

## Background

Participation, as defined by the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health, constitutes a central domain of health and a core goal of pediatric rehabilitation. Nevertheless, in Greece, therapeutic approaches often focus on the individual level rather than on the level of participation. At the same time, recent research highlights the potential of arts and theatre to enhance participation and trigger neuroplasticity. “Kivotos” is a Pediatric Rehabilitation Center in Northern Greece that provides, since 2000, early intervention and rehabilitation services for children with neurodevelopmental disorders, integrating arts and theatre into its interdisciplinary rehabilitation framework.

## Objectives

This presentation aims to describe the processes through which arts, and particularly theatre, are integrated into pediatric rehabilitation programs, including physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy and psychosocial support. A key objective is to highlight the importance of collaboration within the fields of health, arts, education, and local/ regional authorities. Secondary objective is to present research findings, developed in collaboration with the University of Western Macedonia (Department of Occupational Therapy), examining the impact of participation in theatrical performance on 23 members of healthcare staff on psychological resilience, subjective happiness and burn out using the Connor-Davidson (CD-RISC), Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) and Maslach & Jackson questionnaire respectively.

## Methods

The methodology lies in reorganisation of therapeutic intervention aiming at participation through theatrical roles. Therapeutic goals are embedded within meaningful stage roles, which function both as a therapeutic means and as an outcome in itself. The theatrical roles are collaboratively adapted between the interdisciplinary rehabilitation team and art professionals according to each child’s current functional level and targeted therapeutic goals. The program further includes inclusive artistic camps for children with and without disabilities, workshops for parents and therapists, and community-based performances in outdoor and public spaces.

## Results

Empirical findings and qualitative outcomes underscore the important role of the use of the arts in pediatric rehabilitation for children, families and community, promoting engagement and attendance, enhancing motivation and social connection. Outcomes related to healthcare staff psychological resilience, subjective happiness, and burnout show that the supportive staff, compared to healthcare professionals, demonstrate less understanding of the project, less active participation, and a reduced sense of the importance of their role.

## Conclusion

The integration of arts and theatre into interdisciplinary pediatric rehabilitation offers a participation-driven and holistic model of healthcare. Effective collaboration across health, arts, education, and local/regional authorities emerges as a critical factor for sustainable rehabilitation practice.

## References

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