCE

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Abstract
This article presents art therapy centers in social and health institutions – homes and day centers for elderly people, day centers for children and handicapped people and rehabilitation hospitals. It discusses some organization aspects and focuses on the economic significance of the art works created in these centers. It emphasizes the needs and possibilities to find some permanent locations for exhibitions and sale the products made by the elderly and handicapped people.

Key words: *art therapy, patients, employees, residents, art therapy centers, social and health institutions*

Purpose of the study: To establish the usability and economic significance of art therapy activities in social and health institutions of Northwest Bulgaria.

Method of study: The study was conducted in the towns of Vratsa and Varshets in the following institutions:

- Day home for children and mentally handicapped people in Vratsa

- Home for elderly people in Vratsa

- Specialized rehabilitation hospital "St. Mina" in Varshets

Total number of respondents **– 111.**

48 respondents are employed in the a.m. institutions, **42** are patients in the specialized rehabilitation hospital and **21** are residents in the home for elderly people in Vratsa. This study was conducted by means of two questionnaires – one for the people working in the three institutions and another for the patients and residents in the home for elderly people and the specialized rehabilitation hospital. The questionnaires include closed and open questions. The closed questions require multiple-choice answers or use a graded assessment of the Likert-type scale. The percentage of participation of employees in the home for elderly people, the day center for handicapped people and the specialized rehabilitation hospital goes as follows:

1. Art therapists – 4,2%
2. Social workers – 8,3%
3. Psychologists -8,3%
4. Rehabilitators - 37,5%
5. Nurses - 19,2%
6. Teachers - 12,5%

The biggest share of employees (rehabilitators and nurses) come from the Specialized Rehabilitation Hospital in Varshets, and most of the art therapists, social workers teachers and psychologists come from the day center for elderly people in Vratsa.
The results were processed by a SPSS 19.0 statistical package and the graphics were prepared by Microsoft Excel.

Introduction

Art therapy is used in different forms and varieties for healthy and sick, children and adults alike. Its significance and applicability is recognized by many art therapy associations, NGOs, private persons and social and health institutions. Such institutions are interested not only in its preventive and therapeutic applicability but also by the economic significance of the products made and sold.

In countries like Great Britain, Holland, Germany and others there are chains of stores that sell souvenirs, ornaments, household objects, etc. made by handicapped or sick people. Exhibitions are organized in various communities, towns and villages and the proceeds from the sale are used in the budgets of the social or health institutions to cover costs of materials or other budget items.
The goal of this study is to define the actual applicability and usability of art therapy in two social institutions – the home for elderly people and the day center for children and handicapped people in Vratsa compared to a health institution in Northwest Bulgaria – the specialized rehabilitation hospital "St. Mina" in Varshets.

Analysis of results
The study found out that the respondents are mostly women: 61,9% of the patients and residents and 70.8% of the employees of the institutions. The relative share of men is 38.1% of the patients and residents and 29.2% of the employees. The average age of the patients and residents is 68.57 (min. 36 and max. 95 years of age) and 43.67 of the employees (min. 23 and max. 63 years of age).

Out of all patients and residents in the institutions (the specialized rehabilitation hospital and the home for elderly people), 61.9% are urban residents and 38.1% are rural residents. These people define their health status as: "invalids of certain disability rate" -52.4%; "people with "hronic diseases" – 38.1%; and only 9.5% define themselves as "healthy". The disability rate is as follows:
- from 60 to 71% disability rate - 27,3%;
- from 72 to 90% disability rate - 45,4%;
- above 91% disability rate - 27 %.

The average stay in the rehabilitation hospital is seven days. 28.6% have visited the hospital for the first time, 42.9% for the second time, and 28.6% have visited it three and more than three times.

Fig. 1 shows the educational level of the service users in the specialized hospital and the home for old people.

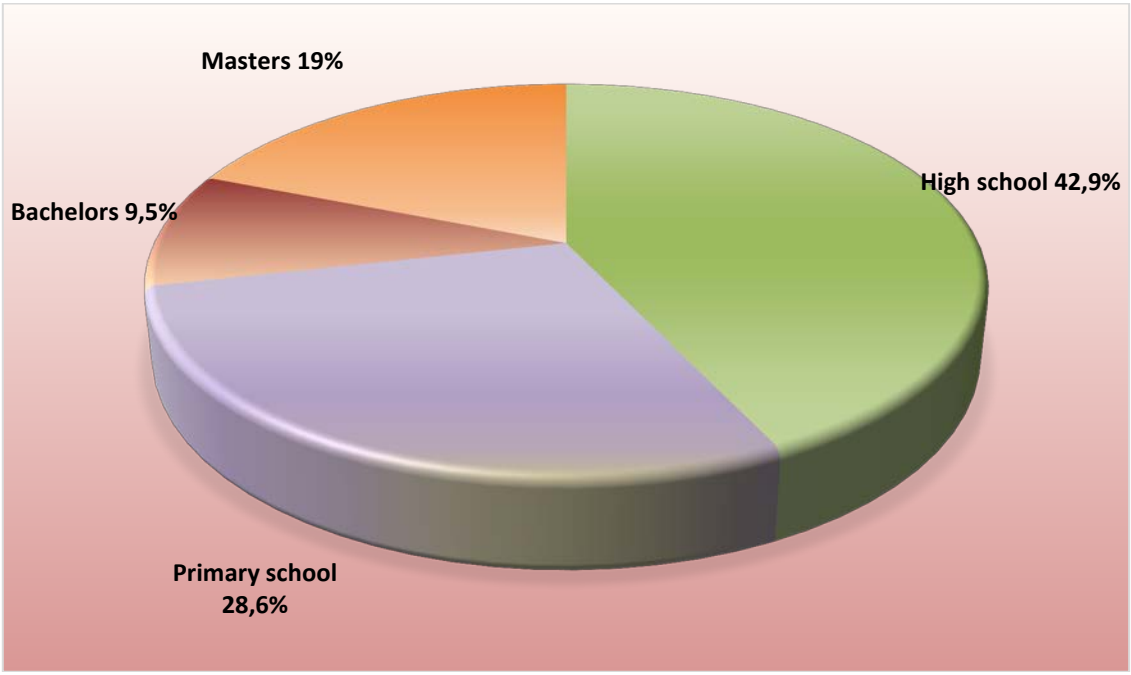


Fig. 1 Educational level of the residents of the Home for elderly people in Vratsa and the Specialized Rehabilitation Hospital in Varshetz.

The study investigated the usability of art therapy in the three institutions. Such activities are performed principally in the two social institutions and to a very small extent in the rehabilitation

hospital. The home for elderly people and the day center for children and mentally handicapped people have art therapy centers but the rehabilitation hospital has no such center. 57.1% of the respondents there think that "there is no such center", while 42.9% think there is one. To the question "If yes, describe it" 9.5% of the respondents say that it is an art therapy center, 28.6% say it is intended for needlework, and 61.9% say again that there is no such center.

The answers to the question about the need of an occupational therapy center show that 52.4% of the respondents think that the occupational therapy center is "much needed", 28.3% say that it is "needed", 19% think that it is "partly needed" and only 4.8% do not see any such need. 57.1% of the respondents who say it is "much needed" and "needed" find that an occupational therapy center should include art therapy, 19% - needlework, 9.5% - gardening and 14.3% want "a little of everything". There is an impressive percentage (71.4%) of people willing to take part in the activities of an occupational therapy center; 23.8% are hesitant and 4.8% would have no part in it. The preferences for the activities of an art therapy center are rated as follows: 33.3% - growing plants, 28.6% - painting and drawing, 14.3% - sewing, 14.3% - everything mentioned above, and 9.5% - knitting.

The usability of the different activities in the occupational therapy centers was also studied. The results show that the employees in the home for old people, the day center and the rehabilitation hospital consider art therapy (fig. 2) most useful of all activities.

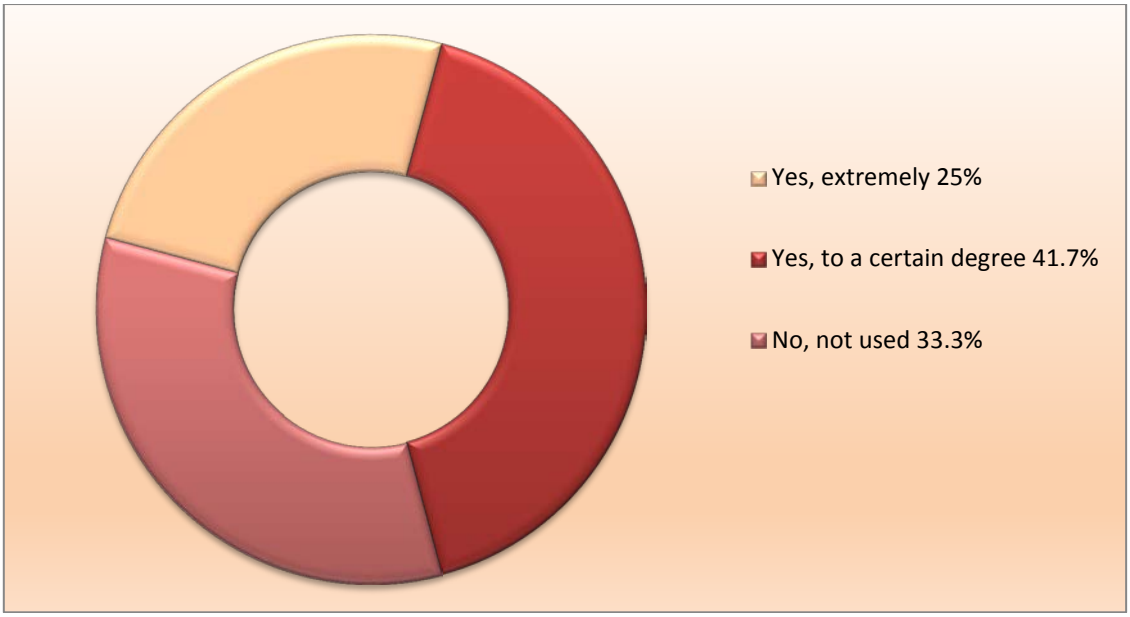


Fig. 2 Usability of art therapy

The "yes" answers are 66.7% (25% "extremely" and 41.7% "to a certain degree") and they show the types of activities that are most applicable to the respective occupational therapy center, as follows:

- coloring pictures - 37,5%
- painting - 12%
- making cards - 12,5%
- wood carving – 4,2%.

The study found that art therapy in the three institutions is carried out by employees of different jobs. The relative share of art therapists is 16.7%, the rehabilitators are 25%, the teachers are 25%, and the artists are 4.2%. The persons who hold these jobs have the following specializations: "health care" – 25%, "teaching" – 25%, "artist" – 4.2% and "no specialization" – 16.7%. The rehabilitation hospital lacks employees for art therapy since their relative share is only 29.2%.

The applicability and economic significance of the products were also studied. The objects produced find their place in exhibitions in the home, they are used for the decoration of the institution, for

presents and for charity – 12.5% for each of them. 45.8% of the respondents find no applicability for the objects and only 4.2% find that they can be used for sale (fig. 3).

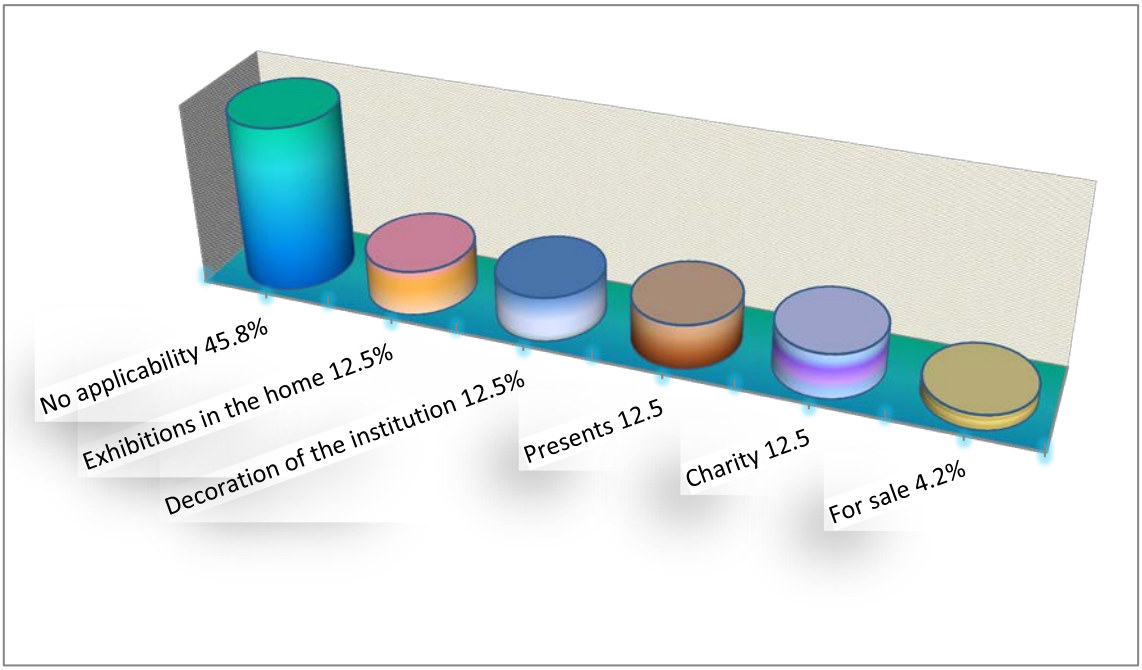


Fig. 3 Applicability of the objects made

As can be seen from the answers of the employees of the three institutions (fig. 4), only 4.2% think that there is a good marketability. 83.3% of them answer that they have never tried to sell, while 12.5% have never considered that option. The study of the economic significance of the objects made by art therapy activities in the institutions used a set of questions to the employees of the day center for children and handicapped people, the home for elderly people and the rehabilitation hospital (fig. 4).

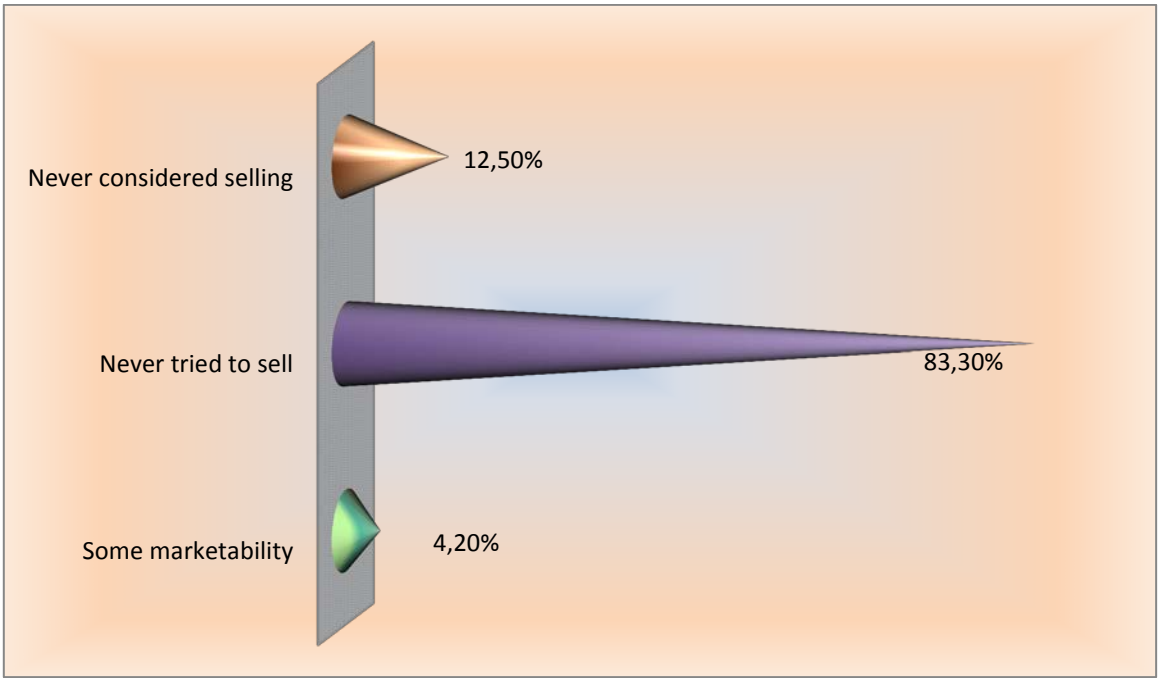


Fig. 4 Marketability of objects made

The answers to the question "If you have ever sold any objects made, what have you done with the proceeds?" are as follows: 70.8% of the employees answer that they have no proceeds, 25% say they have no license to sell, and only 4.2% answer they have used the proceeds to purchase materials. The significance of the art therapy products of the respective institution is shown in Fig. 5.

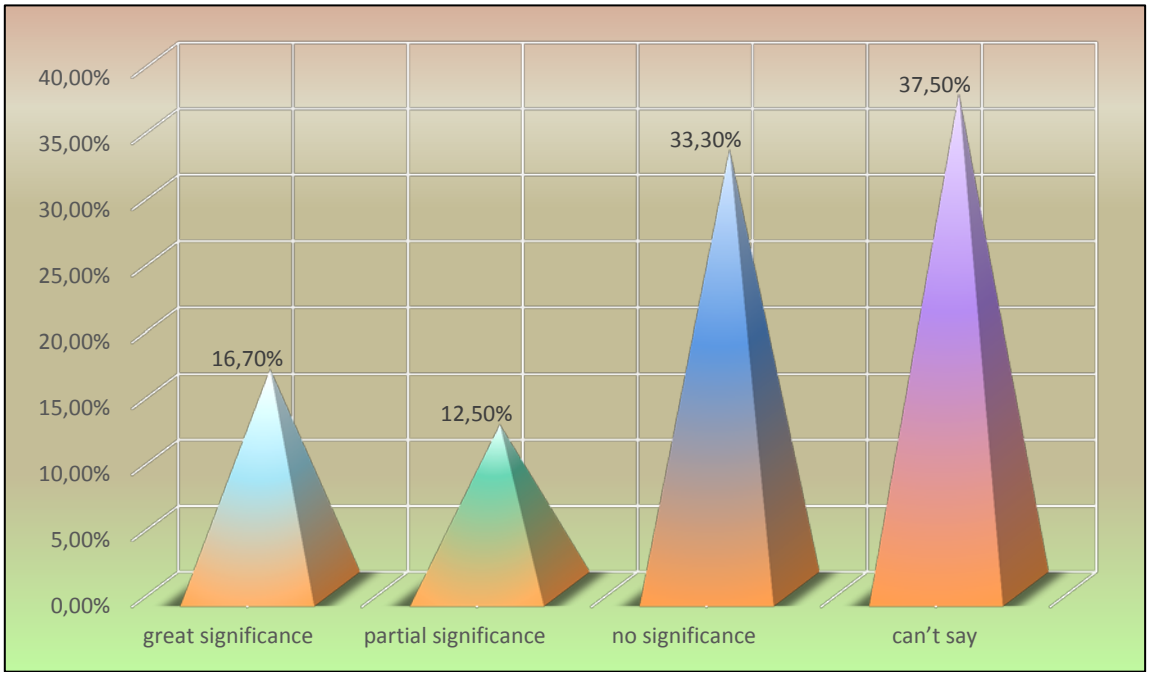


Fig. 5 Economic significance of art therapy in the institution

As can be seen on Fig. 5, 33.3% of the respondents think there is no economic significance, 37.5% cannot say if there is any economic significance of the sale of objects produced, 12.5% think there is some partial significance and only 6.7% assess the economic significance as great.

The open questions of the questionnaire give us information about the applicability of art therapy and especially art therapy in specific diseases. The most frequent proposal is art therapy to be used for persons with brain stroke, trauma and orthopedic diseases, heart stroke, diabetes, cerebral palsy in children, autism and others. These activities are controlled by people of special training.

The analysis of the study results warrant the following conclusions:

1. Art therapy is more widely practiced in the social institutions and not included in the rehabilitation hospital.
2. Only a small part of art therapy activities is applied in practice, like making and coloring cards. The other branches are not included: theatre therapy, music therapy, dance, occupational therapy games, etc.
3. There is no awareness of the economic significance of art therapy for the institutions that practice it.
4. Art therapy, which is an important branch of occupational therapy, is carried out by persons that do not have the necessary qualification. The relative share of the "art therapist" job is 16.7% and the persons who hold it have no educational qualification or specialization.

Conclusion

From this study we can judge about the low utilization of art therapy in the occupational therapy centers. It is underrepresented in the rehabilitation hospitals which have no such centers. There are a

small number of rehabilitators and nurses to guide or train some stroke patients how to perform their daily activities and how to use activities like knitting and embroidery to develop some fine movements. Economic significance is nearly out of the question. No forms and methods are being sought to sell the objects made by elderly or handicapped people, although this would give those persons better self-esteem and confidence.

Our country has no traditions and experience in mass events like trading art works on specially organized bazaars. Unlike other European countries, practically we have no such “social stores” that offer for sale objects made by persons of specific needs. The cooperatives of disabled people that existed in the past are no more and the beautiful objects produced are used only for the decoration of the homes and for presents, and only a small part of them are sold on local exhibitions and bazaars. Changes in the production of marketable art works are imperative in the activity of occupational therapy centers that perform art therapy. At the same time, it is necessary to work with all institutions – ministries, municipalities, social assistance offices, NGOs, etc. for the establishment of networks of municipal, regional and national “social stores” for the sale of decorations and household objects made by persons of specific abilities, disabled and old people. These stores should enjoy a special status and be tax-free, and the proceeds should go back to the institutions, Then it will be possible to talk of actual profit and economic significance of art therapy in the social institutions and rehabilitation hospitals in our country.

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