

The Psychodrama and its Contribution to the Children's Competitive Confrontation. Case Study

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The purpose of this paper is twofold, first to study in depth by analyzing the phenomena in the circle of the psychodrama group and then to highlight the results from the application of the psychodrama technique to young athletes who would take part in competitions. A group of 6 boys and 4 girls (N = 10, 100%) aged 12 years ± 5 months have participated in psychodrama sessions, lasting 90 minutes, with a frequency of every 15 days for 12 months (January 2019 – January 2020). The meetings took place in parallel and in combination with the judo training that lasted 90 minutes for three times a week. Both the trainings and the psychodrama meetings took place in the same place. The present work is a case study for the detailed examination and qualitative analysis of the group of young judo athletes in the process of psychodrama. The results of the coupling of the program of physical education and the method of psychodrama were impressive both by the testimonies of the children and the official results of the Panhellenic championship for girls and boys. Psychodrama can be an alternative method of education in school.

Keywords: psychodrama, judo, stress, athletes, physical education, children.

For citation: Zaragas C. The Psychodrama and its Contribution to the Children's Competitive Confrontation. Case Study. *Kulturno-istoricheskaya psikhologiya = Cultural-Historical Psychology*, 2021. Vol. 17, no. 3, pp. 143–151. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17759/chp.2021170318>

Introduction

In the review of research papers [1; 2; 3; 4; 5], the psychodrama as Group psychotherapy practice improves the symptoms associated with a wide range of behavioral problems while remaining and attracting for a long time the focus of scientific interest. The positive contribution of the implementation of intervention programs with the practice of psychodrama in the development of interpersonal relationships and social skills of participants, self-knowledge and emotional understanding is emphasized by many studies [6; 7], in the treatment of eating disorders [8]. The research [9] reports positive results from the application of psychodrama in higher education in order to detect and solve the teaching and learning needs of students, while the research [10] reports the psychodrama that was developed in the graduate program of the School of Nursing of the University of Sao Paulo as a pedagogical teaching method for the protection of workers' health. Analytical psychodrama, as a form of group psychotherapy, is an integral part of the treatment program for young adults at the Counseling Center of the University of Bologna, which provides a free service to its students, aimed at providing psychological support [11]. The results of various university studies in many countries [12; 11], have shown the success of the inter-

vention in reducing symptoms and improving the well-being of patients and even that analytical psychodrama is an appropriate treatment for students as it reduces the symptoms of young adults. Research on psychodrama [13; 14; 15] is conducted in a school-community context, focusing on interdisciplinary prevention programs and they are related to socio-emotional learning as well as children's and adolescents' bullying and aggression.

The athletic match and especially the children's confrontation in individual combat competitions, such as judo, often generate tension and stress [16]. According to the application of McGrath's theory [17], children of late childhood, in the sport of judo participate in a process which includes: a) environmental stimuli that make demands on the child, such as the opponent, his/her technical level, the confrontational intelligence and the successes of the rival athlete, b) the child's perception of the specific situation and how it should be dealt with, c) the actual action – the child's response to this situation, and d) the consequences of this action for the child. A phenomenological state of stress is created by the complex of environmental stimulus, the child's competitive abilities, and the conflict situation of these two and whether his/her abilities respond to this state. In a representation of the process of children's confrontation in judo competitions of the children's categories for boys and girls and

contrasting with the stages of occurrence of stress, the judo competition is a psychological and physiological requirement. The child's perception of the demands of the fight is related to the fact that the child perceives the demands of the fight "perceives them as a threat" by thinking such as: "it will be very difficult for me to win this fight", "the other's ability is better "My ability is not enough to win." This condition is often characterized by an increased heart rate, rapid breathing, abdominal cramps, negative thoughts and increased muscle tension, which lead to reduced performance compared to the actual performance that the child could achieve [18].

The purpose of this study is to study the application and effectiveness of psychodrama in a group of children of late childhood involved in the sport of judo to enhance their athletic performance.

Conceptual definitions

Psychodrama is a psychotherapeutic method during which participants are encouraged to continue and complete their actions, only through dramatization, role-playing and dramatic self-presentation. Both verbal and non-verbal communication are used and a number of scenes are represented that describe, for example, memories of past events, fantasies, dreams, future plans, internal conflicts and the mental state of the individual in the here and now [19].

The protagonist who is the first in both the action and in the psychodramatic process is the representative voice through which the other members of the group can "process" themselves [7].

Performance stress is a generalized fear before a presentation or performance in front of an audience, which usually focuses on the consequences of failing to meet the requirements of the occasion [20].

Stress is a prolonged period of psychological and physical stimulation, which has negative effects on mood, cognitive ability, immune function and physical health [20].

Theoretical background of research

"Spontaneity" as a concept is the source manifestation of behavior, that is, when someone acts following one's inner impulses without accepting external influences and is characterized by the element of competence, while when it refers to an already known situation it contains a degree of innovation [7; 21]. Fine (1979) [22], states that when spontaneity is limited, suspended then the individual is led to individual and social psychopathology. According to the founder of psychodrama [21] the level of individual spontaneity functions as a criterion for assessing his mental state, social ability and involvement in this situation. Psychodramatic intervention promotes spontaneity and creativity, as is the case with children's play. This mental mechanism then facilitates new roles and coping with new situations [23; 21]. In psychodramatic intervention, individuals meet each other in «here and now», that is, the immediacy of the situation, the focus of their consciousness on the issue, the

treatment of themselves and others in the foreground [24]. In the psychodramatic encounter, concepts and mental phenomena develop themselves such as; we are together, silence, eye and physical contact, body language, uniqueness, love, hate, anger, fear, past, present, future [25].

A key feature is the "tele" the two-way flow of emotions between the participants in the intervention [7; 21]. The "tele" is that connecting factor that connects the members of the team; it is the mutual exchange of empathy and appreciation [21].

"Purification" is a concept used by the ancient philosopher Aristotle and meant the "emotional relief, discharge" of the viewer watching the tragedy. The members of the psychodrama group "see, observe and reflect" on a new version, perspective on an old problematic situation and begin to feel differently about it [21].

According to sociological theory, "role" is the social behavior that is expected from a person who holds a social position in relation to the holder of another position [26].

The exposure of the individual in the psychodramatic process relates to communication and the way in which it relates to other players within the team [27]. The other players have different perceptions of the situation and perhaps different perspectives on things in psychodrama. The diversity of views, decisions makes its appearance within the team of psychodrama.

The "transition" to psychodrama refers to many issues, such as in the phases of the process e.g. transition from warm-up, to the dramatization and to the post-dramatization phase, to the roles that the individual assumes, before, during and after playing, as well as the transitions to the spiritual level from a real state, to imaginary and symbolic and vice versa [28; 21].

The child in the present psychodramatic process adopts the other's attitude (rival athlete, athlete's, coach's, sports fans, champion's, and parent's) and realizes, performs this role with himself herself, that is, handles this role as an object. This role has a social structure, characteristics which the child becomes in familiar with psychodrama. These characteristics of the role are associated with the systems of social, historical and cultural structure in the community in which the child lives and develops [29; 30]. The fact that the child adopts and internalizes the characteristics of the role that have been mentioned above means that he / she adopts and internalizes the characteristics and attitudes of the wider society as a whole in the community in which he /she develops. This is very important for the child and his social development. The child adopts and internalizes the above behaviors and makes an effort to respond appropriately to this role through the psychodramatic process. The child also understands and adopts the other participants' attitude in the group, e.g. of athletes, coaches, fans, parents, friends involved in this process. At this point it has to do with his individual and group duty that he perceives and the characteristics of other roles and behaviors. This is exactly the fact that the adoption and realization by the child of the characteristics and behavior of the other roles, but also the relationship between the roles, influences and shapes the behavior of the child but it is also very important for the socialization of child's according to Mead [29]. The child will therefore organize

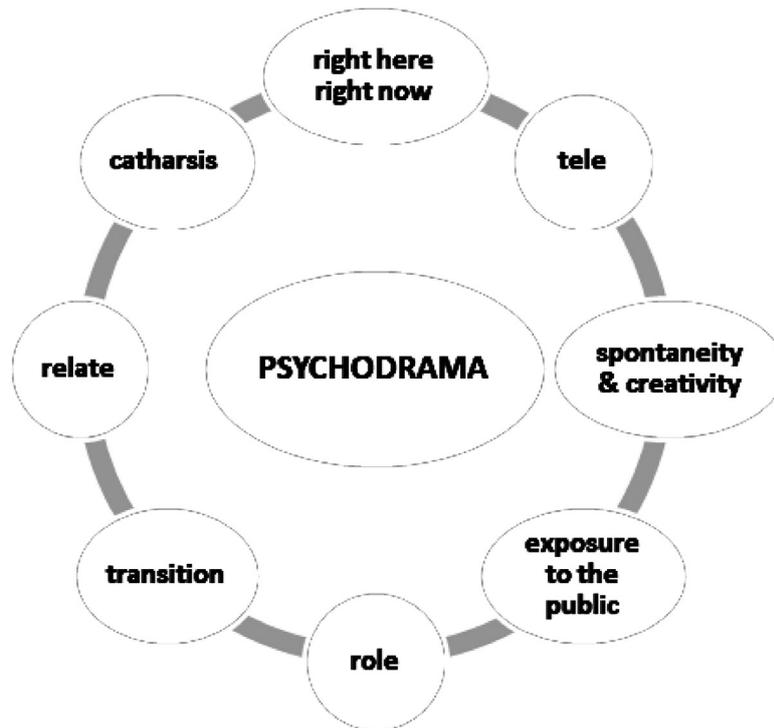


Fig. 1. Basic concepts of the psychodramatic process

his /her behavior in the psychodramatic game according to the above, but at the same time he / she is related to the others and expresses his /her behavior in the game, in the team in a spontaneous way. According to Vygotsky [31], the factors of mental development are not inside the child's body but outside, it in the child's social interaction with other people (especially in adults) in the course of which information, habits and patterns of social behavior are not simply assimilated, but the main mental structures are formed that then determine the whole flow of mental processes. Once these structures are formed, we can speak of the existence in man of the corresponding higher (that is, conscious and voluntary) mental functions of the same consciousness. The main peculiarity of consciousness lies in the fact that any conscious content assumes a symbolic (mainly verbal, internal speech) form. According to the above, the psychodramatic process contributes significantly to covering the distance of the existing mental age of the child with the limit of his /her possibilities to solve problematic situations. Vygotsky defined as the Zone of Immediate Development (ZEA) the distance between the existing mental age of the child and the level of problem solving that the child can reach, with the help of others [31]. Within this zone learning initially and cognitive development are later accomplished.

Research methodology

Sample research

The children who participated in the research (N = 10, 6 boys, 4 girls and aged 12 years \pm 5 months), are judo athletes, students of the sixth primary school, had a coaching age of 2-4 years and have participated

many times in competitions. The children and their parents were informed about the purpose and method of the research. The principles of scientific research ethics were observed, the relevant permission had been given by children and the parents before the research was carried out. The anonymity of the participants was also ensured. The participation of the children was optional and they were given the opportunity to leave at any stage of the research. Children regularly participate in training three times a week for 90 minutes. The psychodrama was performed every fifteen days, twice a month for 90 minutes in the same place as the training, which was shaped appropriately for the phases of the psychodrama.

Psychodrama process in the present research

There were 22 psychodramatic meetings for a whole year. Many psychodrama researchers emphasize the need for longer interventions beyond the 12 sessions in order to make the results and improvements in the condition of individuals from the psychodrama process more stable [6; 32; 33]. The psychodramatic process is divided into three phases: warm-up, action, and feedback [7].

The warm-up or pre-reaction phase lasts about 15 to 20 minutes and attracts the attention of the participants in the "here and now". The purpose of the psychodramatic process in this phase is to enhance the readiness of the team members for emotional and active involvement and the choice of the protagonist about what he/she wants to work on stage. The warm-up includes a free-flowing discussion, commenting on team-related issues such as: size, coherence, emotions, structured exercises, guided fantasies and thoughts. "Sometimes I can't sleep; my opponents are stronger than me, etc." When the group focuses on a protagonist, then the group coordi-

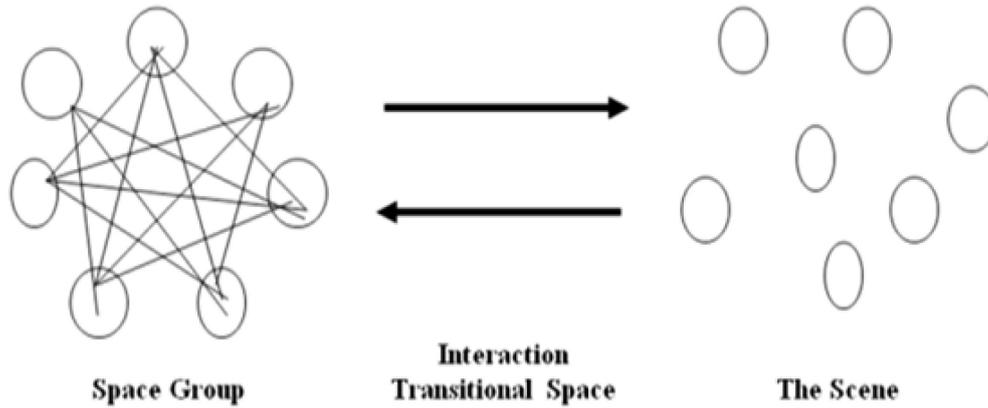


Fig. 2. Switch between the mass process and the stage action

than me. I will have to face him in the national championship and I am afraid that I may lose again. I will train; I will not miss the trainings but how to beat it since it is stronger. "This worries me; I think about it all the time and I cannot calm down."

The coordinator then states: "So what creates this phobic situation for us is not so much the fight as a fight, as a process, but a difficult opponent that we have to face and he may have made it difficult for us in other fights. "None of us like to lose, we want to play as much as possible, to win and win medals for it and we train regularly".

The coordinator guides the discussion so that all the children express themselves present a flow in the discussion and they do not talk to each other.

Coordinator: "What we all notice is that this feeling is common to all of us. This feeling of fear has a dynamic which is greater in others and less in others. It is important that this happens to all of us, it is a universal situation, phobic, but we can manage it and overcome it, as you very nicely mentioned before. We ask for the help of the coach, we participate in the training; I intensify the effort even more. Well done guys, these are actions that you thought of yourself and did to provide a solution. So guys, how do we see this situation? How could we compare this situation? With what object, animal, history, and human could we compare it? "

Member (F): "looks like Homer's Odyssey".

Member (I): "with the story of Sisyphus".

Member (C): "with Mount Everest, a big mountain that we are trying to climb".

Member (I): "the story of children in Thailand who were locked up and isolated for twenty days deep in a cave without contact with the rest of the world".

The coordinator then gives each member some time to tell their own story – analogy.

Coordinator: "Which of the stories you have heard would you like us to play in different roles?"

The children thought and after a dialectical discussion decided to make a composition of all four stories. The member (F) receiving trust in his face from the other members of the team announces to the coordinator and to the team the story that the team finally ended up playing.

Coordinator: "We have to choose who wants to play on stage, what role he wants to play, who wants to be a

spectator». Even those who choose to play can improvise on stage freely and about the story."

Children voluntarily choose the roles. The coordinator gives the group members some time to think about the story and the roles they will play and then get up to go on stage.

Main part: duration 40 'minutes

The divided roles were: a) Sisyphus, b) two members would play Sisyphus's comrades who would help him in his endeavor, c) "The Dog" a member of the group opened and closed his arms trying to trap his victim for to eat it, d) the Cyclops and e) the two robbers who would try to steal the "fearless". Three children and the coordinator preferred to be spectators, sitting in the group area and watching the others play while not taking an active part with a role on stage.

The event begins. Sisyphus is lying on one side of the stage, he and his two companions are supposed to be sleeping in the depths of an underground cave and have an episodic sleep with Sisyphus dreaming and talking in his sleep.

After the main action: duration 30 'minutes.

The facilitator gives some time to the members who played to calm down from the intensity of the dramatic play and to return to the reality of the team.

Coordinator: "How are we before, during and after the game? Did we like the game?"

All the children replied that they liked the process and would like to be given the opportunity to repeat it for many other issues. The emotions reported by the children are worth noting below.

Member of the team that played Sisyphus: "I really liked the process and generally similar activities, so I asked the team to take on the role of Sisyphus. Interest, enthusiasm, question if I am in the role, curiosity to play well, how others will judge me, anxiety not to escape the story with what I say. I had a lot of fun. "

Coordinator to Sisyphus: "First of all, big thumbs up to everyone you played, you were all really great, as professional actors. Sisyfe you showed not to be afraid at all and for every obstacle that was presented you had a plan that you followed with composure and great care. Although I do not hide from you that in the beginning with

the thoughts you had in your sleep you showed us how much you are afraid. "But then you wake up very well."

Member of the team that played Sisyphus: "This is how I try to be in reality too. I'm afraid too if I can describe this situation that way. I am also afraid in the competition but I do not allow this feeling of fear to overwhelm me, I want to win it every time, to control it. I am afraid when I have not prepared well for the next day at school that the teacher examines me and I do not answer, I know that even if I did not answer, nothing happened but I do not like it. That's why I prepare and read in advance. I do the same in training. I do not like to lose, so I try harder in training. I'm afraid of losing games. I implement a plan but apart from training I ask the coach to find me videotaped matches of my opponents to watch them first and then to fight with them. I do not want to leave things to chance, as they come. It is a fact that I experience some important things very intensely and many times I dream about them while I sleep."

Member who played partner 1: "At first I felt interest, curiosity, embarrassment, anxiety about what I would do, what I would say in the event, what others would tell me, if I performed well at the game, if I was in the game. In the end I liked everything that happened and I would love to play again. I felt a little tight at the beginning of the game, even though we all know each other very well. However, this feeling of anxiety is similar to what I feel and have when the competition is approaching. I felt relieved and confident when Sisyphus explained to us the plan he had in mind and when we implemented it to overcome the difficulties."

Member who played partner 2: "I was afraid if we succeed but at the same time I had a hope that we will succeed in the end. I was a little scared if I did the role correctly. I really liked it and I had fun. "I was trying to find out where what we did on stage was similar to what we feel in training and competitions."

Spectator of the event: "I liked the spectacle from the children and at first I did not think that it would develop into such a nice situation. At first I did not want to play and I preferred to sit down. In the end I wondered why I should not play too. Something I will pursue next time in the team. I was scared at first to play because I was not sure I would make it and others would laugh with me, and I did not want that to happen. I was curious to see what others would do on stage. It strongly reminded me of the effort I make and all the kids do with training and competitions. I made a parallel between the training and the race by going from the underground cave to the mountain climbing, the difficulties, the fears that we will face and in the end we will emerge victorious. It's all in the game. I was very worried and even now I think a lot about these processes that take place in my mind. "Is fear part of the game, in what we do to intensify our attention and effort on what we do to be the winners in the end?"

A member impersonating Scylla: "And if we are defeated by someone, what happened? Will they kill us? Absolutely nothing happened. Since I know that I tried hard and failed to beat someone, then this means either that the other is better with more capabilities and abilities than me (like the ones that Sisyphus applied

to deceive me and pass through my area) or that I was unlucky. "Personally, I am scared when I go to school illiterate and I am worried that the teacher will not examine me, when I do not train properly and we go down to competitions, then yes, I am very scared".

Another spectator: "I was curious what we would see. It makes it difficult for me to go on stage and play, congratulations to the children who played. They were really good and I liked them. I was satisfied that they did it after they had an action plan and put it into practice. I liked the whole scene and it left a very good impression on me."

After all the children had spoken, the coordinator then spoke about the summary of the psychodramatic process.

Coordinator: "through this experiential, thoughts, feelings, attitudes emerged on the surface. These emotions in order of appearance and as you mentioned them were embarrassment, interest, curiosity, anxiety, worry, satisfaction, excitement, fun. The whole team experienced these feelings that are common to all of us. So when we feel a feeling of worry, fear of something like the fights and our opponents experience exactly the same feeling we are not the only ones experiencing it. I can't know how much what I say can help us. So I inform you about an emotional factor that refers to the universality of emotions [37]. In the face of the same situation, the participants experience common feelings, so it is not only you who are afraid, so your opponent is also afraid. You all mentioned your concern if I would play my role properly, what others would say about how I played, I did not want to be exposed playing. Isn't this concern what we feel in the races as well? The question then is what happens to this feeling, what creates it? What do we do about it? How do I dominate it and not let it dominate us? Many of you rightly said that I am very worried if I am illiterate, if I am untrained, I am scared of what others will say if I fail, I am not sure if I succeed, I felt confident and relieved when Sisyphus explained the action plan. Indeed some of the thoughts you have made and are doing as well as the feelings are common to all people in the face of difficult situations. The following thoughts that referred to the psychodramatic process and reflect the reality as you experience it and these are the insufficient training, our self-confidence, the difficulty and importance of the fight, the important other parents and friends, the perception of defeat and victory (and if I lose did anything bad happen? Next time I will try harder, it's also luck that each of us has the uncertainty of the result and the cohesion of the team. The three partners worked together perfectly and succeeded. This means bonding and cohesion between team members. I do not hide the fact that because you did not mention the cooperation through the psychodramatic process, in a way, in parallel with the lack of cooperation and coherence, it is also in the training, that is, even though you train together, everyone cares about what they will achieve. He and not all together as a team. It is a fact that according to sports psychology [16] the above thoughts are causes of anxiety in athletes. The point, however, is that we recognize our thoughts as okay, but what are we going to do to domi-

nate over these thoughts and situations? Here again you mentioned that: an action plan made me feel confident and relieved, when I train, when I ask the coach after training to watch videotaped matches of my opponents, when I do not care so much if I lose and what happened then If I lose and that is in the game, as victory is also defeat is part of it. I will try more and more systematically next time. There are some actions I need to take that will guide me so that these concerns are completely or largely eliminated. But does it take some tolerable level of concern for each of us to keep us motivated to succeed? If we consider that Sisyphus, after reaching the top of the mountain and completing his mission, rested for a while the precious fearless on the top of the mountain and then threw it down to continue the process of taking it again and bringing it to the top. You chose the story, you played it, and you show it way and the solution of the situation in a nice and experiential way. I really thank you very much. “

Discussion

The purpose of this study is to study the application and effectiveness of psychodrama in a group of children of late childhood involved in the sport of judo to enhance their athletic performance. The program presented refers to the combination of extracurricular physical education in children's leisure time through the combination of judo and psychodrama and showed that it is an appropriate supportive method of psychological support for children of late childhood involved in sports and athletic performance. Specifically, the psychodramatic process of the present work is an innovative and original action — intervention for sports and children's competition which in parallel with the sports process helps children to perform better. This conclusion is drawn from the children's own assessments, in addition to their reports that they liked it very much and ask to be repeated, the children report that it helped them a lot to reduce the effects of the negative thoughts they had and that they were relieved and respond better to races. The team consists of 10 children who would take part in the Panhellenic competitions of boys and girls category A. Among them two boys won first place, one boy won a silver medal, one girl and two other boys won bronze ones, two girls and one

boy won fourth place winning but has lost in the small final, while a boy and a girl failed to stand out. The results for the positive contribution of psychodrama to the educational process of the present work are in line with those of other researches in the international scientific field [13; 14; 15]. The innovation of the present research refers to its application in parallel with the sports physical preparation. Research reports on the positive contribution of psychodrama to psychotherapy but there are not enough reports specifically on sports, something that the present study attempted. This work is a continuation of an effort to apply psychodrama or better the method of psychodrama in education and especially in the field of sports and physical education of school and extracurricular form [38; 39; 40; 41; 42].

Conclusions

Taking into consideration the empirical research and the positive results for the contribution of psychodrama in the scientific field of physical education, it is considered as necessary the systematic study of the application of the psychodramatic process in the formal education of children and in other cognitive fields beyond physical education. Some of the advantages of psychodrama are the democratic element of communication, with the type of horizontal communication of team members, the discipline, respect and responsibility that members display in sessions. The spontaneous expression and creation of the members on the stage which is supported in all the meetings of the groups. The method is experiential, collaborative, communicative and most importantly obstetric. Through discussion, the thoughts and the solutions of the problematic situations are extracted by the participants themselves. We can observe this in every session and especially in the “fearless and sun” session. Of course, in order for the psychodramatic process to be applied in formal education, teacher training will be needed. We applied psychodrama to extracurricular physical education and sports, something original for the Greek scientific data, that is, we applied a psychotherapeutic method by lending it from psychotherapy to sports and physical education. This presupposes many things: a) more research on an empirical level for application in education, b) training and special education of teachers in psychodrama.

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Психодрама и ее роль в детских соревновательных противоборствах. Исследование случая из практики

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Настоящая работа преследует сразу две цели: во-первых, глубинное изучение и анализ феноменов в психодраматической группе; во-вторых, привлечение внимания к результатам применения техники психодрамы в работе с подростками-спортсменами, постоянно принимающими участие в соревнованиях. Группа из 6 мальчиков и 4 девочек (N = 10, 100%) в возрасте 12 лет ± 5 месяцев участвовала в 90-минутных сессиях психодрамы каждые 15 дней на протяжении года (с января 2019 по январь 2020). Параллельно с сессиями ребята трижды в неделю посещали 90-минутные тренировки по дзюдо. И сессии, и тренировки проходили в одном и том же месте. Настоящая работа представляет собой изучение кейса, подробное исследование и качественный анализ процесса психодрамы в группе юных дзюдоистов. Результаты комбинирования программы физического развития и метода психодрамы оказались впечатляющими не только по свидетельству самих ребят, но и по официальным результатам чемпионата Греции по дзюдо для девочек и мальчиков. Делается вывод о том, что психодраму можно рассматривать как альтернативный метод обучения в школах.

Ключевые слова: психодрама, дзюдо, стресс, спортсмены, физическое воспитание, дети.

Для цитаты: Зарагас Х. Психодрама и ее роль в детских соревновательных противоборствах. Исследование случая из практики // Культурно-историческая психология. 2021. Том 17. № 3. С. 143–151. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17759/chp.2021170318>

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Получена 06.07.2021

Принята в печать 10.09.2021

Received 06.07.2021

Accepted 10.09.2021