

HIBUKI THERAPY AS A METHOD OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR WAR TRAUMA IN UKRAINIAN CHILDREN

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Abstract

This comprehensive study delves into the effectiveness of Hibuki therapy, a unique psychological intervention blending psychoanalytic principles and art therapy techniques, in supporting children who have suffered trauma due to the ongoing war in Ukraine. In this comprehensive study conducted from September 2022 to March 2023, we evaluated the efficacy of Hibuki therapy across a diverse cohort of 400 Ukrainian children, each affected by PTSD due to the war in Ukraine. These children, representing a wide range of regions within Ukraine, were methodically divided into two groups: a control group and an experimental group, with each group consisting of 200 children. The study scrutinizes the impact of Hibuki therapy, a psychological intervention uniquely combining psychoanalytic principles with art therapy techniques. This approach was specifically tailored to assist children who have endured the trauma associated with the ongoing conflict. By integrating sensory integration and other

neuropsychological methods, the study enhanced the scope of traditional art therapy to address the complex needs more effectively of traumatized children. Our findings indicate significant progress in the children's emotional expression, stress management capabilities, and social engagement. These improvements highlight the potential of Hibuki therapy as an efficacious tool in aiding the trauma recovery process. Crucially, the involvement of parents emerged as a pivotal factor in the healing journey, emphasizing the necessity of a supportive and nurturing environment. The study underscores the value of bespoke therapy approaches that acknowledge the varied responses and healing trajectories of children. These insights make a substantial contribution to the ongoing discourse in child-centered, innovative, and holistic trauma therapy approaches, especially pertinent in areas plagued by conflict. The outcomes of this research pave the way for developing adaptable, culturally attuned trauma therapies, emphasizing the importance of continuous innovation in child psychology and trauma treatment methods.

Introduction

The Hibuki therapy method, emerging during the Second Lebanon War in 2006, integrates psychoanalytic personality theories with art therapy techniques to address psychological trauma in children. This synthesis enables the method to tackle complex psychotherapeutic tasks, especially effective for children with diagnosed psychological trauma or post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD) (Maksimov, 2022).

This form of toy therapy, conceptualized and developed by Dr. Shai Hen-Gal, is grounded in the principles of art therapy and psychoanalysis, including the theories of object relations, stress response, and the significance of emotional connections with objects. The therapy has shown remarkable effectiveness in various countries, notably in Israel, where it has been applied to over 100,000 children, with Tel Aviv University studies confirming its efficacy in reducing post-traumatic stress reactions. The program's success is attributed to its ability to facilitate emotional expression and coping mechanisms in children, helping them to transfer and process their traumatic experiences through interaction with the Hibuki toy. This therapy model, which emphasizes the role of caregivers and incorporates the broader psychological needs of

children, represents a significant advancement in the field of child psychology and trauma therapy (Sadeh et al., 2008).

Hibuki therapy, a unique psychological support method for children affected by war trauma, was first developed in Israel and has been effectively adapted for Ukrainian children. This therapy revolves around a stuffed toy dog named Hibuki, characterized by long arms and a sad face, designed to resonate with the emotional state of traumatized children and encourage them to share their fears and problems. The name Hibuki is derived from "hibuk," the Hebrew word for hug, emphasizing the comforting aspect of the therapy (Lending a paw: Hibuki Therapy, 2023; Hibuki Therapy Ukraine, 2023). The Hibuki program is developed in collaboration with various institutions, including the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, the Israeli Ministry of Education, and Tel Aviv University, has been effective in post-traumatic psychological recovery (Maksimov, 2022).

The effectiveness of Hibuki therapy is not only in the physical design of the toy but also in its implementation as a psychological tool. The therapy involves a carefully crafted interaction between the child and Hibuki, where the child is encouraged to project their feelings onto the toy, facilitating emotional expression and processing. The approach is based on the principle that children, by actively engaging in the therapy and addressing their fears, can significantly alleviate the psychological impact of trauma. This method has proven highly effective, with reports indicating that symptoms of psychological trauma were completely alleviated in 95 % of children who completed a full course of Hibuki therapy, typically spanning 8–10 sessions (Hibuki Therapy Training, 2023).

In Ukraine, the application of Hibuki therapy has been adapted to address the specific needs of children affected by the war. The therapy is used to help children exhibiting symptoms such as sleep disturbances, fears, anxiety, withdrawal, and aggression, often stemming from their traumatic experiences due to the conflict. The therapy aims to help children adapt to new circumstances and environments, which is particularly relevant for those displaced or living in unstable conditions (Israeli-

invented Hibuki therapy doll helping Ukrainian children in New York, 2023; Lunov et al., 2022; Lytvynenko et al., 2020).

A crucial aspect of Hibuki therapy is the interaction model between the child and the toy. Psychologists carefully facilitate this interaction, narrating Hibuki's story and its characteristics to spark interest and encourage the child to welcome the toy into their personal space. This process is vital for the therapeutic effectiveness of Hibuki, enabling the child to express and manage their emotions through their interaction with the toy.

The methodology of Hibuki therapy is grounded in the concept of enabling children to recognize and articulate their feelings, a challenging task for many, especially in the context of trauma. By focusing the conversation on Hibuki rather than directly on the child, therapists can help children indirectly express and process their emotions. This approach not only aids the child in coping with their experiences but also provides adults and caregivers with insights into the child's emotional state, thereby enabling them to offer more targeted support (Smahina, 2022).

In addition to its emotional benefits, Hibuki serves as a symbol of protection and strength for the child. As the child cares for the toy, they engage in an active role, fostering a sense of control and resilience. This process is integral to the psychological rehabilitation of the child, helping them to navigate and overcome their traumatic experiences. It's important to note that Hibuki toys are not commercially available; they are specific psychological tools used exclusively in the therapeutic context. This exclusivity ensures that the toy's significance and role in the therapeutic process are preserved.

The application of Hibuki therapy in Ukrainian schools and educational settings has evolved into a hybrid model. In collaboration with Ukrainian teachers and psychologists, the therapy has been integrated into the educational environment, providing teachers with tools and knowledge to identify trauma symptoms and stabilize affected children quickly. This collaborative approach between educators and psychologists enhances the therapy's effectiveness and fosters a more supportive and understanding environment for traumatized children (Hibuki Therapy Training, 2023).

In summary, Hibuki therapy represents an innovative and effective approach to supporting children experiencing psychological trauma due to war. Its success in Israel and adaptation in Ukraine underscore its potential as a valuable tool in the psychological care and rehabilitation of children in conflict zones (Hibuki-therapy or therapy that helps to cope with stress, 2022).

The purpose of this article is to explore and elucidate the innovative approach of Hibuki therapy as a psychological support method for children experiencing trauma due to war, with a particular focus on its application in Ukraine. This therapy, originally developed in Israel, utilizes a unique interaction model involving a specially designed stuffed toy dog, Hibuki, to facilitate emotional expression and processing in children affected by the harsh realities of conflict. Therefore, the research purpose conditions the following objectives:

1. To specify the conceptual foundation and therapeutic methodology of Hibuki therapy, including its psychological underpinnings and the role of the Hibuki toy as a therapeutic tool.
2. To analyze the adaptation and effectiveness of Hibuki therapy in the context of Ukrainian children affected by the war, taking into account changes made to meet their specific needs.
3. To investigate the implications of Hibuki therapy in addressing the psychological trauma of children in war-torn regions.

Ultimately, the article seeks to contribute to the understanding of innovative psychological interventions in war contexts, offering insights into how Hibuki therapy can be an asset in the psychological care and rehabilitation of young trauma survivors. Thus, it aims to provide empirical evidence on the effectiveness of Hibuki therapy in aiding the psychological recovery of children affected by war trauma, with a focus on developing resilience and coping mechanisms.

Section snippets

The conceptual foundation and therapeutic methodology of Hibuki therapy

Hibuki therapy, rooted in a robust psychological framework, leverages the therapeutic potential of a unique stuffed toy, Hibuki, to aid children in coping with the

psychological aftermath of war trauma. This method was originally developed during the Second Lebanon War in 2006 by Dr. Shai Hen-Gal and Prof. Avi Sadeh from Tel Aviv University, in partnership with the Israeli Ministry of Education and JDC (A Healing Hug from Israel to Japan, 2011). The toy's design is purposefully crafted to

Hibuki therapy: approach, foundations, and implementation in the context of war

The researches doll therapy technique used to address psychological trauma in children. This therapy, especially relevant in the context of the aggressive war against Ukraine, is a form of art therapy that helps build an adequate system of psychological protection.

First of all, Hibuki therapy involves using a toy as a therapeutic tool in helping children who have experienced severe emotional stress due to natural disasters or military conflicts. The therapy's effectiveness lies in its ability

Neuropsychological methods and art therapy in the structure of Hibuki therapy as factors in the development of creative abilities in children

This integration is particularly relevant for children who struggle to adapt to changing external environments, a common challenge faced by professionals working closely with children. Hibuki Therapy include the following neuropsychological and art therapy methods:

Sensory Integration Method, developed by American neurologist Jean Ayres, is based on the theory of the uniform development of six basic human body systems. It involves organizing a child's environment in such a way that they engage

The adaptation and effectiveness of Hibuki therapy in the context of Ukrainian children affected by war

In the context of Ukraine, where children have been significantly affected by war, Hibuki therapy has been adapted and implemented with notable modifications to cater to the specific needs of this vulnerable group. Initially developed in Israel, the therapy's core concept has been preserved, but its application has been broadened and intensified to address the complex trauma experienced by Ukrainian children.

The adaptation of Hibuki therapy in Ukraine includes expanding the age range of the

Materials and methods

The study aimed to evaluate the efficacy of Hibuki therapy on Ukrainian children affected by PTSD. Conducted over a period from September 2022 to March 2023, the investigation involved 400 participants. The participants were carefully selected to ensure a broad geographical representation, encompassing various regions of Ukraine. The study involved a sample of children, aged 6–8 years, who have been affected by the war in Ukraine. This age range is selected to ensure that the children can

Results of the study

The study revealed that 75 % of children in the experimental group showed complete disappearance of emotional-volitional disorders and somatic symptoms associated with their trauma, while the remaining 25 % exhibited partial improvement. In contrast, these symptoms intensified in all children from the control group. This outcome suggests that the ongoing interaction with the Hibuki toy, extending beyond therapy sessions into daily life, plays a significant role in enhancing children's

Discussion of the study on Hibuki therapy for war-traumatized children in Ukraine

As a result of the study, it was established that post-therapy assessments showed a significant decrease in symptoms of anxiety and trauma-related stress among the participating children. In this regard, there was an observable improvement in emotional expression and communication skills, as evidenced by children's increased participation in group activities and more frequent, coherent articulation of their thoughts and feelings.

Moreover, the use of projective techniques, such as drawings and

The broader implications of Hibuki therapy in the field of child psychology

Hibuki therapy's successful implementation in addressing the psychological trauma of children in war-torn regions, particularly in Israel and Ukraine, offers profound implications for the field of child psychology. The therapy's core principle

lies in using a uniquely designed stuffed toy, Hibuki, as a therapeutic tool to help children process and express their emotions in the wake of traumatic experiences.

One significant implication of Hibuki therapy is its demonstration of the effectiveness

Practicality and research implications

The study on Hibuki therapy has shed light on the transformative effects of this therapeutic intervention on children suffering from psychological trauma due to war. This section delves into the practical applications and broader implications of the research findings for the field of child psychology and beyond.

Thus, the success of Hibuki therapy underscores the potential of incorporating tangible, relatable objects into therapeutic practices, particularly for children. Such tools can be

Conclusion

The exploration and analysis of Hibuki therapy, particularly in the context of children affected by the war in Ukraine, have led to significant theoretical and empirical insights. This conclusion encapsulates the theoretical underpinnings of the therapy, the findings from the research, and the broader implications for the field of child psychology and trauma therapy. Hibuki therapy's effectiveness is partly due to its foundation in psychoanalytic theories of object relations and art therapy

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Dafna Sharon Maksimov: Validation, Supervision, Software, Project administration, Methodology, Funding acquisition. **Tetiana Melnychuk:** Data curation, Formal analysis, Resources, Visualization. **Lesia Inzhyievskaya:** Formal analysis, Resources, Visualization, Writing – original draft. **Alona Sadykina:** Conceptualization, Investigation, Software, Writing – review & editing. **Valeriia Shynkarova:** Formal analysis, Investigation, Resources, Visualization.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Ethical approval

All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Consent to participate

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

Consent for publication

All individual participants agreed to be included in the study.

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