

EFFECTIVENESS OF CREATIVE PEDAGOGY IN SUPPORTING EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING OF DISABLED CHILDREN

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Abstract

Creative pedagogy plays an important role in supporting the emotional well-being of disabled children by providing flexible, expressive, and inclusive learning experiences. Disabled children often face emotional challenges such as stress, low confidence, communication barriers, peer rejection, and limited classroom participation. In this context, creative activities such as music, singing, rhythm, drama, role play, storytelling, and movement-based exercises help children express emotions, reduce anxiety, build confidence, and participate more actively in school life. Music activities support calmness, emotional regulation, social connection, and classroom belonging, while drama activities help children improve communication skills, confidence, emotional expression, and peer interaction. These activities are especially useful because they do not depend only on academic performance or verbal ability. Instead, they allow children to participate according to their individual needs and abilities. Therefore, creative pedagogy can make the classroom more inclusive, joyful, and emotionally supportive for disabled children. The study highlights the value of arts-based teaching strategies in reducing stress and enhancing emotional well-being among disabled school children.

Keywords

Creative Pedagogy, Disabled Children, Emotional Well-Being, Music Activities, Drama Activities, Stress Reduction, Inclusive Education, Communication Skills

Introduction

Education for disabled children should not focus only on academic achievement but should also support their emotional, social, and psychological development. Many disabled school children experience stress because of academic pressure, communication difficulties, physical limitations, social isolation, low self-esteem, bullying, and lack of inclusive classroom support. These challenges can affect their confidence, participation, emotional expression, and overall well-being.

Creative pedagogy offers an effective way to support disabled children because it uses art, music, drama, rhythm, storytelling, movement, and role play as part of the learning process. These activities provide children with opportunities to express feelings, relax their minds, interact with classmates, and develop confidence. Music activities such as listening to calming music, singing, clapping, and rhythm exercises help children experience calmness, emotional release, and social connection. Similarly, drama activities such as role play, mime, storytelling, puppet play, and expression games help children communicate emotions, practise social behaviour, and reduce stress.

Creative pedagogy is especially useful in inclusive classrooms because it can be adapted according to the needs of children with different disabilities. Children with speech difficulties may use gestures, rhythm, or facial expressions. Children with physical disabilities may participate through seated activities, hand movements, or adapted instruments. Children with intellectual disabilities may benefit from simple songs, repeated actions, and structured routines. In this way, creative pedagogy supports participation beyond academic ability and creates a more accepting classroom environment.

Thus, the effectiveness of creative pedagogy lies in its ability to reduce stress, promote emotional well-being, improve confidence, and strengthen communication among disabled children. It helps make education more child-centred, inclusive, expressive, and emotionally supportive.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the role of creative pedagogy in supporting emotional well-being among disabled school children.
2. To study the effectiveness of music activities in reducing stress and promoting calmness among disabled children.
3. To analyse the role of drama activities in improving communication skills and emotional expression among disabled children.
4. To assess how creative activities help in building confidence, social participation, and classroom inclusion among disabled school children.

Role of Music Activities in Emotional Well-Being

Music activities play an important role in promoting emotional well-being among disabled school children because music provides a calm, enjoyable, and expressive medium through which children can experience relaxation, emotional connection, and social participation. Emotional well-being refers to a child's ability to feel secure, express emotions, manage stress, develop confidence, and maintain positive relationships with others. Disabled school children may experience emotional challenges due to academic pressure, communication barriers, physical limitations, peer rejection, bullying, low self-esteem, and lack of inclusive support. In such situations, music can create a supportive environment where children feel relaxed, accepted, and emotionally connected.

Music is useful in education because it works through sound, rhythm, melody, repetition, movement, and emotional response. It does not always require complex language or academic ability. This makes music especially helpful for disabled children who may struggle with verbal communication, reading, writing, attention, or social interaction. Music-based activities may include listening to calming music, singing songs, clapping, rhythm exercises, movement with music, use of simple instruments, group songs, and relaxation through soft melodies. Fancourt and Finn (2019) explain that arts engagement, including music, has an important role in promoting health and well-being across different age groups and settings.

Music can support emotional well-being in several ways. First, it helps children relax by reducing mental tension and creating a peaceful classroom atmosphere. Second, it supports emotional expression because children may express joy, sadness, excitement, or calmness through singing, rhythm, or movement. Third, it encourages social participation because many music activities are performed in groups. Fourth, it builds confidence because children can participate according to their ability without fear of academic failure. Geretsegger et al. (2022) reported that music therapy for autistic people may support overall improvement and may help in areas related to social interaction, communication, and quality of life, which is relevant for inclusive school practices involving children with communication and social difficulties.

For disabled school children, music can become an emotional bridge between the child and the school environment. Some children may not be comfortable speaking about their feelings, but they may respond to rhythm, melody, or familiar songs. A child who avoids classroom discussion may participate in clapping or humming. A child who is anxious may calm down while listening to soft music. A child who lacks confidence may feel encouraged while singing with classmates. In this way, music does not only entertain children but also helps them regulate emotions, build relationships, and participate more actively.

Music activities are also inclusive because they can be adapted for different types of disabilities. Children with visual impairment can participate through listening, singing, rhythm, and instrument playing. Children with physical disabilities can participate through seated movement, hand rhythm, clapping, or adapted instruments. Children with hearing impairment may respond to vibration, rhythm, visual cues, movement, and beat patterns. Children with intellectual disability may benefit from simple repetitive songs and structured rhythm activities. Children with autism spectrum disorder may respond positively to predictable musical patterns and familiar sounds. Therefore, music activities provide flexible opportunities for emotional support and participation.

Music also helps in building classroom belonging. Disabled children may sometimes feel isolated because of their disability or learning difficulties. Group music activities such as singing together, clapping in rhythm, or playing simple instruments can help children feel part of the group. Porter et al. (2017) studied music therapy for children and adolescents with behavioural and emotional problems and showed that music therapy has been examined as a structured intervention for young people with social, emotional, behavioural, and developmental difficulties. This supports the idea that music-based activities can be useful for children who experience emotional and behavioural stress in school settings.

Thus, music activities can support emotional well-being by creating calmness, emotional release, confidence, communication, and social connection. They are especially useful for disabled school children because music allows participation beyond academic performance and verbal expression. When music is included in the school curriculum, it can make the classroom more joyful, inclusive, and emotionally supportive.

Music Listening and Calmness

Music listening is one of the simplest and most effective music activities for promoting calmness among disabled school children. Listening to music can create a peaceful environment and help children shift attention away from stress, fear, anger, or frustration. In school life, disabled children may experience stress due to classroom noise, academic tasks, social pressure, peer comparison, communication difficulties, or sensory overload. Soft, slow, and familiar music can help create emotional comfort and reduce tension.

Music listening supports calmness because it affects mood and attention. When children listen to relaxing music, their mind becomes engaged with sound and rhythm. This engagement may reduce restlessness and emotional discomfort. A calm musical environment can also help children feel safe and settled before learning activities. Fancourt and Finn (2019) noted that arts engagement can support health promotion and the management of different well-being needs, and music is one of the major arts-based activities used in well-being practices.

For disabled school children, music listening can be used at different points in the school day. It can be used at the beginning of the class to create a calm atmosphere, before examinations to reduce anxiety, after physical activity to settle children, during art or craft work to improve focus, or after a stressful event to support emotional regulation. The teacher can use soft instrumental music, nature sounds, slow rhythm songs, or culturally familiar calming music. The selection of music should be based on children's comfort, age, culture, disability needs, and sensory preferences.

Music listening is especially helpful for children who experience anxiety or sensory sensitivity. Some disabled children may become disturbed by loud sounds, sudden instructions, crowded classrooms, or unpredictable situations. Gentle music can provide a predictable and soothing sound environment. However, teachers must be careful because not all music is calming for every child. Some children may dislike certain sounds, instruments, volumes, or rhythms. Therefore, music listening should be flexible and child-centred. Children may be given choices, and the volume should remain comfortable.

Listening to music can also support emotional recognition. Teachers may use different types of music to help children identify feelings such as happiness, sadness, calmness, excitement, or fear. For example, after listening to a soft tune, the teacher may ask, “How does this music make you feel?” or “Does this sound feel calm or fast?” Such activities can help disabled children understand and name emotions. This is useful for emotional well-being because children who can recognise emotions may gradually learn to manage them better.

Music listening may also reduce classroom stress by creating a non-threatening environment. Academic tasks often create pressure because children may fear mistakes or failure. Music listening does not require the child to give correct answers. It simply allows the child to experience sound, rhythm, and feeling. This makes it suitable for children who are shy, anxious, or withdrawn. Rabeyron et al. (2020) compared music therapy and music listening for children with autism spectrum disorder and reported that both approaches were studied as structured musical interventions, while music therapy showed stronger clinical improvement than music listening alone in that trial.

Music listening can also be combined with breathing, relaxation, and visualisation. For example, children may be asked to sit comfortably, close their eyes if they are comfortable, breathe slowly, and listen to gentle music. They may imagine a garden, river, sky, or favourite place. This can help children relax emotionally and physically. For disabled children who face stress due to school adjustment, such short relaxation activities may be useful as part of the daily classroom routine.

Another important benefit of music listening is that it can improve attention and readiness for learning. A child who is emotionally disturbed may not be ready to learn. Calm music can help the child settle before academic work. When children feel relaxed, they may be more able to concentrate, listen to instructions, and participate in classroom activities. Therefore, music listening indirectly supports academic learning by improving emotional readiness.

Music listening is also easy to implement in schools because it does not require expensive equipment. A teacher can use simple audio devices, classroom speakers, or even live humming and soft singing. The activity can be short, such as five to ten minutes, and can be adjusted according to the school timetable. It is important, however, that music listening should not disturb children who are sensitive to sound. Teachers should observe children’s responses and make changes when needed.

Singing and Rhythm Activities for Confidence

Singing and rhythm activities are important for building confidence among disabled school children. Confidence means the child’s belief in his or her ability to participate, express, perform, and interact with others. Disabled children may sometimes lack confidence because of repeated academic failure, social comparison, communication problems, physical limitations, or negative attitudes from peers and adults. Singing and rhythm activities can help children feel capable, active, and included.

Singing allows children to use voice, words, melody, and emotion together. It can be done individually, in pairs, or in groups. For disabled children, group singing is especially helpful because it reduces the fear of performing alone. When children sing together, no single child feels fully exposed or judged. This creates a sense of safety and belonging. Singing familiar songs can also increase joy and participation. Geretsegger et al. (2022) highlighted that music therapy for autistic people may support social interaction and communication outcomes, which shows the relevance of music-based engagement for children with social and communication difficulties.

Rhythm activities include clapping, tapping, beating simple drums, using shakers, repeating sound patterns, walking to a beat, or responding to musical cues. Rhythm gives structure and predictability. Many disabled children benefit from predictable patterns because they reduce uncertainty and anxiety. A simple rhythm such as clap, clap, pause, or

tap, tap, tap can help children follow instructions, coordinate movement, and participate confidently. Rhythm activities do not require perfect singing or advanced musical skill, so they are suitable for children with different abilities.

Singing and rhythm activities build confidence by providing immediate participation. In many classroom subjects, children may need to read, write, remember, or speak correctly. In rhythm activities, even a child who cannot read well can clap, tap, or respond to a beat. This gives the child a positive experience of success. When teachers appreciate the child's effort, the child may feel more confident. Such confidence can gradually transfer to other classroom activities.

Singing also supports emotional expression. Children may express happiness, excitement, sadness, hope, or comfort through songs. Songs with positive words can encourage children and improve mood. For example, songs about friendship, courage, kindness, and self-belief can support emotional well-being. Disabled children who feel lonely or insecure may feel emotionally connected through group singing. Music creates shared emotional experiences that can reduce isolation.

Rhythm activities can also improve communication and social interaction. When children clap together or take turns playing instruments, they practise listening, waiting, responding, and coordinating with others. These are important social skills. A child who finds direct conversation difficult may still communicate through rhythm. Turn-taking in music can prepare children for turn-taking in conversation and classroom interaction. Porter et al. (2017) examined music therapy for children and adolescents with social, emotional, behavioural, and developmental difficulties, showing that music-based interventions are relevant to children with emotional and social needs.

Singing and rhythm also support body awareness and coordination. Children may clap, tap feet, move hands, sway, or play simple instruments. These movements can be adapted for children with physical disabilities. A child who cannot stand or dance can still clap, tap, move fingers, use a small shaker, or respond through facial expression. The aim is not musical perfection but active participation. This inclusive approach helps disabled children feel that they are part of the classroom group.

Rhythm can also help reduce nervousness. Repeated rhythmic patterns create a sense of order and control. Children who feel anxious may become calmer when they follow a predictable beat. The rhythm gives them something concrete to focus on. For children with attention difficulties, rhythm activities can also support focus because they are active, sensory, and engaging. Music-based structure may help children remain involved for longer periods than ordinary verbal instruction.

Singing and rhythm activities can be used in different ways in the curriculum. Teachers may use welcome songs at the beginning of the class, transition songs when moving from one activity to another, rhythm games for attention, action songs for movement, and closing songs for emotional settlement. These activities make classroom routines more predictable and enjoyable. Predictable routines are especially helpful for disabled children who may feel stressed by sudden changes.

Confidence also grows when children are given leadership roles in music activities. A child may be asked to start a clap pattern, choose a song, lead a small group, hold an instrument, or suggest a rhythm. These small responsibilities help children feel trusted and valued. For disabled children who are often treated as dependent, such leadership opportunities are very important. They help children see themselves as active contributors rather than passive receivers of help.

Singing and rhythm activities also promote peer acceptance. When disabled and non-disabled children sing or clap together, they share a common activity. This reduces the distance between them. Group music can create equality

because each child contributes to the same sound. A child who is weak in academics may still be strong in rhythm or singing. This can change how classmates see the child and may improve social inclusion.

However, singing and rhythm activities should be handled carefully. Teachers should not force children to sing alone if they feel shy or anxious. Children with sound sensitivity should not be exposed to loud music or sudden beats. Children with speech difficulties should be allowed to hum, clap, use gestures, or play instruments instead of singing words. The activity should be flexible and respectful. The goal is confidence, not performance pressure.

Role of Drama Activities in Reducing Stress

Drama activities play an important role in reducing stress among disabled school children because they provide a safe and expressive space where children can communicate feelings, practise social behaviour, and release emotional pressure. Drama in education includes role play, storytelling, mime, puppet play, expression games, movement, dialogue practice, improvisation, and small group performance. These activities allow children to express themselves through voice, body movement, facial expressions, gestures, imagination, and interaction with others. For disabled school children, drama is especially useful because many children may not easily express their stress, fear, anger, sadness, or confusion through direct conversation.

Disabled school children often experience stress due to communication barriers, peer rejection, academic pressure, bullying, lack of confidence, and limited participation in classroom activities. Drama can reduce this stress by giving children a controlled and supportive environment where they can act, speak, move, and express emotions without fear of being judged. In drama activities, children are not always required to speak about their personal problems directly. They can express emotions through characters, stories, situations, and role play. This indirect expression makes drama less threatening and more comfortable for children who feel shy, anxious, or emotionally withdrawn.

Drama-based activities also help children understand emotions and social situations. Through drama, children can practise how to greet others, ask for help, express happiness, show sadness, manage anger, cooperate in a group, and respond to difficult situations. Bololia et al. (2022) found in a systematic integrative review that dramatherapy for children and adolescents with autism spectrum disorder may support behavioural, expressive, social, and emotional skills, although the authors also noted that more strong empirical research is needed in this area (Bololia et al., 2022).

Drama activities can reduce stress because they create emotional release. When a child acts out a story, performs a character, uses facial expressions, or participates in movement, the child may release hidden tension. This release can create relief and relaxation. Children who are unable to explain their emotions verbally may communicate through gestures, actions, and dramatic expression. Drama therefore becomes a bridge between inner feelings and outward communication.

Another important role of drama is confidence building. Disabled children may sometimes hesitate to participate in classroom discussions because they fear mistakes or peer judgment. Drama gives them an opportunity to practise speaking and interaction in a playful manner. Group drama activities reduce performance pressure because children work together. A child may first participate through simple gestures, then short dialogue, then role play, and gradually more active performance. This step-by-step participation can increase confidence and reduce anxiety.

Drama is also useful because it supports social inclusion. Many disabled children feel isolated from classmates due to disability, communication differences, or low confidence. Drama activities encourage cooperation, turn-taking, listening, group planning, and shared performance. When disabled and non-disabled children participate together in drama, they learn to understand and accept each other. D'Amico et al. (2015) reported that drama therapy techniques used in a group context helped children with autism spectrum disorders develop and practise social skills (D'Amico

et al., 2015).

Drama activities should be planned carefully for disabled school children. The aim should not be perfect acting or public performance. The main aim should be expression, relaxation, participation, emotional release, and confidence. Teachers should avoid forcing children to perform in front of others if they are not ready. Some children may participate through facial expressions, hand movements, puppet play, simple sounds, or short actions. Drama becomes stress-reducing only when it is supportive, flexible, and child-centred.

Thus, drama activities can become an effective method for reducing stress among disabled school children. They help children express emotions, develop communication skills, build confidence, improve peer interaction, and feel more included in the school environment. When drama is integrated into the school curriculum, it can make learning more expressive, joyful, and emotionally supportive.

Drama and Communication Skills

Drama activities are closely connected with communication skills because drama requires children to observe, listen, respond, speak, move, and interact with others. Communication is not limited to spoken language. It also includes facial expressions, gestures, body movement, eye contact, posture, tone of voice, rhythm, and emotional response. Many disabled school children may face difficulty in one or more areas of communication. Some may struggle with speech, some may find it difficult to understand social cues, some may hesitate to speak in groups, and some may have limited confidence in expressing needs and emotions. Drama provides a practical and enjoyable way to practise these communication skills.

In regular classroom situations, communication may become stressful for disabled children. A child may feel afraid to answer questions, read aloud, ask for help, or speak with classmates. However, drama changes communication into a playful activity. When children act as characters, use puppets, perform simple scenes, or take part in expression games, they communicate in a less pressured way. They are not speaking only as themselves; they are speaking through a role. This makes communication easier for children who feel shy or anxious.

Drama helps develop verbal communication. Through short dialogues, storytelling, character speech, and group scenes, children practise using words, sentences, voice, and expression. A child who normally speaks very little may begin by repeating a simple line in a drama activity. Over time, the child may become more comfortable with speaking in front of others. Drama also helps children improve clarity, pronunciation, voice modulation, and confidence in speech. D'Amico et al. (2015) examined drama therapy for children with autism spectrum disorders and highlighted its use in developing and practising social skills in a group setting (D'Amico et al., 2015).

Drama also supports non-verbal communication. Some disabled children may not be able to communicate fluently through words, but they can express meaning through body movement, facial expression, gesture, and action. Mime, puppet play, expression games, and movement-based drama allow such children to participate without heavy dependence on speech. This is important because non-verbal expression can reduce frustration and help children feel understood. Bololia et al. (2022) reported that dramatherapy can support expressive and social skills among children and adolescents with autism spectrum disorder (Bololia et al., 2022).

Drama activities also improve listening skills. In a role play or group performance, children need to listen to the teacher's instructions, follow the sequence of the story, wait for their turn, and respond to other children's actions. These skills are important for classroom communication. Disabled children who struggle with attention or social interaction may benefit from short and structured drama activities because they provide clear roles and predictable patterns.

Turn-taking is another important communication skill developed through drama. In drama, children learn when to speak, when to listen, when to enter a scene, and when to respond. This helps children understand the rhythm of social communication. Turn-taking is especially useful for children who find conversation difficult. A drama scene provides a visible and practical model of social exchange.

Drama also helps children understand emotions in communication. In daily life, children need to understand whether someone is happy, angry, sad, afraid, or confused. Drama activities allow children to practise these emotions through facial expressions, voice, and body language. For example, a teacher may ask children to show a happy face, a worried face, or a brave posture. Such activities help disabled children recognise emotions in themselves and others. Emotional recognition is important for reducing stress because children who understand emotions can communicate their needs more effectively.

Drama can also improve social confidence. A child who is afraid to speak in class may feel more confident while acting in a group. Group drama reduces individual pressure because children perform together. When classmates clap, appreciate, or participate cooperatively, the child feels accepted. This acceptance can reduce fear and improve self-esteem. Rahimi Pordanjani (2021) studied drama therapy among children with high-functioning autism spectrum disorder and examined its effectiveness for social skills such as communication, self-confidence, and appropriate social behaviour (Rahimi Pordanjani, 2021).

Drama activities can be adapted according to disability needs. Children with speech difficulties may use gestures, picture cards, puppets, or short repeated lines. Children with hearing impairment may use visual scripts, signs, gestures, facial expression, and movement. Children with physical disabilities may perform seated role play, hand movement, voice acting, or puppet-based drama. Children with intellectual disability may benefit from simple stories, repeated actions, and visual cues. Children with autism spectrum disorder may benefit from predictable scenes, structured roles, and familiar routines.

The teacher's role is very important in drama-based communication activities. The teacher should create a safe and respectful environment where children do not laugh at each other's mistakes. Children should be appreciated for effort, participation, and expression. The teacher should not correct every mistake harshly because this may increase stress. Instead, gentle guidance should be given. For example, the teacher may say, "Let us try this line together," or "You expressed that feeling very well." Such encouragement helps children feel secure.

Drama also helps teachers understand children's communication strengths and difficulties. Some children may speak more during role play than during normal classroom discussion. Some may show emotions through movement or facial expression. Some may participate better with puppets than with direct conversation. These observations can help teachers plan better support for disabled children.

In conclusion, drama activities play a strong role in developing communication skills among disabled school children. They support verbal communication, non-verbal expression, listening, turn-taking, emotional recognition, confidence, and social interaction. Since communication difficulties are a major source of stress for many disabled children, drama can reduce stress by making communication easier, safer, and more enjoyable.

Conclusion

Creative pedagogy is an important approach for supporting the emotional well-being of disabled children. Music and drama activities provide disabled children with safe, enjoyable, and expressive opportunities to reduce stress, express emotions, build confidence, and participate in classroom activities. Music helps children experience calmness, emotional comfort, rhythm, social connection, and confidence, while drama supports communication skills, emotional expression, turn-taking, social interaction, and stress reduction. These activities are flexible and can be adapted

according to different disability needs, making them useful for inclusive education. Therefore, creative pedagogy should be included in classroom practices to create a supportive, joyful, and inclusive learning environment for disabled school children.

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