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Self-Activity of Preschool Children During Social Isolation Caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic, as Declared by Their Parents

Samoaktywność dzieci w wieku przedszkolnym w okresie izolacji społecznej wywołanej pandemią COVID-19 według deklaracji rodziców

KEYWORDS

self-activity, preschool children, COVID-19 pandemic, social isolation, creative/reproductive activity

ABSTRACT

The article analyses the self-activity of preschool children during social isolation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. In the first part of the article, a literature review was conducted, which made it possible to define self-activity and its significance for the development of the individual. The following part reflects on the potential of self-activity, considered in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The review of literature provided the basis for the development of methodological foundations of the author's own empirical research. The empirical research was conducted according to a quantitative strategy, by means of a diagnostic survey, with the use of a survey technique and a questionnaire. The article contains the characteristics of the study group. Afterwards, the collected and analysed research material provided the basis for the final conclusions. It was found that, according to parents' declarations, children often or very often undertook self-activity during social isolation. The predominant types of activity undertaken by the children were identified. It was also determined what nature of creative/reproductive activities dominated the children's own activity time.

SŁOWA KLUCZE

aktywność własna, dzieci w wieku przedszkolnym, pandemia COVID-19, izolacja społeczna, aktywność twórcza/ reprodukcyjna

ABSTRAKT

W artykule dokonano analizy aktywności własnej dzieci w wieku przedszkolnym podczas izolacji społecznej spowodowanej pandemią wirusa SARS-CoV-2. W pierwszej części artykułu dokonano przeglądu literatury, co pozwoliło na zdefiniowanie aktywności własnej i jej znaczenia dla rozwoju jednostki. W kolejnej części podjęto refleksję nad potencjałem autoaktywności, rozpatrywanym w kontekście pandemii COVID-19. Przegląd literatury stanowił podstawę do opracowania podstaw metodologicznych autorskich badań empirycznych przeprowadzonych według strategii ilościowej, metodą sondażu diagnostycznego, z wykorzystaniem techniki ankiety i kwestionariusza. W artykule zawarto charakterystykę grupy badawczej. Następnie zebrany i przeanalizowany materiał badawczy stanowił podstawę do sformułowania wniosków końcowych. Stwierdzono, że według deklaracji rodziców dzieci często lub bardzo często podejmowały aktywność własną w czasie izolacji społecznej. Określono dominujące rodzaje aktywności podejmowanej przez dzieci. Ustalono również, jaki charakter aktywności twórczej/reprodukcyjnej dominował w czasie aktywności własnej dzieci.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic and related social isolation were determining factors in a series of socio-cultural transformations. Its consequences for the family and the school educational process require multifaceted pedagogical analyses. It is legitimate to reflect on how preschool children's own activities are presented in the context of their siblings' distance learning and their parents' remote work responsibilities.

For the purpose of this article, research was conducted using a quantitative strategy.

The study involved 130 parents of preschool children living in Poland, France and the UK.

The concept of self-activity and its importance for the development of a person

The main purpose of the article is to determine the specificity of preschool children's self-activity at the time of social isolation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The following article is based on selected books and the author's empirical research.

Activity is embedded into humanity. It shapes its personal and social reality. Motivation for becoming active can vary and might have internal or external sources. The subject of the following study is the self-activity of preschool children, also defined as 'a child's own activity' for the purpose of the study. A. Gurycka defines self-activity as "the constructive activity of a person resulting from the integrity of his/her personality" (1977, p. 13). T. Kukołowicz (1997), S. Chrobak (1999), A. Sowiński (2013) and G. Kryk (2009) dealt with self-activity in their research.

For the purpose of this article, the author adopted the definition according to I. Jundziłł who defines the child's self-activity as:

> […] occurring when the individual has the opportunity, without external pressure, to choose the goal and the means for its fulfilment, and independently performs individual activities personally controlling their results. [...] The starting point is an imbalance giving rise to a specific need (or needs) (Jundziłł, 1974, p. 74).

In order to complete the presented definition, three constitutive aspects of self-activity should be indicated. A person undertakes such activity when:

a) he/she "undertakes it on his/her own initiative,
b) he/she undertakes it personally or sets himself/herself a specific goal, directs his/her activity and performs it on his/her own responsibility,
c) performs his/her actions also to his/her own satisfaction and not only to gain someone else's approval" (Kujawiński, 2006, p. 39).

The above-mentioned characteristics of the child's own activity indicate that it is a space for building a sense of autonomy and agency in action. This, in turn, as J. Uszyńska-Jarmoc (2007) points out, next to the sense of subjectivity and the sense of competence, is one of the conditions conducive to the fulfilment of the child's productive activity. In this context, it should be emphasised that the child's own activity can be of productive nature.

B. Abery and R. Zajac (1996) point out that education to one's own activity should be started already at the preschool stage of youngest children. The authors believe that the natural ability to try out one's own abilities should be strengthened by parents who may consciously arrange the environment in such a way as to provide the child with the possibility of making independent choices and experiencing their consequences. Therefore, one of the goals of parenting becomes encouraging the child's self-education and self-initiated activity.

A person's own activity is an exemplification of his freedom, which is a safe space for the fulfilment of creativity. K. Szmidt (2017) points out that it is freedom and spontaneity that create conditions, even for the youngest children, to undertake

activity, which will constitute the first level of creative activity, as I. Taylor called expressive creativity.

Furthermore, K. Pirklová (2021) emphasises that authentic and self-induced play of a child, which, according to the criterion of usefulness applied by adults, is evaluated as useless, constitutes a time of a break, and even a child's exit from ineffective compulsion into the open space of creativity.

A child's own activity in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic

Difficult and changing socio-economical conditions, and a sense of uncertainty and insecurity resulting from the pandemic situation, provide a rationale for the formation of a sense of autonomy in the face of a change (Dymecka, 2021). Additional published studies draw our attention to the psychological consequences of the pandemic, i.e. anxiety, worry, lack of interest, depression, and poor overall performance (Le & Nguyen, 2021). It is important to emphasize that one of the main factors of psychological imbalance during the COVID-19 pandemic is government restrictions i.e. social isolation and social distancing measures (Arora et al., 2020).

M. Dąbkowska points out that "Even short-term closure of educational institutions and home isolation is difficult and burdening for children, negatively impacting their physical and mental health by disrupting their sense of normality" (2020, p. 153).

However, it is worth to emphasize that the need for isolation and the constraints associated with it constituted an inhibiting factor for many activities. At the same time, a person had to reorganize their activities and seek new opportunities, which, in turn, provided space for the fulfilment of daily creative activities (Elisondo & Melgar, 2020).

In this context, it becomes crucial to change the motivation for undertaking tasks – from the external motivation to the internal one. Additionally, it is necessary to build authentic autonomy of the student in the process of upbringing.

A. Olubiński emphasizes that the child's own activity is an authentic human activity "in which I experience myself as an acting subject of the desire to be active, I act on the strength of my own conscious and free decisions, taking into account the possibilities of my own creative development" (2008, p. 19).

J. Kujawiński (2006) emphasizes that a child, through his/her own activity, can get to know himself/herself better and assess his/her own possibilities, advantages and disadvantages. This cognition is the basis for the improvement of one's own internal conditions, also in dialogue with another person. Self-activity also becomes a kind

of training in relying on one's own abilities the expression of which is the attitude of resourcefulness, perseverance, responsibility, and conscientiousness. In this context, it is worth presenting the position of K. Citko (2019) who points out that the process of teaching creativity should focus on indicating the possibility of overcoming obstacles and limitations, and searching for new ways of cognition. Hence, the child's own activity should be seen as an autonomous and natural training of creativity that includes a confrontation of one's own possibilities and limitations with the possibilities and limitations of the external reality.

The development of the pupils' own activity makes it possible to build their self-confidence as a fixed point in the face of the changes taking place in the surrounding reality. The child's own activity creates an opportunity to conduct an independent search for the solutions, evaluation and control of the task performed (Wojciechowska-Charlak & Zubrzycka-Maciąg, 2016). In the author's understanding, a child's own activity appears as a structural element of the student's subjectivity. This, in turn, constitutes a "Venetian mirror" that makes it possible to see external difficulties, but does not allow one to see internal influence.1 Self-activity, therefore, provides the basis for building self-efficacy that allows the formation of perseverance in confronting difficulties and resilience to disappointments. Failure becomes a lesson that provides the direction for further action (Kyndt et al., 2019). A high sense of self-efficacy, developed especially through creative self-activity, introduces flexibility that enables people to see adversities as points around which an efficacy strategy is shaped and built (Garaika & Margahana, 2019).

M. Jarymowicz (2008) points out that the development of human subjectivity is conditioned by two mutually dynamizing factors: a person's abilities and his/her own activity. Abilities are most effectively developed through self-activity which determines undertaking our own activity in new areas.

The author emphasises that each of the indicated components of subjectivity is fulfilled in the following spheres of human functioning:

- "in the orientation, cognitive sphere […],
- in the emotional and motivational sphere […],
- in the executive sphere" (Jarymowicz, 2008, p. 11).

In this context, it is necessary to find what functions (in individual spheres) of human functioning can be performed by a person's own activity of a productive and reproductive nature during the COVID-19 pandemic. The data for this scope is presented in the table below.

Table 1. Functions of the subject's own activity in the spheres of human functioning in the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the nature of a person's own activity

	Productive self-activity	**Reproductive self-activity**
Orientation and cognitive sphere	• modifying established relationships with the world in the context of a pandemic; • shaping one's own identity despite the difficulties caused by the pandemic; • creating a safe space for the development of identity structures; • distancing one's own development from the pandemic	• understanding the new social situation created by the COVID-19 pandemic; • self-awareness of one's place in the new pandemic reality
Emotional and motivational sphere	• developing internal motivation to take action despite social isolation; • achieving objectives despite difficulties resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic; • modifying planned activities in the context of a dynamically evolving pandemic situation	• anticipating the consequences of their own actions
Implementation sphere	• developing the capacity to act despite the constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic; • directing one's own actions despite the constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic	• developing an attitude of responsibility for one's own actions, in view of the social responsibility needed during the COVID-19 pandemic

Source: the author's own elaboration based on conducted research

The literature review made it possible to formulate the following conclusions:

1. Self-activity can have a creative dimension.
2. Engagement into one's own activity stimulates the development of a sense of agency, subjectivity and autonomy of a person.
3. Increased one's own activity shapes the attitude of openness to action and persistence in overcoming difficulties for tasks, as well as a sense of responsibility.
4. Developed ability to undertake one's own activity may be a supporting factor in mitigating the effects of isolation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, especially when it assumes a productive nature.

The methodological basis of the author's empirical research

The conclusions that were formulated made it significant to determine to what extent preschool children, according to their parents' declarations, undertook self-activity during social isolation.

The main aim of the empirical research was to find out the specificity of self-activity undertaken by children during social isolation.

The main problem is formulated in the following question:

How do students express the specificity of self-activity undertaken by preschool children during social isolation as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the parents' survey?

The main problem implies the following problems:

1. In the opinion of the parents surveyed, did the children undertake self-activity?
2. How often, in the parents' opinion, did the children undertake their own activity?
3. What kind of self-activity did the children carry out during social isolation?
4. To what extent did the children, in the opinion of the respondents, undertake particular types of activity?
5. What was the nature (productive/reproductive) of the activities undertaken by preschool children during social isolation, in the opinion of their parents?
6. What are the relationships and correlations between children's gender, children's age, country of residence, parents' education and the type of activities undertaken by children during self-activity?

A quantitative research strategy was applied in the study, using the diagnostic survey method, carried out using the questionnaire technique. The questionnaire contained sixteen closed questions and was prepared by the author of the study. The link to the electronic survey questionnaire was made available on 8.02.2021 in groups on social networks for Poles living abroad. The questionnaire was also sent electronically to institutions supporting the Poles. Parents of pre-school children, who have lived abroad for more than a year, were invited to participate in the study. A link to the questionnaire for parents living in Poland was also made available on social media.

Statistical analysis was carried out using the chi-squared test to determine whether or not a statistically significant relationships existed in the research results.

Characteristics of the studied group

One hundred and thirty parents of preschool-age children participated in the study.

The vast majority of the study group were mothers – 118 people, i.e. 90.77%. Parents aged 21– 49 participated in the study. The largest group were parents aged 30–39 – 101 people, i.e. 77.69%. Parents participating in the study were also differentiated according to their education. In this category, the largest group were parents

with higher education – 85 people, i.e. 65.38%. The largest number of respondents lived in a city of over 100.000 inhabitants – 54 people, i.e. 41.54%.

Parents who live with their pre-school children in Poland included 42 respondents, i.e. 32.31%; in France – 55 respondents, i.e. 42.31%, and in Great Britain – 33 respondents, i.e. 25.38%.

In the context of the research objective, it was important to determine the age and gender of children whose own activity was determined by their parents.

Seventy-three, i.e. 56.15% parents of girls and 57, i.e. 43.85% parents of boys participated in the study. A slightly larger group were parents of 4-year-olds – 45 people, i.e. 34.61%, 26.92% of the respondents – 35 people were parents of 6-year-olds, and 24.62% of the respondents – 32 people were parents of 5-year-olds. The smallest group were parents of children aged 2.5–3 years – 18 people, i.e. 13.85%.

Self-activity of preschool children undertaken during the COVID-19 pandemic, in the light of the results of our own empirical research

In the first part of the study, parents were asked to declare whether their children undertook activities that could be described as self-activity. In order to avoid different interpretations of the term 'self-activity,' the parents were provided with a definition in the questionnaire.

The vast majority of the surveyed parents – 120, i.e. 92.31%, declared that their child, during the social isolation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, undertook self-activity.

The frequency of children's own activity during the social isolation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic was differentiated according to the country of residence of the respondents. The data on this is presented in the table below.

Table 2. Frequency of self-activity by children according to country of residence

Frequency	Country of residence					
	Poland		France		The United Kingdom	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Very often to often	38	90.5	44	80.0	27	81.8
Rare to very rare	4	9.5	11	20.0	6	18.2
Total	42	100	55	100	33	100

Source: our own elaboration based on the conducted research

The data in the above table shows that the majority of parents in Poland, France and the UK declare that their children were very often or often involved in their own activities during the time of social isolation. It is worth noting that the largest group indicating this answer were parents living in France – 44 people, i.e. 80.0%. The presented variation is not statistically significant $\chi^2 = 2.064$; $p = 0.356$.

The data presented above allow us to determine the types of self-activity carried out by children during social isolation. The data on this subject is presented in the table below.

Table 3. Type of activity undertaken by children during social isolation, as declared by parents

Response categories	N	%
Cognitive activity	13	10.00
Artistic activity	38	29.23
Working activity	5	3.85
Playful activity	73	56.15
Other	1	0.77
Total	130	100.00

Source: our own elaboration based on the conducted research

The data from the table above shows that in the declarations of parents, during social isolation children most often undertook playful activity – 73 people, i.e. 56.15%. It is worth recalling the stance of B. Surma (2018) who points out the idea of Montessorian upbringing in which the child's play is his work because it facilitates his/her development and prepares him/her for self-education. The author points out that the acceptance of this kind of self-activity is an expression of respect for the subjectivity of the child and promotes the optimization of the conditions of child development. It is appropriate, at this point, to cite the results of research which showed that adults who were deprived of the opportunity to organize their own play in childhood were more likely to lose their jobs in adulthood, and which also noted the correlation between the lack of play in childhood and breaking the law in adulthood (Wenner, 2009).

It is noteworthy that nearly 30% – i.e. 38 of the parents surveyed – said that artistic activities were the most common activities undertaken by their children. At this point, it is necessary to recall the remarks of S. Popek (2012), who indicates that artistic activity, especially the artistic activity of children at preschool age, is very intensive. Additionally, it is particularly valuable and significant in terms of educational importance.

Every type of the indicated self-activity was additionally classified as fulfilled as a productive or reproductive activity.

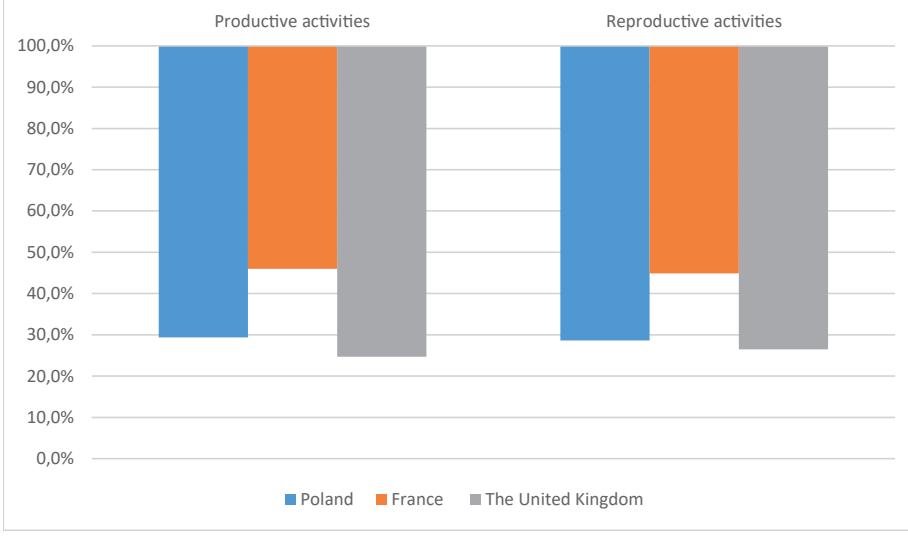
The creative activity that was most frequently undertaken by children during their self-activity, as declared by their parents, was acting out with the use of artistic materials – 92 indications, i.e. 23.9%. At this point, it is worth recalling the analysis of U. Tomasiak (1999) who points out that "through artistic expression, the child satisfies their need to concretise the inner world […]. The result of this concretisation is a product, but for a several-years-old child, the process of creation itself is often more important." The second choice of the respondents was playing with toys, i. e. dolls, teddy bears, cars, etc. – 67 respondents, i.e. 17.4%. Dance improvisation came as the third option – 51 respondents, i.e. 13.2%.

In the declarations of parents, reproductive activity carried out most often by children during their self-activity was watching/reading books and magazines – 65, i.e. 15.5%. The second most frequently indicated recreational activity was board games (i.e. logical and strategic games) – 54, i.e. 12.9%. The third activity of choice was playing games with movement (i.e. tag play) – 52, i.e. 12.4%.

The analysis of the data makes it possible to conclude that the surveyed parents more often indicated that their children engaged in non-creative activities during social isolation.

The chart below shows the distribution of responses for the productive/reproductive nature of activities undertaken by children during their own activity, according to the country of residence of the parents surveyed.

Figure 1. Productive/reproductive nature of activities undertaken by children during self-activity according to the country of residence of the surveyed parents



Source: author's own study

The data in the chart above indicates that parents residing in France perceived more types of activities undertaken by their children during their own activity. It is important to note that among the responses of parents living in Poland, France and the UK, there was no predominance of either productive or reproductive nature of the activities undertaken by the children during their self-activity; the percentage indicating productive and reproductive activities was similar for the respondents from each country.

The following table shows the classification of activities for particular types of self-activity undertaken by children during social isolation, according to their degree of fulfilment, as declared by the surveyed parents.

Table 4. Degree of fulfilment of individual activities in the field of cognitive activity undertaken by children, as declared by the parents

Response categories	Degree					
	very low/low		average		high/very high	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Reading books, magazines	27	20.77	36	27.69	67	51.54
Board games, e.g. logic, strategic games, memory	42	32.31	37	28.46	51	39.23
Micro-experiments or experiments	82	63.08	30	23.08	18	13.85
Nature observation	38	29.23	45	34.62	47	36.15
Watching educational films and cartoons	24	18.46	29	22.31	77	59.23
Conversations with adults about the surrounding world, material reality and/or spiritual reality	29	22.31	41	31.54	60	46.15

Source: the author's own elaboration based on the conducted research

The data in the table above shows that, according to the declaration of the largest group of parents (77 respondents, i.e. 59.23%), children pursued the following cognitive activities during isolation: watching films and educational cartoons. In this context, it is worth presenting the results of the study conducted by K. Pełka (2020), which showed that, during the pandemic, the time spent by children aged 4–12 in front of the TV increased by 18%.

The following table shows the degree of fulfilment of particular activities, within children's artistic self-activity, as declared by parents.

Table 5. Degree of fulfilment of individual activities within children's own artistic activity, as declared by parents

Response categories	Degree					
	very low/low		average		very low/low	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Activities using art materials (i.e. paints, crayons, plasticine, etc.)	11	8.46	18	13.85	101	77.69
Singing or performing activities with musical instruments/toys	46	35.38	27	20.77	57	43.85
Recitation of poems	84	64.62	20	15.38	26	20.00
Composing poems, rhymes, fairy tales, stories	86	66.2	19	14.6	25	19.2
Performing plays/small theatre activities	83	63.85	26	20.00	21	16.15
Dance to a well-known choreography	25	19.23	42	32.31	63	48.46
Dance improvisation	23	17.7	40	30.8	67	51.5

Source: the author's own elaboration based on the conducted research

The data presented above shows that the highest number of parents surveyed – 101 respondents, i.e. 77.69% – admitted that their children, to a high/very high degree, engaged in activities with artistic materials, i.e. paints, crayons, plasticine, etc., during their own artistic activity. In the context of the presented data, it is worth presenting the opinion of D. Kowalska (2020) who points out that one of the factors that facilitates the children's artistic activity is the availability and variety of artistic materials, as well as the opportunity to try out many techniques.

The table below contains data on the degree of fulfilment of individual activities by the children in terms of their own work-like activities.

Table 6. Degree of fulfilment of individual activities resembling the nature of work undertaken by children, as declared by the parents

Response categories	Degree					
	very low/low		average		very low/low	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Housekeeping/cleaning	61	46.92	40	30.77	29	22.31
Meal preparation	51	39.23	38	29.23	41	31.54
Minor repairs/renovation works	100	76.92	18	13.85	12	9.23
Care of siblings	94	72.31	19	14.62	17	13.08
Caring for a pet or helping with farm or agricultural chores	80	61.54	22	16.92	28	21.54

Source: the author's own elaboration based on the conducted research

The data in the table above shows that the 41 respondents, i.e. 31.54%, stated that children prepared meals resembling the activity of work. A similar number – 40 respondents, i.e. 30.77% – declared that children got involved in cleaning and tidying activities. Slightly different results were obtained by J. Barszcz-Skowronek (2019) who indicated that the main duties carried out by preschool children were housework activities, i.e. vacuuming, sweeping the floors, washing the dishes, and taking care of their space and belongings. However, it should be emphasized that the author carried out her research before the pandemic.

The following table contains data on the degree to which children undertake individual and playful activities, as declared by their parents.

Table 7. Degree of fulfilment of particular playful activities undertaken by children, as declared by the parents

Response categories	Degree					
	very low/low		average		very low/low	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Construction games	33	25.38	21	16.15	76	58.46
Watching films and animated series	27	20.77	23	17.69	80	61.54
Computer games, games on mobile phones, tablets, etc.	75	57.69	28	21.54	27	20.77

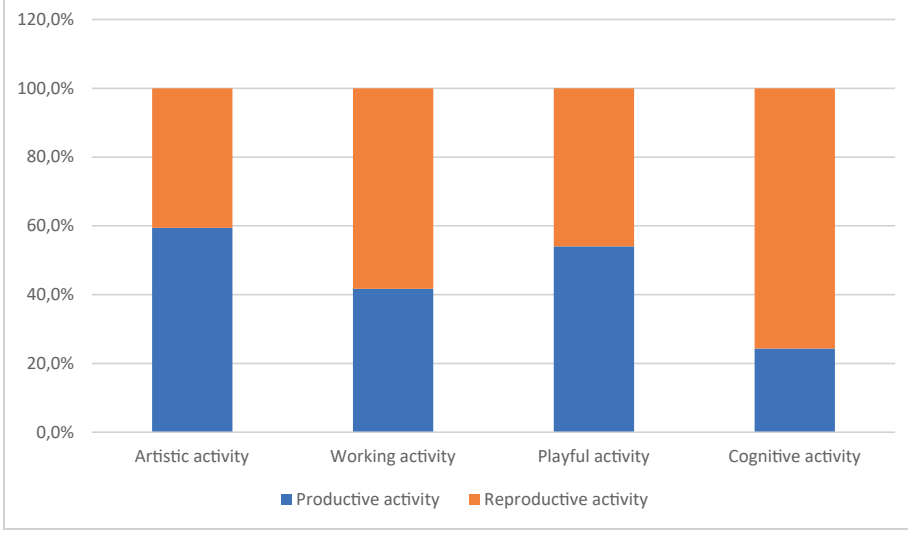
Response categories	Degree					
	very low/low		average		very low/low	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Movement games	10	7.69	24	18.46	96	73.85
Playing with toys such as dolls, toy cars, etc.	9	6.92	15	11.54	106	81.54

Source: the author's own elaboration based on the conducted research

The data presented in the table above shows that 96 respondents, i.e. 73.85%, declared that their children played physical activities to a high degree. Slightly fewer parents – 80, i.e. 61.54%, declared that their children watched films and animated series to a high/very high degree.

The following graph shows which type of activity – productive/reproductive – dominated the different types of self-activity undertaken by children during the social isolation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 2. High/very high productive/reproductive nature of children's self-activities



Source: The author's own study

The data in the chart above indicates that, in the area of their own artistic and play activity, according to the parents surveyed, the children more often carried out activities of a productive nature. On the other hand, according to the parents, during the children's self-activity resembling work and cognitive activities, the reproductive nature of activities was dominant. It is worth mentioning the opinion of A. Stefańska (2021) who indicates that artistic creativity may constitute an area of intellectual reflection for a preschool child. However, for this to occur, it is necessary to create a space of authentic freedom and a sense of agency in which the child is able to undertake creative explorations.

The relationship between the age of the parents, the country of residence, the parents' education, their place of residence, the child's sex, the child's age, and the frequency of the children's own activity during social isolation was also analysed. However, no statistically significant relationships were noted for these variables.

Additionally, the relationships and correlations between the indicated independent variables and the type of self-activity undertaken, as well as the activities undertaken for each activity, were analysed. The relationships which found to be statistically significant are presented below.

The data shows that playful activity (63.16% for boys as compared to 50.68% for girls) and learning about reality and work-like activity (21.05% for boys as compared to 9.59% for girls) were more common among boys than girls. On the other hand, artistic activities were more frequent in the female group than in the male group (39.73% of girls compared to 15.79% in the group of boys). The presented differentiation is statistically significant: $\chi^2 = 10.039$, $p = 0.007$.

The statistical analysis made it possible to determine statistically significant relationships between the child's gender and the type of activity undertaken during self-activity.

The analysis of the data collected showed that a higher percentage of boys – 29, i.e. 50.88%, fulfilled their own activity during social isolation in physical games as compared to girls – 23, i.e. 31.51%. The presented difference is statistically significant: $\chi^2 = 5.004$, $p = 0.025$. Similarly, a higher percentage of boys – 27, i.e. 47.37%, than girls – 14, i.e. 19.18%, fulfilled their self-activity through construction games. The variation is statistically significant: $\chi^2 = 11.781$, $p = 0.001$.

On the other hand, a higher percentage of girls – 36, i.e. 49.32%, than boys – 15, i.e. 26.32%, undertook their own dance improvisation. The difference is statistically significant: $\chi^2 = 7.102$; $p = 0.008$. Similarly, a higher percentage of girls – 60, i.e. 82.19%, than boys – 32, i.e. 56.14%, performed activities with the use of plastic materials during self-activity. The difference is statistically significant: $\chi^2 = 10.501$; $p = 0.001$.

What is more, a higher percentage of girls – 11, i.e. 15.07%, than boys – 1, i.e. 1.75%, got involved in photography and video recording.

In the context of the data presented above, it should be noted that, during the self-activity period, girls undertook more activities of a productive nature than boys.

There was also statistically significant variation in the types of children's own activity according to age.

The analysis of the data collected showed that a higher percentage of 2.5-4-year-olds – 26, i.e. 41.27%, than 5-year-olds – 4, i.e. 12.50%, and 6-year-olds – 11, i.e. 31.43% played construction games during their self-activity. This is a statistically significant difference: $\chi^2 = 8.135$, $p = 0.017$.

On the other hand, a higher percentage of 5-year-olds – 9, i.e. 28.13%, than 2.5-4-year-olds – 4, i.e. 6.35%, and 6-year-olds – 9, i.e. 25.71%, played computer games on a phone or tablet as a mean of self-activity during social isolation. The difference is statistically significant: $\chi^2 = 9.790$, $p = 0.007$.

On the other hand, a higher percentage of 6-year-olds – 9, i.e. 25.71%, than 5-year-olds – 2, i.e. 6.25%, and 2.5-4-year-olds – 4, i.e. 6.35%, performed micro-experiments and experiments during self-activity. This variation is statistically significant: $\chi^2 = 9.430$, $p = 0.009$.

In the context of the data above, it is worth noting that more activities of 2.5-4-year-olds and 6-year-olds were productive rather than reproductive. In the case of older children, self-activity was of cognitive nature, while younger children engaged in their own playful activity. On the other hand, more activities of 5-year-olds were reproductive.

Conclusions

The data presented above makes it possible to formulate the following conclusions:

1. According to the declarations of the majority of parents, children undertook their own activities during social isolation.
2. According to the declarations of the vast majority of the surveyed parents, the children often or very often undertook their own activities during social isolation.
3. More than a half of the surveyed parents declared that, during social isolation, the children engaged mainly in playful self-activities. Nearly 30% of the surveyed parents indicated that their children engaged in artistic activities during the time of social isolation.

4. The majority of parents surveyed indicated that the following activities were undertaken, to a high or very high degree, by the children through their self-activity during social isolation:
   a) Watching cartoons and educational films (cognitive activity);
   b) Activities with the use of art materials (artistic activity);
   c) Preparing meals (working activity);
   d) Playing with movement (playful activity).
5. It was indicated that, during the time of self-activity, girls undertook more activities of productive nature than boys.
6. The sex of the children was shown to statistically significantly influence the type of their own activity. In the parents' declarations, boys were more likely than girls to undertake their own play, cognitive and work-related activities. In contrast, girls were more likely to engage in artistic activities. In addition, boys were more likely to engage in movement and construction games during self-activity, while girls were more likely to engage in dance games, as well as in photography and filming.
7. The age variable also statistically significantly differentiates the type of children's own activity. In the declarations of the parents surveyed (25), 3 year-olds were more likely to undertake construction games during self-activity, while more 5 year-olds were more likely to use computer games, either on a phone or tablet. It was shown that 2.5-4-year-olds, and 6-year-olds were more likely to engage in an activity of a creative nature. Within this group, the older children were more likely to get involved in a cognitive activity, and the younger children preferred their own playful activity. In contrast, 5-year-olds were more likely to engage in an activity of a reproductive nature.

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