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# MOTIVATION FOR CREATIVITY - PSYCHOLOGICAL-PEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVES[28]

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***Abstract:*** *The paper explores the motivation for creativity as a psycho-pedagogical process of self-communication, symbolization, and meaning-making, grounded in humanistic, existential, and analytical theoretical frameworks. A single-subject randomized experiment was conducted with a 12-year-old boy in a home-based art environment, comparing three pedagogical conditions: exploratory, affective-regulative, and stimulating-with-constraints. The hypothesis assumes that autonomy and playful structure enhance intrinsic motivation. Four indicators-interest, desire to continue, perceived choice, and time experience-were measured using a five-point Likert scale. The highest values were observed under the exploratory and play-structured conditions, confirming the importance of freedom within structure. The findings highlight the pedagogical significance of autonomy, ritual, and symbolic action in fostering intrinsic motivation and creative flow.*

***Key words:*** *creativity, intrinsic motivation, flow, self-communication, symbolization, art pedagogy, single-subject experiment.*

## INTRODUCTION

"What makes us create?" – this question has accompanied the philosophy, psychology, and pedagogy of art for centuries. In the contemporary psycho-pedagogical perspective, creativity is not viewed merely as a result of inspiration or talent, but as a process of meaning-making, emotional regulation, and self-actualization.

The present study aims to uncover the motivational foundations of creative activity by integrating classical psychological theories of intrinsic motivation with modern pedagogical observations of children's spontaneous creativity. At its core lies the attempt to understand which pedagogical conditions stimulate intrinsic motivation and the state of "flow" in children as a natural experience of joy and concentration within the creative process. The research also has an applied dimension –it demonstrates how pedagogical frameworks can nurture the creative impulse by combining autonomy, playfulness, and moderate structure. The empirical component was implemented as a single-subject experiment with alternating conditions and randomization, conducted in a home-based art environment with a 12-year-old child.

## EXPOSITION

### 1. Theoretical Foundations: Motivation, Self-Actualization, and Self-Communication

#### 1.1. The Humanistic Perspective: The Striving for Self-Actualization

In *"Motivation and Personality"*, **Abraham Maslow** presents the classical hierarchy of needs, at the top of which stands self-actualization – the tendency toward the full realization of one's potential. According to Maslow, creativity is not a luxury but a natural expression of a healthy personality – *"a normal creation of human nature."* He also highlights the importance of peak experiences – moments of existential wholeness in which fear and control temporarily disappear and the individual feels *"in harmony with oneself and the world"* (Maslow, 1970). These moments give rise to acts of inspiration and discovery.

**Carl Rogers** complements Maslow's theory with the concept of the *"fully functioning person,"* who does not merely achieve but continually evolves (Rogers, 1961). In his work, creativity is understood as a product of inner freedom supported by an environment that fosters authenticity and experimentation. For

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Rogers, the individual exploration of personal experience and interests is the key factor that gives rise to creativity. He distinguishes between intrinsic motivation (process-oriented and meaning-related) and extrinsic motivation (reward- and evaluation-oriented). In this regard, in a more contemporary context, **Teresa Amabile** empirically demonstrates that external rewards and pressure often diminish intrinsic interest and originality (Amabile, 1983).

In the spirit of the humanistic tradition, **Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi** develops the concept of *flow* – an optimal psychological state in which the individual is completely immersed in an activity, experiences pleasure in the process itself, and loses the sense of time and self-observation. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1996), *"a person is happiest when entirely absorbed in an activity that requires total concentration and the use of one's skills to the utmost."* In this state, motivation arises not from external rewards but from the intrinsic experience of engagement and harmony between challenge and skill. The concept of *flow* concretizes Maslow's notion of the peak experience, adding a dimension of processual, continuous self-actualization that holds direct significance for the pedagogy of creativity.

### 1.2. The Existential Perspective: The Courage to Create

The American existential psychologist **Rollo May** (1909-1994) interprets creativity as an existential necessity – a drive of the individual to bring form into the chaos of experience. Art, for May, is *"an active response to being*" and a form of emotional health. A person creates in order to give meaning to existence and to experience oneself as a creator rather than a mere observer. May formulates the concept of the *"fundamental passion for form,"* an unconscious longing to structure the world according to personal meanings (May, 1985).

In a pedagogical context, this can be understood as the child's innate striving for order and expressiveness-the need to *"make the invisible experience visible."* Here, contemporary aesthetic theory discovers a new dimension of creativity*: "central to contemporary art is its nature as a trace of action"* (Tabakova, 2024). The artistic product is no longer merely a result but a testimony to the process itself-to the act of inner and outer transformation through which the individual leaves a tangible imprint of existential activity. In this sense, creativity can be viewed as a psychological autobiography in motion-an act that constructs both identity and meaning.

### 1.3. Psychoanalytic and Analytical Interpretations of the Creative Process

The renowned art historian **Meyer Schapiro** (1904–1996) was among the first to introduce a psychoanalytic approach to the study of art. A notable example is his essay *"Apples of Cézanne"* (1968), in which he interprets Cézanne's still lifes as expressions of emotional detachment and self-control through which the painter's introverted personality finds a secure and self-sufficient field of expression. Schapiro concludes that the apple, for Cézanne, functions as a symbolic equivalent of the human figure, carrying sublimated erotic and spiritual meaning-the *"golden apple"* as an archetype of creative desire.

In Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art (1971), **Ernst Kris** examines the creative process as a state of inspiration during which the boundaries between the ego and the unconscious are temporarily blurred. According to Kris, art represents a form of *"magical control"*-a means by which the creator manages and transforms both constructive and destructive impulses. This dynamic balance between regression and self-regulation, he argues, is a fundamental characteristic of artistic creativity.

For **Melanie Klein** (1929), the creative impulse emerges from anxiety: through the creation of symbols, the individual restores the damaged internal objects. **Hanna Segal** (1975) continues this line of thought, stating that genuine art arises when the depressive position has been worked through by means of symbolization; otherwise, *"creative inhibition"* occurs.

Within analytical psychology, **Carl Gustav Jung's** contribution is particularly significant. He views the creative process through the prism of the archetypal structure of the psyche. According to Jung, the creative act does not originate entirely from consciousness but constitutes *"an autonomous psychic process which develops within the artist and often overpowers him"* (Jung, 1933). The artwork *is "a living organism which detaches itself from the personality of the author and leads an independent life"*- an *"autonomous complex*" carrying energy that ascends from the unconscious to the threshold of consciousness. Jung emphasizes that the artist *"is not completely free, but serves the work that seeks to be born through him"* (Jung, 1933). Through the method of active imagination, described in Psychological Types (1921) and

further developed in his clinical practice, Jung demonstrates that the creative act is not merely aesthetic but also a psychological process of inner integration and healing (Jung, 1933).

In this sense, drawing can be regarded as a special mode of self-expression. **D. Markova** (2001) observes, artistic creation serves to *"liberate consciousness, providing relaxation and catharsis."* According to her, *"the subconscious finds its expression in creativity, which thus becomes a symbol, a sign, a mirror of another world,"* while *"the character of artistic creativity is determined by the nature of the repressed emotional conflicts of the creator."* These observations extend the psychoanalytic tradition, emphasizing the therapeutic and self-reflective potential of visual art within a pedagogical context.

## 2. Conceptual Model: Creativity as Self-Communication

Based on the synthesis of the preceding theories, creativity can be defined as an active process of self-communication in which the individual simultaneously produces form and engages in an act of self-understanding. It functions as a dynamic connection between the inner and outer worlds, where symbols link affect and meaning. Within this framework, three core motivational nuclei can be identified:

- **Meaning-making** – the striving for integration, self-knowledge, and peak experience (Maslow, May, Csikszentmihalyi);
- **Symbolization** – the transformation of affect into image and form (Klein, Kris, Jung);
- **Social validation** – the need for sharing, recognition, and dialogue (Rogers, Amabile).

The teacher or mentor plays a mediating role between the student's inner world and the social context, creating conditions for safety, play, and experimentation.

## 3. Experimental Section

### 3.1. Methodology

The present study was conducted using a single-subject experimental design with alternating conditions and randomization. **The aim** was to examine the influence of different pedagogical conditions on the intrinsic motivation of a child in preadolescence. The main **hypothesis** states that pedagogical conditions offering greater autonomy and a playful element increase the level of intrinsic motivation. **The dependent variable**-intrinsic motivation-was measured through a subjective index comprising four indicators: interest in the activity, desire to continue, sense of choice, and experience of time. Each indicator was evaluated on a five-point scale (1-5). **The independent variable** was the type of pedagogical condition, with three levels: exploratory ($U_1$), affective-regulative ($U_2$), and stimulating-with-constraints ($U_3$).

### 3.2. Participants

The study involved a single participant-a 12-year-old boy without specialized art training. The experiment was conducted in a home art environment providing safety, emotional comfort, and a natural setting for spontaneous creative expression.

### 3.3. Method

To assess intrinsic motivation, a scale with four indicators measured on a five-point Likert format was applied. Three pedagogical conditions were implemented:

1) In **the exploratory condition** ($U_1$), the child was encouraged to experiment by asking, "What will happen if…?", without a predefined topic or model.

2) **The affective-regulative condition** ($U_2$) included a brief breathing exercise and visual attunement, followed by the instruction to draw his current emotional state.

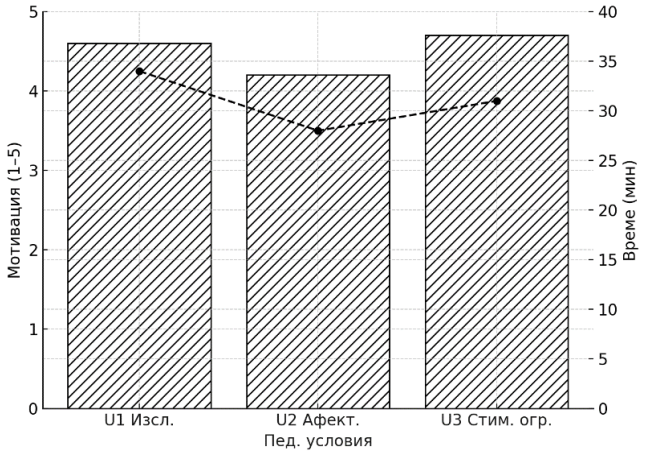
3) **The stimulating-with-constraints condition** ($U_3$) introduced a playful framework-limiting the palette to five colors and setting a ten-minute time constraint, followed by free completion of the composition.

### 3.4. Procedure

Six 30–40-minute sessions were administered across two weeks on non-consecutive days (Mon/Wed/Fri each week), at a fixed late-afternoon time (17:00–17:40). The 24-48 h inter-session interval served as a washout to reduce carryover and fatigue effects. Conditions were presented twice each in a counterbalanced randomized sequence (e.g., $U_1$–$U_2$–$U_3$–$U_2$–$U_3$–$U_1$).

### 3.5. Results

The data revealed varying degrees of motivational engagement across the three pedagogical conditions. The mean values of intrinsic motivation were as follows: $U_1$ – 4.6; $U_2$ – 4.2; $U_3$ – 4.7 (on a five-point scale). The average duration of creative work ranged between 28 and 34 minutes, being the longest in the exploratory condition (34 minutes) and shortest in the affective-regulative one (28 minutes).




Фиг. 1. Средни стойности на вътрешна мотивация и време по педагогически условия

### 3.6. Analysis

The analysis of the data indicates that the highest level of intrinsic motivation was observed under conditions combining autonomy and playfulness-namely, the exploratory and the stimulating-with-constraints settings. In the former, the child demonstrated spontaneous experimentation, initiative, and a desire to continue the task, which may be interpreted as a state approaching flow. The stimulating-with-constraints condition also fostered sustained interest and concentration, likely due to the presence of clear yet unobtrusive boundaries that focused attention without limiting freedom. The affective-regulative condition, although promoting calmness and emotional balance, showed a lower degree of motivational activation.

These findings correspond to Csikszentmihalyi's (1996) concept of flow, which arises from the balance between challenge and skill, when action merges with consciousness. Contemporary research further confirms that flow is not only psychological but also physiological (Peifer et al., 2014): optimal levels of arousal sustain engagement, while too little or too much suppress creativity. Thus, a "good dose of tension" proves pedagogically valuable for maintaining focus and motivation in creative learning contexts.

### 3.7. Conclusions

The findings confirm that intrinsic motivation is enhanced in contexts characterized by autonomy, play, and structured freedom. Light constraints do not inhibit creative spontaneity; rather, they support it by providing direction and encouraging focused engagement. Regulatory techniques contribute to emotional stability but do not significantly elevate motivation. From a pedagogical standpoint, the adult's role should be facilitative-to create an atmosphere of trust and autonomy in which motivation arises naturally from the process of creative activity itself.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

From Maslow to Jung, diverse psychological theories converge on a shared understanding of creativity as a fundamental human impulse for self-realization and integration. In a pedagogical context, this implies teaching through art rather than merely about art-using the creative process as a means of cultivating personality, empathy, and autonomy. Art should not be regarded as a peripheral or "recreational" subject, but as a central component in the development of students' emotional intelligence and capacity for meaning-making.

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