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**CREATIVE DRAMA, CREATIVE MINDS: CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE CREATIVE
DRAMA TO THE PRESCHOOLERS' DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAINS**

***Annotation.** Creative drama serves as a powerful tool in the holistic development of preschoolers, offering a myriad of benefits across various domains. Its aims encompass socialization through group activities, experiential learning, and the fostering of verbal creativity. Through creative drama, preschoolers not only enhance their physical development but also express themselves verbally, refine social skills, and develop self-awareness. Moreover, creative drama plays a crucial role in shaping teachers' perspectives toward preschoolers. In essence, creative drama provides a rich and engaging platform for preschoolers to explore, express, and learn, contributing significantly to their cognitive, emotional, and social growth during these formative years.*

***Key words:** creative drama, contribution, preschoolers, cognitive, socio-emotional.*

***Анотація.**Творча драма служить потужним інструментом цілісного розвитку дошкільнят, пропонуючи безліч переваг у різних сферах. Його цілі охоплюють соціалізацію через групову діяльність, навчання на досвіді та сприяння словесній творчості. За допомогою творчої ігри дошкільнята не тільки покращують свій фізичний розвиток, але й виражають себе вербально, удосконалюють соціальні навички та розвивають самосвідомість. Крім того,*

творча драма відіграє вирішальну роль у формуванні поглядів педагогів на дошкільнят. По суті, творча драма надає багату та захоплюючу платформу для дошкільнят, щоб досліджувати, виражати та вчитися, суттєво сприяючи їхньому когнітивному, емоційному та соціальному зростанню протягом цих років формування.

***Ключові слова:** творча драма, внесок, дошкільники, когнітивний, соціально-емоційний.*

Introduction. Preschool education marks a pivotal stage in a child's developmental journey, where the seeds of curiosity, imagination, and social interaction are sown. Recognizing the transformative power of creative experiences, educators increasingly turn to creative drama as a dynamic and engaging tool for fostering holistic development in preschoolers. This innovative approach not only cultivates a love for learning but also nurtures crucial skills such as communication, problem-solving, and emotional intelligence. In this exploration, we delve into the realm of creative drama in preschool, unraveling its significance, methodologies, and the profound impact it has on the minds of young learners. Join us on a journey where the stage becomes a vibrant classroom, and each child is an actor in the unfolding drama of their own development. Drama serves as a technique that nurtures children's imagination and creativity while facilitating experiential learning. Integrating drama activities into educational programs for children offers several advantages, including the promotion of creative thinking, the reinforcement of learned concepts, the cultivation of critical thinking abilities, enhancement of listening skills, fostering cooperation and empathy, instilling a positive outlook, and supporting overall developmental areas [13; 14]. It is understood that when children engage in creative drama with their peers, they experience a sense of inner peace, gain encouragement, and develop increased confidence. Participation in these activities also boosts students' motivation. Through drama activities within educational settings, individuals have the opportunity to confront various challenges

they may encounter in their future lives and devise solutions. Therefore, it is imperative that creative drama initiatives are prominently incorporated into preschool programs [21]. Many studies reveal the importance of drama in education. These studies were generally conducted on topics such as the effects of drama on children, its contributions to their development, teachers' competencies regarding drama, their opinions, perceptions and attitudes. The importance of drama in education has been better understood as a result of these studies [7; 10; 15; 19].

Considering the effects of pre-school education on children's development, drama method is a suitable educational tool. Creative drama is one of the activities that enhances and reinforces children's mental, emotional, social, psychomotor, language, and self-care skills. Implementing a learning-by-doing approach for preschoolers enhances the retention of learned concepts. Direct engagement in activities boosts children's enthusiasm for learning. Creative drama studies serve as a vital educational tool, encouraging active participation from students. Drama plays a major role in improving the quality of education and in the education and achievements of our children, as it is the age when the foundations of personality and character development are laid between the ages of 3-6 in pre-school. Creative drama aims to facilitate socialization through group activities, promote experiential learning, and enhance verbal creativity. It contributes to children's physical development, verbal expression, social skills, and self-awareness. Through creative drama, children have the opportunity to express emotions, explore various roles, animate objects, and engage in diverse experiences [20].

Additionally, creative drama plays a pivotal role in shaping teachers' perceptions of preschool children, fostering empathy, and promoting social development. Research suggests that prospective teachers recognize the effectiveness of incorporating creative drama into the learning-teaching process and acknowledge its significant impact on children's development [9; 16]. Considering the benefits of creative drama for children, it is important that teacher candidates find themselves successful in applying the drama method as well as having the

competence to know and apply drama. For this reason, it is considered important to reveal the factors affecting this so that pre-school teacher candidates can effectively apply the drama method in their educational activities after graduation [5]. Students who receive creative drama training use body language effectively. It helps to send messages effectively to the other party non-verbally or without using words [1; 4; 18].

The effective use of creative drama in many areas of education can be seen as an enriching situation for teacher candidates. The teacher can use creative drama in teaching many subjects in every lesson. The teacher makes the student active through creative drama. Creative drama practices improve students' ability to produce solutions and make decisions in the face of problems [2; 6; 8].

Engaging in drama studies offers individuals various experiences, opportunities to assume different roles, exposure to diverse events and situations, fostering a multifaceted perception of life, nurturing the desire for inquiry, and facilitating experiential learning. These outcomes significantly impact individual development. Consequently, this study holds great significance in exploring the extent to which children are influenced by drama activities, which play a vital role in their development, the benefits they offer, and their effects on children's overall growth.

The aim of the article is to investigate the contributions of creative drama to preschool children's developmental domains within preschool settings.

Specialized literature was used during the study [1 - 22].

Contributions of the creative drama to the preschool children's developmental domains.

Creative drama offers numerous contributions to children's development across various domains

Cognitive Development: Creative drama enhances cognitive skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking, and decision-making. Through imaginative play and storytelling, children learn to sequence events, understand cause and effect, and explore abstract concepts.

Language Development: Participation in creative drama activities fosters language acquisition and communication skills. Children engage in verbal exchanges, storytelling, and role-playing, which enrich vocabulary, grammar, and expressive language abilities.

Social-Emotional Development: Creative drama provides opportunities for emotional expression and empathy development. Role-playing allows children to explore and understand different perspectives, emotions, and social dynamics. Cooperative play promotes teamwork, collaboration, and conflict resolution skills.

Creativity and Imagination: Creative drama stimulates imagination, allowing children to explore limitless possibilities and expand their creativity. Through improvisation and role-play, children develop innovative thinking, originality, and the ability to generate novel ideas.

Self-Confidence and Self-Esteem: Engaging in creative drama builds self-confidence as children take on different roles, express themselves, and receive positive feedback. Successes in improvisation, storytelling, and performance boost self-esteem and foster a positive self-image.

Physical Development: Creative drama involves physical movement, gesture, and expression, promoting gross and fine motor skills. Activities such as acting out scenes, miming, and dancing contribute to coordination, balance, and body awareness.

Cultural Awareness and Diversity: Creative drama exposes children to diverse cultures, perspectives, and experiences. Through storytelling and role-playing, children gain insights into different traditions, customs, and societal norms, fostering cultural awareness and acceptance.

Problem-Solving and Adaptability: Creative drama encourages children to think on their feet, adapt to changing circumstances, and solve problems collaboratively. Negotiating roles, navigating imaginary scenarios, and improvising responses develop resilience, flexibility, and adaptability.

Empathy and Understanding: Participation in creative drama activities cultivates empathy as children step into the shoes of different characters and explore their emotions and experiences. Understanding the perspectives of others promotes compassion, tolerance, and acceptance of diversity.

Life Skills and Resilience: Creative drama fosters essential life skills such as communication, teamwork, and leadership. Children learn to navigate social interactions, cope with challenges, and persevere in the face of adversity, building resilience and emotional intelligence. Overall, creative drama serves as a powerful tool for holistic development, nurturing children's cognitive, emotional, social, and physical well-being while fostering a lifelong love for creativity and expression.

Conclusions. In this study, the concepts of drama and game are explained and attention is drawn to the drama-game relationship in the preschool period. In today's education system, drama and games are indispensable areas in the preschool period. Drama and games are intertwined and frequently used in pre-school education. In order for preschool children to make the most of these two areas, these areas should be given due importance. The study is a descriptive study in survey model. In the study, by scanning the relevant literature, drama, the importance of drama, play, the importance of play and the relationship between drama and play in pre-school education were discussed. In this period, when the foundations of the child's personality are laid, frequent inclusion of drama activities is important and necessary for all stages of the child's development. Creative drama should be included in activities as it develops and supports children's mental, emotional, social, psychomotor and self-care skills.

It is known that effective and permanent learning takes place in learning processes in which the child actively participates by doing and experiencing. Children reach information on their own by directly participating in activities, expressing their feelings and thoughts easily in activities, observing and experimenting, and the information acquired in this way becomes permanent. When viewed in this sense, the necessity of including drama activities in the education of

pre-school children becomes obvious. One of the most effective ways to communicate is to have the ability to empathize. Empathy is what enables people to understand each other and tries to understand the other person's feelings and thoughts by putting himself in the other person's shoes. It is important that teachers should not interfere with children during the activity and that drama activities should be appropriate to children's age and development characteristics and that children should participate in activities on a voluntary basis. Values education should be given through gamification through creative drama activities. It has been concluded that the subject should be brought to a level that attracts children's attention by using remarkable and different materials suitable for values education. It can be said that creative drama is an effective method in teaching the subject of "Values education", which should be taken seriously in the preschool period, which is a very active period in personality development [11]. The importance of using materials in drama activities was emphasized. It has been concluded that it is important that materials concretize abstract subjects, make the subject clear and understandable, and make the activity more productive, eye-catching and enjoyable.

Recommendations. By incorporating the recommendations below, educators can harness the full potential of creative drama in preschool, creating a rich and dynamic learning environment that nurtures creativity, social skills, and a love for exploration.

Create a Welcoming Environment: Establish a safe and inclusive space where children feel comfortable expressing themselves through creative drama. Set up a designated area with props, costumes, and open-ended materials to spark imagination.

Incorporate Storytelling and Imagination: Integrate storytelling into creative drama activities to stimulate children's imaginations and narrative skills. Encourage children to create and act out their own stories, fostering creativity and self-expression.

Emphasize Cooperative Play: Design activities that promote teamwork, cooperation, and social interaction among preschoolers. Group exercises and collaborative storytelling enhance communication skills and the ability to work collectively.

Encourage Expression of Emotions: Use creative drama as a tool for children to explore and express a range of emotions in a supportive environment. Provide opportunities for dramatic play that allow children to embody different roles and feelings.

Integrate Curriculum Concepts: Weave educational concepts into creative drama activities to enhance learning in areas such as language development, numeracy, and science. Align activities with specific curriculum goals to reinforce academic concepts through playful engagement.

Promote Problem-Solving Skills: Structure scenarios within creative drama that require children to think critically and solve problems collaboratively. Encourage open-ended questions and discussions to stimulate critical thinking.

Offer Diverse Themes and Perspectives: Explore a variety of themes, cultures, and perspectives through creative drama to broaden children's understanding of the world.

Introduce diverse characters and narratives to promote cultural awareness and inclusivity.

Foster Self-Confidence and Communication: Provide opportunities for each child to take on different roles, fostering self-confidence and a sense of achievement. Emphasize effective communication through activities that involve speaking, listening, and non-verbal expression.

Adapt Activities to Individual Needs: Tailor creative drama activities to accommodate different learning styles and abilities within the preschool group. Be attentive to individual preferences and adapt activities to ensure inclusivity.

Celebrate and Reflect: Celebrate children's creative efforts and performances to boost self-esteem and a positive attitude towards learning. Incorporate reflection

sessions where children discuss and share their experiences, promoting self-awareness and communication skills.

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