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**Assessment of the Ph.D. dissertation submitted by Amani Mussa  
titled: ‘The use of art therapy in the Arab sector education system in Israel in  
therapeutic work with children experiencing violence: the perspective of art therapists’  
written under the supervision of prof. UAM dr hab. Barbary Jankowiak and the  
auxiliary supervision of dr Anna Gulczyńska**

The issues raised in Ms. Amani Mussa's doctoral dissertation concern the use of art therapy in working with Arab children who have experienced violence. This is an extremely important and interesting topic and constitutes a contribution to the development of pedagogy as a scientific discipline. The use of art therapy at school is not a popular solution in Polish educational settings. However, as the example of the reviewed dissertation shows, this phenomenon is already functioning quite well in other countries. Another little-recognized aspect is therapeutic work at school with children who are victims of violence in its various manifestations. The example of the Arab community described in the dissertation shows that it is possible, although not easy, to try to help harmed children, despite systemic, mental and cultural adversities.

What deserves special attention in the reviewed thesis is the broadly outlined cultural and social background of the functioning of the Arab minority in Israel. This is a solution that I rate very highly, because without knowing these conditions it would be difficult to understand the problem that Arab art therapists struggle with. The Ph. D. Candidate showed in detail the various problem areas that therapists working in schools struggle with on a daily basis: a lower professional status compared to psychologists, a lower social status resulting from being women, the fear of reporting child abuse to the management or other services, resulting from awareness that this notification will most likely destroy the life of a given child due to cultural conditions and the child's status in Arab society, etc. Already at the beginning of her



dissertation, the Author writes: "However, when they [art therapists - A. B.-W.] attempt to apply their professional in Arab schools, they encounter resistance from the school staff, parents, and the community" (p.11). So, being an art therapist is not an easy task in communities where social mentality sets moral and cultural standards.

The reviewed work is very extensive (287 pages) and has a structure typical of research works. It can be divided into a theoretical part, which consists of chapters 1 to 5, a methodological part (chapter 6) and an empirical part (chapters 7-11). In addition, the work includes an acknowledgment, an introduction and a bibliography. It is worth noting here that Chapter 11 is of a summary nature and contains conclusions as well as limitations that the Ph. D. Candidate believes her work has. I would like to point out that the reviewed doctoral thesis does not have any appendix, which is of course not a mistake, but due to the nature of the research being conducted, it would, in my opinion, be advisable. On page 107 there is a reference to Appendix I, which is not included in the work and which, according to the description, should contain instructions for conducting an interview. If the doctoral student decides to add an appendix, it should include the research tool used in the study and a transcription of the selected interview. Such a procedure would make it easier to follow the course of analyzes presented by the Ph. D. Candidate in the empirical part. I would like to emphasize that on pages 107-108 we find questions from the questionnaire that were assigned to individual research questions. This is the right solution in terms of the structure of the research project, but to complete this multi-threaded and complex doctoral thesis, creating an appendix would be the right solution.

Referring to the theoretical part of the work, I would like to emphasize that it is properly written and contains all the necessary elements. What caught my attention was the presentation of the socio-cultural background of the life of the Arab minority, including Arab children, in a country that is not friendly to them due to numerous misunderstandings, conflicts and different religions (Szczerbiński, 2014). This procedure is important for capturing the very uncomfortable situation of women working as art therapists, to which the doctoral student refers many times in the analytical part. In my opinion, this part would require some ordering, which should take the direction from general to specific or vice versa. Besides, in my opinion, chapter 1 adds nothing to the work, so I do not see the point of creating it. The title of chapter 1 and subchapter 1.1 are practically the same. Due to the content of the remaining subsections, subsection. 1.1 could be titled 'Psychosocial Child Development', especially since its content refers to this developmental aspect. We also face a similar situation in the case of subchapter 2.3 entitled



'Psychological consequences of violence towards children'. The Author presents not only the psychological consequences, but also the somatic, physiological and behavioral ones. In general, I have the impression that some of the subsection titles do not correspond to their content - they are too narrow compared to the content discussed.

In subsection 1.3. entitled 'School as a developmental environment for children', there is little on the importance of school as an institution and as a culture for a child's development at two key stages of his life: early and primary education. There is also no information about the importance of school, teachers and peers in this respect. Almost half of this subchapter is devoted to parents. They also play an important role in a child's school life, but it seems that the Author devotes too much space to them compared to other actors of school culture, about whom, for example, Maria Czerepaniak-Walczak (2018) writes. Looking at the other actors of school life in this subchapter would also be justified by the fact that in the empirical part, the Ph.D. Candidate presents peers and teachers as those who, in the opinion of art therapists, sometimes play a significant role in creating a violent environment at school.

At this point, I would also like to point out that the literature referred to by the doctoral student in subsection 1.4 comes from the 1970s and 1990s. This procedure is incomprehensible and has no justification, especially since there are much newer publications available that concern the importance of play for a child's development (e.g. Parker, Thomsen, Berry, 2022; Majumdar, 2020).

To sum up, the theoretical part of the work is written correctly. The author discusses literature and outlines the socio-cultural background of her considerations. This part, however, requires some corrections related to the structuring of the argument.

The methodological part of the work is written in an appropriate way. The Ph.D. Candidate included the necessary information regarding the completed research project. The objectives of the study, the research problem and the methods used to collect and analyze data were presented. The author also characterized the sample and presented the ethical aspects of the research. However, the statement on page 104 is unclear: 'The sample was chosen as a convenience sample and snowball sampling. (...) Participants varied geographically.' Therefore, the question arises whether the selection of the sample was related to the geographical distribution of the respondents? What was the purpose of such selection? In the further part of the work, the Ph.D. student does not refer to issues related to the geographical



location of the respondents' workplace. It is also not understandable why the Author in table 1 (p.105) indicates the age and professional experience ranges of the research participants and does not provide the exact number. This is an unusual strategy considering the fact that the research is qualitative in nature. Another aspect that I would like to draw attention to is the use of numerical codes by the Ph.D. Candidate to anonymize the respondents. In my opinion, giving changed names to the respondents would be a better solution, especially in qualitative research that does not aim to create generalizations. The use of numbers instead of names slightly dehumanizes research participants.

While reading the methodological chapter, I missed some important data, namely: information about how long the interviews lasted and where they were conducted. The Author indicates on page 109 that the interviews were conducted in a place that was neutral for the respondent. However, there is no explanation of what this 'neutral place' means.

At this point, I would like to draw attention to the procedure used by the Author, which I have already written about above, namely assigning questionnaire questions to research questions. This is a solution that introduces order and shows the logic of thinking about the research process, which I rate very highly.

To summarize the methodological part, I state that it is written in accordance with the methodological requirements typical of qualitative research procedures. The doctoral student demonstrated knowledge and the ability to create a research project.

The empirical part constitutes more than half of the volume of the reviewed dissertation. It is written very well and presents detailed analyzes and interpretations of the analytical categories developed by the Author. The specified categories are assigned to individual aspects researched by the Ph.D. Candidate, which introduces a certain order and makes it easier for the reader to follow the Author's thought process. When creating the discussed categories, the Ph.D. Candidate demonstrated extensive knowledge and analytical skills. However, I would like to point out that the methodology assumes that the names of analytical categories should be as precise and short as possible. In the reviewed work, however, the names of the categories are often very long, e.g.: 'Being a member of the community in which one works a anxiety-increasing/reducing factor for the therapist' (p.160) or 'Uniqueness of the use of violence towards children in Arab society from the therapists' perspective' (p.122). Another aspect that should be worked on concerns distinguishing the categories of the so-called umbrella categories



and subcategories within them. For example, when describing the first category (p. 112), where the doctoral student begins the analysis of category I: 'Forms of violence towards Children in the School and Environment', there is no general characterization of this overarching analytical category. The author begins the discussion of this overarching category with the subcategory 'Violence from the Staff'. It does not really fit into Category I, which is quite narrowly worded. Perpetrators of violence should be distinguished as a separate category, where different types of violence could be discussed, such as teachers, peers, family, strangers. However, it is worth noting here that the Author discusses the categories she distinguishes in great detail and justifies their derivation with numerous references to the content of the interviews.

I also highly appreciate the introduction of summaries concluding analyzes of individual research questions. This introduces the necessary order into such extensive analytical material.

In the last chapter, which is summarizing, the Ph.D. Candidate discusses the analyzes performed. This chapter is written in a thoughtful way and shows the research maturity of the Author.

Therefore, summarizing the empirical part of the work, I can say that it is written with high scientific standards. The Ph.D Candidate demonstrated analytical and critical competences in preparing this part of the reviewed doctoral dissertation.

Summing up, I appreciate the importance of the issues of the reviewed dissertation in supplementing pedagogical knowledge in the aspect of using the tool of art therapy in everyday school work. Despite some weaknesses, the Ms. Mussa, provided convincing and valuable study findings. There is a need to highlight, that findings interpretation reached a good scientific level. Therefore, I can state that the Ph.D. dissertation of Amani Mussa, written under the supervision of prof. UAM dr hab. Barbara Jankowiak and the auxiliary supervision of dr Anna Gulczyńska, meets the requirements for dissertations contained in Art. 187 paragraph. 1 and 2 of the Law on Higher Education and Science form July 20, 2018 (Journal of Laws 2018, item 1668, as amended). I am applying for admission of Amani Mussa to further stages of the procedure.

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