

## ABSTRACT

The presented paper is devoted to the psycho-pedagogical problem of the influence of tactile therapy on the stimulation of the development of children on the autism spectrum. The scientific position that has changed over the years shows the complexity of the phenomenon, aiming at attempts to explain it. The issue of the development and functioning of a child with autism is undoubtedly an interesting research problem. As an area, it opens up wide opportunities for search for help, support and therapy aided by many years of research. The overlapping symptomological triad allows for a psycho-pedagogical assessment and the implementation of new methods to improve the functioning of children with ASD. Early development support based on the premises of a therapeutic effect creates new opportunities for improvement. The conducted research emphasized the relevance of tactile therapy as a method that stimulates and improves given functions.

The subject of study shows the level of functioning of children with autism in the early support of child development. The aim of the research was to establish and define the development of an autistic child and their functioning in the scope of particular areas of development, whose theoretical goal is: to determine the degree of autism and individual functioning of the studied children; and the practical one: to formulate the premises for therapeutic work.

The study included 40 children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). Two groups have been distinguished among them: Experimental group (E) - 20 children aged 6-7 (5 girls and 15 boys) and Control group (C) - 20 children aged 6-7 (5 girls and 15 boys).

The following tools were used for assessment:

The questionnaire for an interview with the parents of an autistic child - part I - contains general data concerning the family and the autistic child. Part II - concerned therapy and part III - data concerned the child's social behavior. Developed by the Polish Association of Behavioral Therapy (Kornela Grzegorzczuk-Dłuciak).

The following were applied and used: CARS - Childhood Autism Rating Scale (E. Schopler, R. Richler, B. Renner, 1988), which determined the degree of autism from mild-moderate to severe, and the Psychoeducational Profile PEP-R - E. Schopler, R. Reicher, A. Bashford, M.D. Lansing, Lee M. Marcus. The Psychoeducational Profile concerned two aspects of the assessment of a child's functioning - (Development Scale) and their behavior (Behavior Scale) and was used to measure the progress in development and therapy.

The collected data was subjected to statistical and comparative analysis. Based on the analysis of the collected material, the collected data was subject to statistical analysis. Based on R software version 4.0.5., the statistical significance was set at 0.05.

Verification of the impact of tactile therapy (used only in the experimental group) on the level of autism (measured with the CARS questionnaire) and on the Psychoeducational Profile of children (measured with the PEP-R questionnaire) was performed using a two-way ANOVA analysis in a mixed scheme. This analysis is used when there is both an intergroup factor (in this study - tactile therapy) and an intragroup factor (in this study - two different measurement/study times).

The conducted analysis confirmed that the use of tactile therapy improves the quality of functioning of the respondents in the Early Development Support classes.

**Keywords:** autism, early support, tactile therapy,