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Transactional analysis in the education of art therapists: “The Book of My Life”

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Abstract

The study explored the integration of Transactional Analysis (TA) and art therapy in postgraduate studies of art therapy. Participants were 52 students who completed the Ego State Questionnaire (Egogram) before and after a five-hour workshop entitled “The Book of My Life.” During the workshop, students created art books representing the Parent, Adult and Child ego states and wrote short reflections. Quantitative analyses showed a significant increase in the Creative Child scale ($p < .001$, $SMD = 0.264$) and a trend toward growth in the Spontaneous Child scale ($p = .065$). Other scales remained stable. In interpreting the Egogram results, increases in the Creative and Spontaneous Child scales were understood as indicators of enhanced expressive freedom, playfulness, and emotional authenticity — features associated with greater psychological flexibility and integration of the self.

Qualitative analysis indicated that self-awareness was the most frequently reported theme. Reflections on childhood were significantly associated with negative emotions (Fisher $p = .04$, $OR = 5.44$), while ambivalence was less common when self-awareness was explicitly mentioned (trend $p = .08$). These findings suggest that combining TA with art therapy promotes personal reflection, activates creativity and spontaneity, and strengthens readiness for professional practice. Limitations include a convenience sample and the absence of long-term follow-up.

Keywords: Transactional Analysis, art therapy education, ego states, self-awareness, creativity.

Introduction

Art therapy is a discipline that integrates diverse theoretical and practical approaches, supporting the personal growth, awareness, and self-awareness of participants in the therapeutic process. In the context of this study, which focused on the personal development of postgraduate students in the program *Art Therapy with Elements of Pedagogical Therapy*, who during their studies are encouraged to reflect on their own experiences and their impact on personal and professional life, particular importance is given to the analysis of ego states. A useful framework for this process is Transactional Analysis developed by Eric Berne (Berne, 2008). Concentrating on the ego states of Child, Adult, and Parent provides a deeper understanding of one's thoughts and behaviours. The ability to reflect on them plays a significant role in preparing art therapists for self-exploration and for their future professional practice with clients.

Self-awareness as a foundation in the education of art therapists

Contemporary education of art therapists increasingly emphasizes not only theoretical knowledge and technical skills, but also the necessity of personal development and the systematic deepening of self-reflection. Self-awareness, understood as the ability to recognize one's emotional states, behavioral patterns, and defense mechanisms (Filice & Weese, 2024, p. 585), constitutes a key professional competence that directly influences the quality of the helping relationship. Its absence fosters transference and projection, which in turn creating a risk of disrupting the therapeutic process (Prasko et al., 2022, p. 2132). For this reason, educational programs include elements of personal work, supervision, and workshops focused on insight, and they also require a coherent, accessible language for describing internal experiences.

Art therapy provides such a language through image, metaphor, and narrative. The creative process evokes emotions and memories that are often inaccessible in therapeutic conversation, while artworks serve as a visible starting point for reflection, reinterpretation, and the integration of identity (Chmielnicka-Plaskota & Kompowska-Marek, 2025, p. 55; Malchiodi, 2014, pp. 79–173). In this context, Transactional Analysis, by offering a conceptual framework for self-exploration, supports the organization of experiences and their conscious processing.

This study is situated at the intersection of art therapy education and self-reflection. Its focus is the extent to which directed creative work may promote the development of self-awareness among students. Eric Berne's Transactional Analysis, based on the concept of three fundamental ego states: Parent, Adult,

and Child, provides a clear model for describing the inner dynamics of the individual (Berne, 2004, pp. 16–20). Within this framework, ego states are not permanent personality traits but functional aspects of the self, that manifest in thinking, feeling, and behaviour.

Importantly for the present study, reflecting on these states enables a better understanding of one's own reactions, patterns, and beliefs, thereby supporting the growth of self-awareness. The conscious recognition of active ego states makes it possible to distinguish automatic patterns from deliberate choices, which is of considerable importance in both therapeutic and educational contexts.

In art therapy, working with metaphor and image creates a space in which individuals can view themselves from a distance while maintaining a deeply personal perspective. The symbolic representation of one's experiences, for example in the form of an artist's book, supports the integration of different aspects of identity and facilitates insight into the inner tensions between ego states. In this way, the creative process becomes a tool of meta-reflection, combining artistic expression with a deeper self-understanding (Józefowski, 2012, p. 136).

Art therapy in the education of students in this field has a dual dimension: it supports the personal development of participants while simultaneously serving as a didactic method. On the one hand, it enables the safe expression of emotions, the reduction of tension, and the integration of experiences. On the other, it allows students to familiarise themselves with methods "from the inside", to experience their effects, and to develop interpretative competences. The creative process thus becomes both a tool of self-analysis and a form of professional practice, preparing students for future work with clients, through the cultivation of skills in understanding visual expression and engaging in reflection on its meaning.

Self-diagnostic workshops, such as creating the artist's book "The Book of My Life," support the recognition and naming of one's own ego states. Such workshops provide students with the opportunity to integrate different life roles and confront their personal stories, strengthening insight and self-awareness. In this way, art therapy becomes not only a therapeutic method, but also a vital element of education, in which personal development forms the foundation for professional competences in the helping professions.

Interdisciplinary connections between art therapy and Transactional Analysis

Art therapy, as a method of therapeutic work using the medium of art, and Transactional Analysis, as a psychological theory and therapeutic method aimed at understanding and improving interpersonal relationships, converge

in a shared objective: supporting the development of self-awareness and the integration of experiences.

In Transactional Analysis, a key aspect is the recognition and naming of the dynamics of ego states (Berne, 2004, pp. 21–25). In art therapy, this dynamic can find symbolic expression through image, metaphor, and narrative, which facilitates its grasp and subsequent reflection (Bartel, 2024, pp. 71–77). This perspective corresponds well with the Expressive Therapies Continuum (ETC) model, proposed by S. Kagin and V. Lusebrink, which describes levels of creative functioning ranging from sensory-motor, through affective, to cognitive-symbolic and creative modes (Lusebrink, 2010, pp. 173–174). From this point of view, the artistic process becomes a space in which inner states and psychological dynamics may be observed in the form of creative expression. Both Transactional Analysis and art therapy are based on the idea of inner dialogue and the creation of a space, where the individual can recognise, name and work through personal experiences. In the educational dimension, combining these two approaches allows students not only to acquire theoretical foundations, but also to immediately relate them to personal creative practice, linking reflection with direct experience (see Bartel, 2024, pp. 71–138).

Seen this way, the connections indicate that integrating Transactional Analysis and art therapy creates a coherent framework, both for deepening self-reflection and for developing the practical competences of future art therapists.

The ego state as a category that can be operationalised in creative expression

The ego states: Parent, Adult, and Child, are categories that can be identified not only in the observation of behaviour or interpersonal relations, but also in various forms of expression and modes of response. The Natural Child may be revealed through spontaneity, kindness, and emotional freedom, whereas the Adapted Child appears in behaviours marked by politeness, the pursuit of harmony, and the ability to adjust. The Nurturing Parent manifests in care, support, and readiness to help, while the Critical Parent is expressed through firmness, control, and authority. The Adult, in turn, becomes visible in logical thinking, analysis, problem-solving, and the capacity for detachment (see Hey, 2010, p. 100, as cited in Kraczla, 2023, p. 287). Each ego state may also be expressed in metaphor, narrative, and the structure of visual works, becoming a starting point for reflection on oneself and one's own mechanisms of action.

In visual arts, the expression of the Natural Child may take the form of a free, spontaneous line, intense colours, or experimentation with texture. At times, it is manifested in the bold combination of incongruent elements, indicating open-

ness, playfulness, and the authenticity of the creator. The Adapted Child may be expressed in orderly composition, in the pursuit of harmony and compliance with task requirements, in attention to detail, or in adherence to aesthetic rules. The Nurturing Parent may be reflected in themes depicting care, protection, bonds, and symbolic nurturing of others, whereas the Critical Parent may emerge in a rigorous order of composition, sharp contrasts, strong lines, and a tense structure of the image. The Adult, in turn, may be conveyed through clear spatial organisation, logical selection of elements, reflective manipulation of form, and the ability to maintain distance from one's own work (see Malchiodi, 2014, pp. 503–515).

Artistic creation thus offers the possibility of observing and analysing the dynamics of ego states in material form. The resulting visual works become not only form of expression but also a kind of “mirror” in which individuals can recognise their own emotions, attitudes, and patterns of response. In this way, they perform a self-diagnostic function, revealing content often difficult to express verbally and opening space for self-reflection (Hinkel, 2022).

It should be emphasised, however, that these are only possible ways in which ego states may manifest in visual creation. Their interpretation is never obvious or unambiguous but rather serves as a starting point for further reflection and dialogue with the participant in the art therapy process.

Literature review

The literature on the applications of Transactional Analysis in education and therapy is extensive and encompasses both empirical studies and theoretical contributions. In this article, only selected examples are cited, those that most clearly illustrate the potential of TA in developing self-awareness and competences in the helping professions.

A good example of the use of TA in an educational process, and simultaneously in the context of supporting students' psychological well-being, is an experimental study conducted among nursing students at the University of Medical Sciences in Kerman (Iran). The study implemented a four-week training programme based on Transactional Analysis, including elements such as script analysis, work on ego states, games and contracts. The results showed a significant increase in cognitive flexibility in the intervention group compared to the control group, as well as improved emotion regulation within the intervention group (Abbasszade et al., 2025). These findings indicate that TA can be an effective tool for supporting both psychological well-being and practical competences in the education of future professionals working in helping professions.

The reflective-methodological aspect of competences developed in the training of psychotherapists is illustrated by a study conducted among psychotherapy students in the TA modality at the Metanoia Institute in London. The study compared second-year students beginning clinical practice with a group of fourth-year students. The results indicated differences between the groups consistent with their level of training, suggesting the development of self-awareness and the ability to engage in contact among the more advanced students (van Rijn et al., 2011, pp. 16–24).

At the level of theoretical-diagnostic frameworks, Z. Wiecezorek's model is particularly useful, as it integrates the key categories of Transactional Analysis into a coherent structure of practice: ego states, transactional analysis, games, contracts, and script. The model functions as a common language and set of criteria, facilitating the observation and description of behaviours, the formulation of hypotheses, and the planning of interventions. In education, it allows for the organisation of teaching and the assessment of learning outcomes, while in research such as the examples cited earlier it provides a framework for interpreting results and comparing changes in competences. In this way, it connects students' developmental perspective with educational requirements and clinical practice (Wiecezorek, 2016, pp. 17–27).

In this context it is relevant to briefly refer to studies on the creative process in art therapy, which highlight its role in the integration of the self and in deepening insight into personality structures. The first is a review article by Haeyen (2019), which synthesises recent approaches and findings on art therapy, organising a catalogue of interventions aimed at mature, integrated self-functioning. The author combines the perspective of schema therapy with positive psychology and emphasises the role of play, flexibility, and creativity in moving beyond destructive patterns and building self-efficacy (Haeyen, 2019, pp. 1–15).

In a subsequent study conducted by Haeyen (2020), clear benefits of art therapy were observed in the emotional and social functioning of individuals with personality disorders. These most prominently concerned emotional expression, stabilisation of self-image, autonomy, and insight into personal behaviour patterns. The effects increased over time and were not differentiated by age, gender, or diagnostic cluster. They were facilitated by the therapist's non-judgemental stance and by maintaining a balance between freedom and structure (Haeyen et al., 2020).

To conclude this section, it is also worth mentioning a study on online art therapy, which demonstrated its potential in supporting self-integration and adaptive functions among individuals with a neurotic personality organisation. In the study by Çataldaş (2024), a nine-week cycle of art therapy sessions conducted remotely contributed to improvements in ego functions and emotion regulation in the experimental group, regardless of age or other demographic

variables. These findings show that even in online settings, creative expression can effectively support processes of self-regulation and the development of interpersonal abilities (Çataldaş et al., 2024, pp. 74–84).

In the literature, there are few but significant attempts to combine Transactional Analysis with art therapy. This direction is particularly important, as both approaches focus on developing self-awareness, reflexivity, and the modification of maladaptive relational patterns. The integration of TA and art therapy opens new possibilities in both clinical and educational practice, and its potential calls for further exploration, including in the studies presented in this article.

The first example is an experiment conducted in South Korea among housewives with higher education, raising children in early school age. Group art therapy combined with methods of Transactional Analysis contributed to the modification of parenting styles in the studied group. Democratic and autonomous attitudes as well as consistency increased, while parental stress decreased, particularly stress associated with the child's difficult temperament (Lim et al., 2015, pp. 649–670).

Another example is the publication by I. Levkova and P. Minchev, which discusses the integration of art therapy methods with the Transactional Analysis approach. The authors show how techniques derived from the arts, such as collage or music therapy, can support the process of uncovering unconscious content, recognising ego states, and strengthening the therapeutic relationship. The presented case studies demonstrate that the use of these methods facilitates both emotional expression and insight into personal patterns, while also enabling therapists to deepen their understanding of transactional dynamics (Levkova & Minchev, 2021, pp. 582–587).

The integration of art therapy and Transactional Analysis was also applied by J. Bloomgarden and F. F. Kaplan (1993), who applied visualisation and artistic activities as elements of group work. Referring to J. Loevinger's concept of ego development, the authors pointed out that combining art therapy techniques with Transactional Analysis and existential therapy promotes self-awareness, integration of experiences, and the formation of mature modes of functioning. The described model illustrates how creative methods can support the process of personality development within the perspective of TA (Bloomgarden & Kaplan, 1993, pp. 201–207).

Finally, it is worth emphasising that the literature also contains descriptions of clinical practice in which art therapists consciously combine Transactional Analysis with creative methods. One such example is the approach of Australian art therapist P. Howfield, who, in her work with children, families, and couples, uses TA to structure relationships and communication, while employing artistic activities as a space for revealing ego states and interactional patterns. These applications indicate that the integration of the two approaches is not only possible, but also brings practical effects in various therapeutic contexts (Davidson, n.d.).

The preceding examples illustrate the potential of combining TA and art therapy, which provides the starting point for presenting the study undertaken in this article.

Aim and rationale of the study

Incorporating Transactional Analysis into the curriculum of art therapy students can broaden opportunities for developing self-awareness and reflecting on one's own functioning. Previous research shows that TA supports the understanding of ego states and communication patterns, while art therapy facilitates self-integration and insight into personality structures. Nevertheless, the literature rarely combines these two perspectives in an educational context. The present study aimed to examine whether introducing elements of Transactional Analysis into the educational process of postgraduate students in *Art therapy with elements of pedagogical therapy* could deepen their self-awareness, enhance their ability to recognise ego states, and increase reflection on themselves and their experiences. In doing so, the study addresses a gap in the literature, where empirical evidence is lacking on whether TA can serve as a valuable tool for supporting the education of future art therapists.

Context and study design

The study was conducted within the framework of the postgraduate programme *Art Therapy with Elements of Pedagogical Therapy* at the Maria Grzegorzewska University in Warsaw. The participants were students of this programme (N = 52). The study structure followed a pretest–posttest structure: questionnaire measures (Egogram) were administered immediately before the workshop and after its completion. In parallel, short qualitative reflections were collected following the sessions.

The intervention was the art therapy workshop *“The Book of My Life”*, combining elements of Transactional Analysis and creative work. Participants created artist's books referring to the three ego states (Child, Adult, Parent), and then formulated brief descriptions of their experiences and insights from the process. This structure allowed for triangulation, juxtaposing changes in Egogram profiles with the narrative and emotional content expressed in the artworks and accompanying self-reflections.

Participants

The study involved 52 postgraduate students of the *Art Therapy with Elements of Pedagogical Therapy* programme, aged 25–55. The group consisted of 49 women and 3 men. The inclusion criterion was participation in the workshop “*The Book of My Life*.” No exclusion criteria were applied beyond withdrawal from the workshop. Recruitment was natural, encompassing all students enrolled in the course in a given semester. Participation was voluntary, and all participants provided informed consent for inclusion in the project and for the anonymous analysis of their results.

Research questions and hypotheses

The study addressed the following research questions:

1. Does participation in the *Book about My Life* workshop, based on the integration of Transactional Analysis and art therapy, result in changes in Egogram scores between the pretest and the posttest?
2. What kinds of themes and emotions related to ego states most frequently appear in participants’ self-reflections?
3. What themes and emotions most commonly accompany participants during the process of creating and discussing their books?
4. To what extent are participants’ reflections after the workshop consistent with their egogram results?

On the basis of the literature reviewed, three hypotheses were developed:

Hypotheses

- **H1:** The creative process during the workshop will foster the activation of attitudes associated with spontaneity, expression, and creativity.
- **H2:** The workshop integrating TA and art therapy will be perceived by most participants as a valuable educational and developmental experience.
- **H3:** Participation in the workshop will contribute to an increase in self-awareness and insight into the functioning of ego states.

Intervention

The workshop “*The Book of My Life*” was conducted using the artist’s book technique and lasted for five academic hours. The sessions followed these stages:

1. **Pretest** – completion of the Egogram questionnaire.
2. **Introduction** – a brief overview of E. Berne’s theory, with attention drawn to the division of the book into three stages corresponding to the ego states: Child, Adult, and Parent.

3. **Book creation** – each student individually created an artist's book using collage, with sketchbooks, coloured paper, magazines, fabrics, and self-brought materials. The task lasted 60 minutes, divided into three 20-minute parts corresponding to each ego state. Participants could adjust the time devoted to each section according to their needs, with an additional five minutes provided at the end to complete the state of their choice.
4. **Theory deepening** – a detailed discussion of the ego states and reflection on whether and how they were represented in the created books.
5. **Presentation and discussion** – each student had one minute to present their work. Afterwards, all books were displayed in a joint exhibition ("*The Library of Our Life*"), enabling participants to view all works and exchange insights.
6. **Posttest and reflection** – the Egogram questionnaire was completed again, results were calculated, and a group discussion followed concerning outcomes and personal insights. In addition, each participant was asked to provide a short written statement about their experiences and emotions related to the book-making process and the test analysis; these texts then served as material for qualitative analysis.

Research measures – Egogram

To measure ego structures, the *Kwestionariusz Stanów Ego* [Ego States Questionnaire], developed by M. Cichocka and A. Suchańska (Cichocka & Suchańska, 1989, pp. 33–59), was employed as part of the diagnostic techniques of Transactional Analysis. The tool consists of 60 items rated on a four-point scale (0 – never, 1 – sometimes, 2 – often, 3 – always). Responses are assigned to six categories of ego states: Critical Parent (Rodzic Krytyczny), Nurturing Parent (Rodzic Opiekuńczy), Adult (Dorośli), Adapted Child (Dziecko Dostosowane), Creative Child (Dziecko Twórcze), and Spontaneous Child (Dziecko Spontaniczne). The results can be presented numerically and as a graphic profile (egogram). The instrument enables analysis of the balance between ego states and is frequently applied in studies on self-awareness, communication, and individual functioning.

Data analysis and results

Results of participants assessed with the TA questionnaire – Egogram, obtained before and after the art therapy process (N = 52), were analyzed for the presence of differences across all test scales. A paired Student's t-test was applied for scales with distributions not significantly deviating from normality, and the Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used for scales requiring nonparametric testing.

Table 1
Paired sample comparison tests for TA questionnaire scales

Scale	ΔM	SMD	Statistic	p
Critical Parent	-0.077	-0.026	$t=0.235$	.815
Nurturing Parent	-0.135	-0.026	$t=0.428$	.670
Adult	-0.231	-0.083	$t=0.834$	.408
Adapted Child	0.25	0.068	$t=0.849$	.400
Creative Child	1.13	0.264	$W=175.5$	<.001***
Spontaneous Child	0.538	0.166	$t=-1.883$	.065

t – tStudent test statistic

W – Wilcoxon signed rank test statistic

Source: own research.

The results presented above show a statistically significant effect: an increase in scores on the Creative Child scale (SMD = 0.264, $\Delta M = 1.13$, $p < .001$) across the pre–post measurements. A statistical trend can also be observed for the Spontaneous Child scale where an increase in mean score was measured (SMD = 0.166, $\Delta M = 0.538$, $p=.065$).

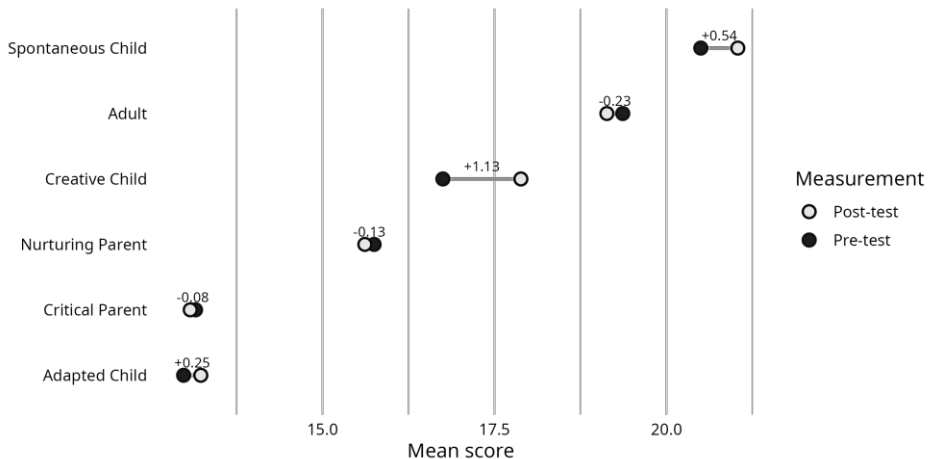


Figure 1
Mean differences between pre-test and post-test score of TA questionnaire

Numbers show Post-Pre difference

Source: own materials.

According to the Ego State Questionnaire (Cichocka & Suchańska, 1989), the Creative Child is associated with imagination, originality, and the capacity for artistic and symbolic expression, while the Spontaneous Child reflects playfulness, emotional openness, and natural spontaneity in relationships. The observed increase in these two ego states suggests that the artistic process of creating the “Book of My Life” may have activated participants’ creative and expressive resources, reinforcing both reflective and experiential dimensions of learning. In line with this interpretation, the findings support Hypothesis 1, which predicted that the creative process during the workshop would foster attitudes linked to spontaneity, expression, and creativity.

Qualitative Study – Data and Results

To complement the quantitative results, a qualitative analysis of participants’ written reflections was conducted, allowing for a deeper understanding of their experiences during the workshop.

Qualitative Data Collection

At the end of the workshop, participants were asked to provide short written reflections on their experiences, emotions and insights. To facilitate this process, they were given five guiding questions:

1. *What feelings did you experienced while representing different ego states (Parent, Adult, Child) during the creation of your art book? Which of them felt most comfortable to you, and why?*
2. *Which chapter of your book turned out to be the richest in content? What contributed to its development, and what emotions or experiences dominated this part of your story?*
3. *What did you observe after calculating the results of the Egogram test? Did any of the results regarding your dominant ego states surprise you?*
4. *What new perspectives or discoveries about your life emerged during the workshop? How did these discoveries affect your perception of yourself and your past/future?*
5. *Did the process of creating an art book about your life affect your emotions and well-being, and if so, how? Do you think this effect will last after the workshop?*

It should be emphasized, that these questions served only as prompts to support reflection. Participants were free to address them selectively or to provide other observations they considered meaningful.

The collected statements were then imported into MAXQDA 24 software, which supported the coding and categorization process. The analysis combined quantitative information about the frequency of themes with qualitative exploration of participants' individual voices. A content analysis approach was applied, allowing us to identify recurring categories and patterns. Results are presented both quantitatively (as frequencies and percentages of themes) and qualitatively (through illustrative quotations from participants).

Table 2
Frequency of main categories in participants' reflections

Category	N	%
Self-awareness	12	33.3
Negative emotions	11	30.6
Ambivalence	7	19.4
Confidence	4	11.1
Confusion	2	5.6

Source: own research.

The distribution of categories shows that *self-awareness* emerged as the most frequent theme, confirming H3, which predicted that the workshop would enhance participants' insight into ego states. A notable proportion of reflections also expressed *ambivalence*, suggesting that the process activated mixed or conflicting emotions, an expected element of personal exploration. *Confidence* was reported less frequently but highlights the empowering aspect of creative work with personal narratives. Finally, *confusion* and *negative feelings* appeared in a smaller but meaningful number of statements, indicating that for some participants, the art therapy process also surfaced unresolved difficulties, particularly when reflecting on childhood.

Associations between themes and emotions

In order to identify areas that evoked deeper emotional reflections among participants in the art therapy process, the frequency of topics present in the feedback was compared with the emotional character of the statements using contingency analysis.

The results of the contingency analysis show a statistically significant dependence between the presence of negative feelings and references to childhood (Fisher's Exact test, $p = .04$, OR = 5.44). This suggests that the art therapy process may have evoked difficult childhood memories or experiences. Illus-

trative statements include: *“Part of my childhood was quite difficult for me, because of the strong emotions associated with it”* and *“Childhood feels oppressive to me.”*

Table 3

Association between negative feelings and references to childhood

Childhood Topic	Negative Feelings		Total
	Absent	Present	
Absent	22	6	28
Present	3	5	8
Total	25	11	36

OR= 5.44, Fisher’s Exact test p-value =0.04

Source: own research.

Another interesting trend was observed between ambivalent (emotion-free) statements and references to self-awareness, as shown in the table below

Table 4

Relationship between ambivalence and self-awareness in participants’ reflections

Self-awareness topic	Ambivalence		Total
	Absent	Present	
Absent	12	6	18
Present	17	1	18
Total	29	7	36

OR= 0.118, Fisher’s Exact test p-value =0.08

Source: own research.

The results indicate a trend suggesting that statements coded as *ambivalent* (neutral, mixed, or unclear in emotional tone) occurred less frequently when participants explicitly referred to self-awareness. Although this association did not reach conventional statistical significance (Fisher’s Exact test $p = .08$), the pattern may suggest that reflecting on self-awareness was accompanied by more decisive and emotionally engaged statements. Illustrative quotes include: *“Balancing — no ego state dominates”* or *“The stages were strongly mixed, with concentration on myself.”*

To deepen the understanding of participants’ experiences, a qualitative analysis of their written reflections was conducted. Four overarching themes emerged, capturing both the challenges and developmental opportunities evoked by the workshop.

The first theme concerned **self-awareness and personal reflection**. Many participants emphasized that the process of creating the art book encouraged them to analyze their own ego states and patterns, often leading to insights about their past and present functioning. As one student noted, *"I realized how much responsibility I take for myself,"* while another reflected, *"Balancing — no ego state dominates."*

A second recurring theme was **difficult childhood memories**. The creative task often brought back experiences of pain, exclusion, or unresolved emotions from early life. This was particularly evident when working on the Child ego state, which aligned with the quantitative finding of a significant link between childhood content and negative emotions. As participants expressed, *"Part of my childhood was quite difficult, due to the strong emotions connected with it,"* and *"Childhood feels oppressive to me."*

The third theme involved **ambivalence and mixed emotions**. For some participants, reflections were marked by uncertainty or difficulty in identifying with one dominant ego state. Their narratives illustrated a sense of inner conflict or confusion, for example: *"The stages were strongly mixed, with concentration on myself,"* or *"I couldn't find myself among my peers; I felt excluded."*

Finally, a fourth theme highlighted a **sense of responsibility and self-efficacy**. The workshop not only surfaced challenges but also reinforced feelings of autonomy and readiness to face adult life with maturity. One participant described this as: *"Taking care of myself, being responsible for myself. Even if adult life is difficult, it is worth it."*

Together, these themes demonstrate that the integration of transactional analysis and art therapy stimulated deep personal exploration, simultaneously activating difficult emotions and fostering greater awareness, creativity, and responsibility. In summary, the qualitative findings confirm that the workshop was perceived as a valuable educational and developmental experience (H2). Participants emphasized its role in fostering deeper self-awareness and reflection on ego states, which aligns with the assumption that the integration of transactional analysis and art therapy supports personal growth (H3). At the same time, the presence of difficult childhood memories and ambivalent emotions shows that the process not only promoted insight and agency but also encouraged participants to confront unresolved experiences. In addition to the written reflections, participants' artistic books themselves provided valuable qualitative material, visually expressing the same emotional and cognitive processes captured in their narratives.

Artistic outcomes as qualitative material

The resulting art books provided a visual counterpart to participants' written reflections. They varied widely in form and mode of expression — some resem-

bled visual diaries, others narrative collages or spatial objects made from fabric, string, or textured paper. Participants often used symbols and short written fragments to represent relationships between the Parent, Adult, and Child ego states. These artistic forms revealed a broad emotional spectrum and diverse creative strategies, complementing the self-reflective narratives. The article includes selected photographs documenting the workshop process and examples of participants' books (figs. 1–6).



Fig. 1, 2

Students during the process of creating their artist's books.

Source: own materials.



Fig 3,4

Students presenting pages from their books on ego states.

Source: own materials.

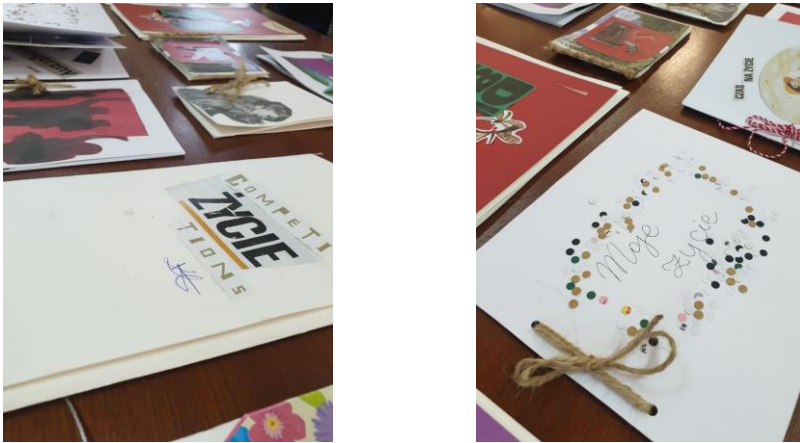


Fig 5,6

"The Library of Our Life" – exhibition of the artist's books created during the workshop.

Source: own materials.

Discussion and Conclusions

The present study examined the integration of Transactional Analysis (TA) and art therapy in the educational context of postgraduate training for art therapists. Quantitative results showed a significant increase in the Creative Child ego state, with a trend also observed for the Spontaneous Child. These findings suggest that creative and expressive resources were activated during the workshop, aligning with the central role of artistic creation in facilitating spontaneity and imagination. In turn, the qualitative analysis revealed that participants most frequently reflected on self-awareness, emotional processing, and life narratives, with some statements pointing to difficult childhood experiences. Taken together, the results indicate that the workshop was perceived as a valuable developmental experience, supporting both personal reflection and professional training goals.

These findings are consistent with earlier reports showing that art therapy enhances integration of the self and fosters emotional insight (Haeyen, 2018; Haeyen et al., 2020). They also resonate with studies where combining TA with creative methods supported reflection on ego states and communication patterns (Bloomgarden & Kaplan, 1993). Importantly, the observed strengthening of the Creative Child mode is in line with the theoretical role of creativity as a resource for flexibility and problem-solving (Berne, 1961/2016).

Nevertheless, some participants also reported ambivalence or recalled difficult childhood experiences, which suggests that art therapy can bring unresolved material to the surface. This aligns with the broader view of art therapy as a safe but emotionally evocative process (Malchiodi, 2014). Such outcomes highlight the importance of the therapist's supportive stance, balancing freedom of expression with structure — factors already noted as critical for effective outcomes in art therapy with personality disorders (Haeyen et al., 2020).

Additionally, the study was conducted with a naturalistic, convenience sample of postgraduate art therapy students ($N = 52$) from a single university, predominantly women. The limited sample size reflects the actual enrollment structure of the postgraduate program, which typically includes around 30 students per year. The study was carried out over two consecutive academic years, allowing data collection from two cohorts; however, not all students were present during the workshop session. The gender imbalance mirrors the reality of art therapy education and practice, where women strongly prevail due to the helping and interpersonal nature of the profession. The absence of randomization and a control group resulted from the educational context and small cohort size, which did not allow for random assignment. Given the 1.5-year duration of postgraduate studies, a long-term follow-up was not feasible at this stage. Consequently, the present project should be regarded as a pilot study exploring the feasibility of integrating Transactional Analysis with art therapy in educational settings. Future research could address these issues by introducing control groups, longer-term outcome measures, and additional instruments for assessing self-awareness and integration.

In conclusion, the integration of TA and art therapy in postgraduate training appears to be a promising approach. It not only supports self-awareness and insight into ego states but also strengthens creative and spontaneous aspects of functioning. For art therapy education, these results provide an argument for including TA concepts in curricula, both as a diagnostic framework and as a tool for personal development.

Other approaches to developing self-awareness in helping professions, such as mindfulness training, reflective journaling, or supervision, also aim to enhance insight and emotional regulation. However, these methods typically rely on verbal reflection and cognitive processing. In contrast, combining Transactional Analysis with art therapy introduces a visual and symbolic dimension that allows participants to externalize and reframe inner dynamics between ego states. This multimodal approach may therefore facilitate a deeper, embodied form of reflection, bridging cognitive understanding with emotional and creative expression.

From an educational perspective, such workshops can be effectively integrated into art therapy curricula as experiential learning modules that support

both professional growth and self-awareness. Participation in reflective creative work based on Transactional Analysis concepts enables students to better understand their inner mechanisms, empathy, and relational patterns essential in therapeutic practice. The integration of TA and artistic expression may also serve as a valuable component of supervision and continuing professional education for art therapists.

At the practical level, the workshop model described in this study can be incorporated into art therapy curricula as a structured yet creative method for fostering reflective competence. Integrating Transactional Analysis with art-based exploration allows students to experience theoretical concepts in action, deepening their understanding of interpersonal dynamics and internal dialogue. Such experiential learning may enhance both intrapersonal and interpersonal skills that are essential for professional art therapy practice, including self-awareness, empathy, and the ability to analyze relational processes.

Future studies will aim to extend this pilot project by including students from other postgraduate art therapy programs in Poland, thereby increasing the diversity and representativeness of the sample. It is also planned to introduce a control group completing the Ego State Questionnaire at two time points without participation in the art therapy workshop, which will allow for comparison of spontaneous and intervention-related changes. A short-term follow-up is further envisaged to examine the stability of observed effects. Such an expanded design will enable a more comprehensive evaluation of the educational and developmental impact of integrating Transactional Analysis into art therapy curricula.

Final remarks

The findings of this study highlight the practical value of integrating Transactional Analysis into art therapy education. Beyond confirming its developmental benefits for students, the approach offers a structured yet creative framework that may enrich curricula and better prepare future art therapists for reflective professional practice. Further research is needed to examine the long-term effects of this integration across diverse educational and clinical contexts.

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Analiza transakcyjna w kształceniu arteterapeutów – „Książka o moim życiu”

Streszczenie

Celem badania była analiza możliwości łączenia analizy transakcyjnej (AT) i arteterapii w kształceniu arteterapeutów. W projekcie uczestniczyło 52 studentów studiów podyplomowych, którzy wypełnili Kwestionariusz Stanów Ego (Egogram) przed i po pięciogodzinnym warsztacie artetera-

peutycznym „Książka o moim życiu”. Podczas zajęć tworzyli książki artystyczne odnoszące się do stanów ego: Rodzica, Dorosłego i Dziecka, a następnie formułowali krótkie refleksje pisemne. Wyniki ilościowe wykazały wzrost w skali Dziecka Twórczego ($p < 0,001$) oraz tendencję wzrostową w skali Dziecka Spontanicznego ($p = 0,065$), przy stabilności pozostałych skal. Analiza jakościowa pokazała, że najczęściej pojawiającym się wątkiem była samoświadomość. Refleksje dotyczące dzieciństwa łączyły się częściej z emocjami negatywnymi, natomiast ambiwalencja była rzadsza, gdy uczestnicy odnosili się bezpośrednio do samoświadomości. Uzyskane wyniki wskazują, że integracja AT i arteterapii sprzyja autorefleksji, aktywizuje kreatywność i spontaniczność oraz wspiera przygotowanie do praktyki zawodowej.

Słowa kluczowe: analiza transakcyjna, kształcenie arteterapeutów, stany ego, samoświadomość, kreatywność.