

"هل ترى ملعب مدرستي؟" كيف تعكس رسومات الأطفال ما يحبون وما لا يحبون: دراسة نوعية

“Did You See my School Playground?” Young Children’s Drawings “as Reflection of Their Likes and Dislikes: A Qualitative Study

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ملخص الدراسة:

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى الكشف عن رسومات أطفال ما قبل المدرسة الأردنيين كوسيلة للتعبير عن تفضيلاتهم ورغباتهم. استُخدم في البحث المنهج النوعي، إذ تم تحليل رسومات ثمانية عشر طفلاً ومناقشتها لتحقيق هذا الهدف. كشفت نتائج التحليل عن وجود أربع مجموعات من المواضيع التي يرغب الأطفال في رسمها: المنازل أو أجزاء منها، المدارس أو أجزاء منها، والمنتزهات أو أجزاء منها ومجموعة من الرسومات المتنوعة غير المصنفة في فئة معينة. أظهر الأطفال رغبة في رسم الأماكن والأشخاص والأشياء التي يعتقدون أنهم يحبونها في مجتمعهم. كما أنهم صوروا مشاعرهم الخاصة ومشاعر الناس المحيطين بهم. في خاتمة البحث وبناءً على هذه النتائج، فإنه يُحدّد أن يتبنى الباحثون رسومات الأطفال كطريقة للبحث في مجالات الطفولة. كما يتّضح الباحثون بإنشاء حوارات مع الأطفال للوصول إلى فهم أعمق لنواياهم والمعاني الضمنية لهذه الرسومات كما أوصت بذلك نظريتي "Semiotics" و "Auteur".

الكلمات المفتاحية: أطفال ما قبل المدرسة، الرسومات، المنهج النوعي، التفضيلات.

Abstract

This study aimed at exploring preschool children's drawings as means of expressing their likes and preferences. The study adopted a qualitative methodology to achieve this aim, by analyzing Drawings of eighteen young children. The results revealed four groups of themes that children liked to draw: houses or parts of houses, schools or parts of schools, parks or parts of parks and an uncategorized group that contained miscellaneous drawings. Children tended to draw the places, people or things they felt they liked in their community. They also portrayed their own feelings and those of other people around them. It was concluded, based on those findings, researchers are recommended to adopt children's drawings as a method of researching with children. Researchers are also advised to initiate dialogues with the image-maker, in order to get a deeper understanding of the intentions of image- creators , as recommended by 'Semiotics' & 'Auteur' theories.

Keywords: preschool children, drawings, images, qualitative method, preferences.

Introduction

Children were treated differently throughout history: in the medieval period, Puritans viewed children as beings who are different from and less efficient than adults (Fresnoza-flot & Nagasaka, 2015). This puritans' view prevailed in western culture in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Kehily, 2015). More recently, however, instead of dealing with children as subjects of research, they have been considered as active social agents who can participate in their own research.

According to Mac Naughton et al, (2007), children, due to their young ages and low experience, were sometimes not allowed to express their views and opinions in public decision making debates related to issues affecting their community. Children's opinions, if allowed, were often filtered and 'subordinated' by adults on the ground that adults are more experienced .Rousseau, for instance, believed that children must be left to act on their own, avoiding the influence of the 'corrupted' and 'immoral' adults and societies (Thomas, 2013). Thus, children will naturally develop their own perspectives about matters affecting their lives, and those most probably would be the correct ones.

By the commencement of the twentieth century and the birth of psychology as a distinct discipline in philosophical sciences, Children started to be the focus of research in developmental psychology, educational psychology and early childhood education. Since the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and opened it for signature in 1989, studying children had shifted to a new paradigm. Children started to be treated as active participants and social agents who can affect and are affected by other community members. Thus, a new movement of researching '*with children*' replaced the old paradigms of studying "*children*".

Data about children can be collected either directly (by interviews and observation) or creatively, such as 'draw-and-tell', which was used in the present research. Interviews might result in less valid responses, due to possible power and age differences between children and adult researchers (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It has been well-documented that 'an image is worth a thousand words'. Based on this saying some researchers believed that indirect image-based research methods are more effective than other direct methods (Blosaw & Josephidou, 2019).

Moreover, Children often tend to present the responses they believe will match those of other adults, and they can express their views and interpretations of their experiences more freely through their drawings (Farokhi & Hashemi, 2011). Some psychologists even used children's drawings as a means of assessing their levels of intelligence, by analyzing their drawings and calculating an IQ based on that analysis (Goodenough, 1926). Depending on drawings for 'researching with' children is uncommon in Jordan, but some research can be detected in this field. Ahmad et al (2015), for instance, analyzed the writings and drawings of 562 four and five year-old children enrolled in 15 preschools. The study found that teachers focused on academic more than non-academic activities and experiences.

Another research was carried out by Ahmad (2018), analyzing the content of the drawings of 736 Jordanian preschool children to determine how much their drawings were informed by the Jordanian culture. The results showed that Jordanian children, similar to children elsewhere, drew images of nature, people, animals, surroundings and transportation. Moreover, English and Arabic numbers, letters and mathematical shapes were also drawn either separately or combined on the same paper by those preschool children. The above-mentioned studies, however, were only descriptive, and only aimed at interpreting and understanding the contents of preschool children's drawings; nothing related to children's preferences could be detected whether directly or implicitly.

Einarsdottir et al (2009) found that combining the creation of the image with the narrative children uttered about that image proved to be effective in disclosing the meanings children have about the topic of research. It was concluded that children's drawings and their comments enriched the understanding of children's perceptions of starting school. The work of Podobnik et al (2024) supported this finding; researchers have to depend on dialogues initiated with young children so that they could better understand children's intentions and meanings behind their drawings.

In a systematic review of studies examining preschool children's drawings in Turkey between the years 2015 & 2024, Guven et al (2025), analyzed studies and articles published during this period. It was found out that the year 2022 had the highest number of studies and articles. The themes of drawing covered, besides environmental subjects, people's emotions, school, teachers, play, family and children's rights. Qualitative analysis revealed that children used their drawings as a means of expressing their emotions and thoughts besides other themes.

The present study may be a breakthrough in the field of researching with children and may open new opportunities for more qualitative research. The results could disclose the status of Jordanian preschool children's expression of their opinions, and be invested to promote their psychological health and general well-being. The main contribution of this research to the theoretical knowledge lies in the qualitative analysis of preschool children's drawings that express their likes and preferences (Zhang, 2015). This contribution gains particular importance because the research approach itself is relatively scarce, as reflected in some related local studies (Hyassat, 2016; Save the Child Foundation, 2018).

The present research attempted to answer the following questions:

- 1- What are the main themes that were expressed in children's drawings of their community environment?
- 2- In what ways do children's drawings differ from their verbal expressions in the after-drawing dialogues?
- 3- How do gender-differences influence children's expressions of their opinions through drawings?
- 4- How do children express their emotions (happiness, fear, stress etc.) through the colors, shapes and symbols of their drawings?

Method

Children who participated in the present research were eighteen five-year-old Jordanian children who attended a private preschool in the North West area of Amman, the capital of Jordan. In Jordan, all religions and ethnicities usually share the same culture and social values and norms, if they live in the same place (Hofstede et al, 2004). Young preschool children may actively participate in researching matters that relate to their everyday life experiences and activities. They proved to be efficient in expressing their views, beliefs, and ideas through direct and indirect methods, such as interviews, role-play, drawings and other creative methods of data collection (Brady & Graham, 2019). Children's parents were requested to sign a consent letter to allow for their children's participation in the research, in addition to children's own oral and written assent to participate.

It was decided to adopt drawing as the research method used in the present research (Mannay, 2016; Siim, 2020). All children, whose parents signed the consent letters, enthusiastically showed their willingness to participate in a drawing activity. Each child was given a piece of paper and a pencil in addition to some plastic crayons. Children were asked to draw something or someone they liked most in their environment, which could be a house, a school, a teacher, a peer, a school facility or a school activity.

Each child was told to draw one thing only; i.e. the thing they liked most. A total of thirty drawings were collected at the end of one hour in the course of three successive days (6 children every day). Children were happy and expressed energy and enthusiasm while drawing. They asked the researcher occasionally to have a look at what they were drawing. The researcher felt that this quick look at children's drawings raised their motivation to draw and increased their energy. The remaining six children of the class (the class consisted of 24 children) whose parents did not give consent for their participation in the research were advised to engage in another out of class activity during the drawing sessions.

Ethical considerations need to be clearly pronounced when doing research with children, due to their relative weakness, lack of familiarity, greater power difference between them and the researcher and their lower awareness of the possible risks of participating in the research (Carnevale et al, 2021). The main ethical dimensions specific for studying with children include minimizing harm, providing benefit, ensuring informed consent, minimizing bias and protecting confidentiality, anonymity and privacy (Palaiologou, 2012; Sadzaglishvili et al, 2021).

Children who participate in research have the right to be informed about the purposes, potential risks, anticipated reward of the research, and voluntarily sharing their knowledge and views with others. They should be told that they have the right to withdraw at any time from participating in the research without even asking for permission (Iphofen & Tolich, 2018; Swain, 2006). When the participants are children, they should be assisted in making the decision to participate by a responsible third party, such as a parent whose major concern is the child's welfare (Derry et al., 2010). All the above ethical concerns were pronounced clearly and honestly to the participant children before starting the research.

Participant children and their parents were promised that the research would not harm them in any way, and that their participation would contribute to their well-being (Iphofen & Tolich, 2018). All participant children were assured of the confidentiality of their responses and the anonymity of their identities, so that they were protected and their informed consents were ensured before participating in the study (Tolich, 2016). All participants were always reminded that they could leave the specific research activity any time they wanted, without taking permission (BERA, 2018).

Children were assured that there was no 'right' or 'wrong' answers to questions, and that their 'views', ideas and preferences were what really counted. Children were told in simple language that what they were doing was different from examinations, tests or any other type of assessment, so that their responses reflected what they really thought about the topics discussed with them. Those precautions were supposed to minimize the sociability effect and reduce the possibility of children's conforming responses; thus, increasing the validity of the results (Podsakoff et al. 2012).

In their research about using drawings and other creative methods with children, Johnson et al. (2012) found that the drawing activity was more successful than other methods and worked fairly well with young children. Obviously, this finding supports the claim in the present research that young preschool children enjoyed their drawing more than any other activity they engaged in. Children who participated in the drawing activities enthusiastically expressed their pleasure for being allowed to draw, by jumping up and down and shouting loudly to express their happiness. Their pleasure also increased when they knew that their drawings would not be graded, and that they were free to choose any crayon or colored pencil and use as many papers as they wanted.

These feelings of pleasure were also confirmed by the work of Theron et al. (2011), who argued strongly for using drawing as a valid research method despite all criticisms. They contended that

young people were happy to draw and considered drawing an opportunity to speak up their opinions easily and without having to use any words. It was noticed that children's drawings were not restricted to their life at school, due to recent social media development that made the whole world look like a small village, and that facilitated communication among people all over the globe. Television programs and other internet applications, videos and stories can easily influence children (Al-Moghrabi, 2018; Al-Hamami, 2015).

According to 'Auteur Theory' (Rose, 2016), the most important aspect in understanding a participant-produced drawing is what the image-maker intended to show. However, in order to know that meaning, the researchers have to ask the participants for an explanation of the images they create. This means that it is important to move beyond researcher interpretation of the image and ask participants questions about what they wanted to communicate, which requires obtaining wider contextual information and wider understanding of the circumstances in which the images were created.

Some researchers, however, believe that children's responses are usually fragmented and lack coherence (Clark & Moss, 2011; Lomax, 2012). The researcher was aware of the negative effects of adults' presence in the research site, so he tried as much as he could to mitigate this negative impact. One strategy adopted was to raise the level of 'rapport' with the participant children. Another strategy was to avoid 'directive' questions in the dialogues that might lead children to certain answers and negatively affect their opinions, in an attempt to give socially desirable responses.

Results and Discussion

Analyses of children's drawings revealed four main categories of themes: drawing houses, drawing parts of the school, drawing public parks and a group of unclassified drawings. The unclassified images covered a variety of topics including religious occasions, life skills situations, natural settings and self-esteem portraits. The researcher tried to extract some meanings from the images themselves, in addition to meanings understood from the dialogues initiated with the participants after completing their drawings.

Drawing houses

One example of houses drawn by young children can be seen in image (20) drawn by a KG2 boy with three slides, a castle and a wooden bridge. This boy declared in his dialogue that he might have been influenced by images he saw on T.V.

Boy: it is my house, with grass in front.

Researcher: what are those things in front of your house?

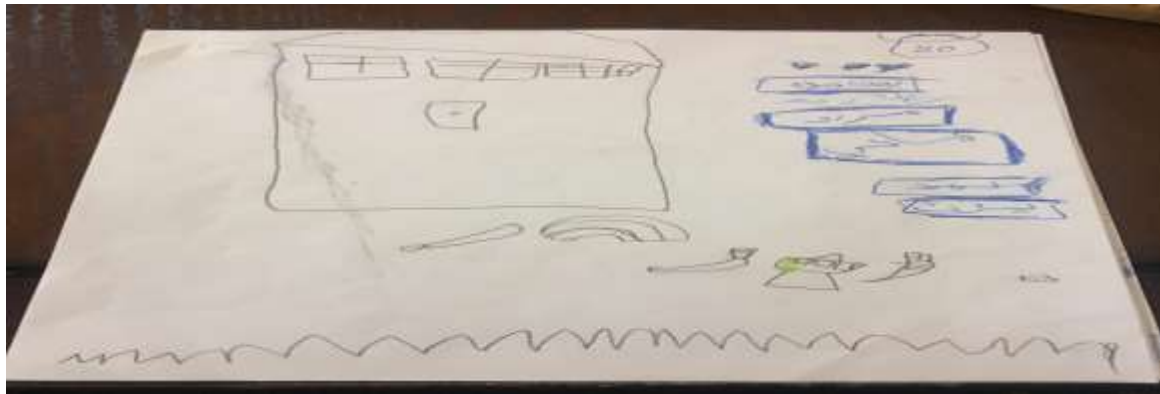
Boy: they are a slide, a castle and a wooden bridge.

Researcher: where did you see them?

Boy: I saw them on television and liked them.

The boy also mentioned that he had five friends who came to play with him, and he wrote their names on the right side of his drawing. It seems that this boy had strong social relations with his friends, so he portrayed love hearts over those friends' names, which might indicate the strong emotional bond between him and his friends. The boy's interpretation of his drawing may indicate some sort of high imagination that enabled him to figure out how houses he saw on TV could also be built in his country (Jordan). The child also explained that the castle was drawn there so that children could hide when they played hide and seek, showing again his ability to imagine future actions while playing with his friends.

The things that the boy drew at the bottom of the image (bridge, castle and three slides) may represent some kind of inter-cultural impact on how this child wanted to enjoy his time with his friends. The 'castle' and the 'bridge' are mainly portrayed from western culture; while the three slides are most probably portrayed from his local environment (Delvin, 2018), representing his immediate Meso- and Exo-systems.



(Fig. 20: House drawn by a KG2 boy)

Another example of drawing houses is image (17), which was drawn by another KG2 boy. The child, in the dialogue, said that he drew three boys, two of them were playing on the slide and the swing, and the third who looked bigger in size stood in front of the house. When asked about the bigger child, the boy said it was himself taking care of his two younger brothers, who were playing on the slide and the swing. He said that sometimes they climbed on the big tree which was planted on grass.



(Fig. 17: House front yard drawn by a KG2 boy).

Older children usually feel proud of taking care of their younger brothers (Al-Hassan et al, 2021), and this is exactly what the child in this drawing portrayed himself doing. This reveals the strong tendency of those older children to please their parents and establish strong social family relations, which are usually highly valued in the Jordanian culture (Moslah & Abo Dalboh, 2005). Pleasing parents and older adults in the community is considered a behavior that is encouraged by social norms and even by religion.

The Holy Quran urges children to please their parents, and considers this to be a good cause for having great reward. “Your Lord has ordered you to worship no one except Him, and to be good to your parents. If either one or both of them attain old age with you, do not say: fie on you, nor rebuke them, but speak to them with words of respect. And lower to them the wing of humbleness out of mercy” (verses 23 & 24 Chapter 17: surat Al-Isra’). Moreover, Abushrakh (2017) analyzed 240 child drawings to detect the stages of moral/religious concepts and their implications. The results revealed a significant contribution of children’s drawings in developing their religious/moral concepts.

Two other examples of drawing houses can be seen in images (30 and 29) which were drawn by two KG2 boys.

Drawing the school

Looking at children's drawings of their school revealed that children used these images to express their likes and preferences of things, people and activities. Almost all children preferred to draw the schoolyard where they performed their daily activities, as reflected by playing with their peers and interacting with other people. Many of them drew the schoolyard full of swings, slides, seesaws and other facilities used for amusement and single and group recreation. A KG2 boy, for instance, drew an image of his schoolyard, with a lot of swings and slides in addition to the football yard where he preferred to play with his friends, as shown in image (13) below.



(Fig. 13: the school playground drawn by a KG2 boy).

When asked what part of his school he had drawn, the child answered that he had drawn the playground, and that all his friends enjoyed kicking the ball high into the sky because that was 'a great fun'. The fact that the boy preferred to picture himself playing football rather than playing on the slides or other facilities may indicate his desire to choose some activity of his own preference rather than merging in other ongoing activities. Young children of this age often evaluate their physical capabilities and achievements by comparing them with those of their peers (Atoum et al, 2018). Young children keep saying to each other, for instance, 'I jumped higher than you did'.

Another example that matched with image (13) above was a KG2 girl's drawing of her schoolyard with four other girls playing on the swings, while she was playing on the slide, as shown in figure (25). The sun appeared on the upper right corner of the image, and the girl pointed to it saying it was a warm and nice day for play. The girl was satisfied to draw 'smiling faces' at the top of the image to indicate that children were happy. This is consistent with what Mannay (2010) contended

that ‘the quality of drawings can be highly influenced by the artistic ability of the participants’, and should be considered seriously by researchers to understand the unclear image.



(Fig. 25: School playground drawn by a KG2 girl).

Images drawn by Jordanian children showed the image creator distinguished from other peers, with a special role different from other children. For instance, in image (25) above, the girl drew herself playing alone on the slide, while four of her friends were drawn playing on the swings, as if she assigned herself the role of ‘controller’. Only symbolically, the girl indicated that the day was warm and good for play and that all children were happy. Here is what she said at the end of the dialogue:

Researcher: I can see the sun on the upper right corner (pointing to the sun).

Girl: yes, it is warm and nice today. Good day for playing out.

Researcher: and why have you drawn two smiling faces at the top?

Girl: I wanted to say we were all happy.

These hidden meanings that refer to the emotions and feelings could be understood in light of ‘Semiotics’ theory (Mannay, 2016). According to this theory, images of communication have ‘denotations’ and ‘connotations’; denotations can be noticed directly from the image, while connotations have to be extracted through dialogues with the image-makers. This may also relate to Chomsky’s ‘surface and deep’ structures of the language; where surface structure refers to denotations and deep structure refers to connotations (Askedal et al, 2010), as is the case in images (1 & 15).

Image (15) reflected a developed artistic ability, which enabled the child who drew the image to produce a better-drawn image than image (1). Image (15) could also be interpreted depending on

the cultural and social context of the child, as Rogosic et al (2020) contended. Image (1) reflected some social bonds with children's favorite teachers. This could be apparent when the girl who drew image (5) stated, in the dialogue, that she was going to give the flower to her favorite teacher as a sign of great love.



(Fig. 1: 'part of the school' drawn by a KG2 girl).



(Fig. 15: the school entrance drawn by a KG2 girl).

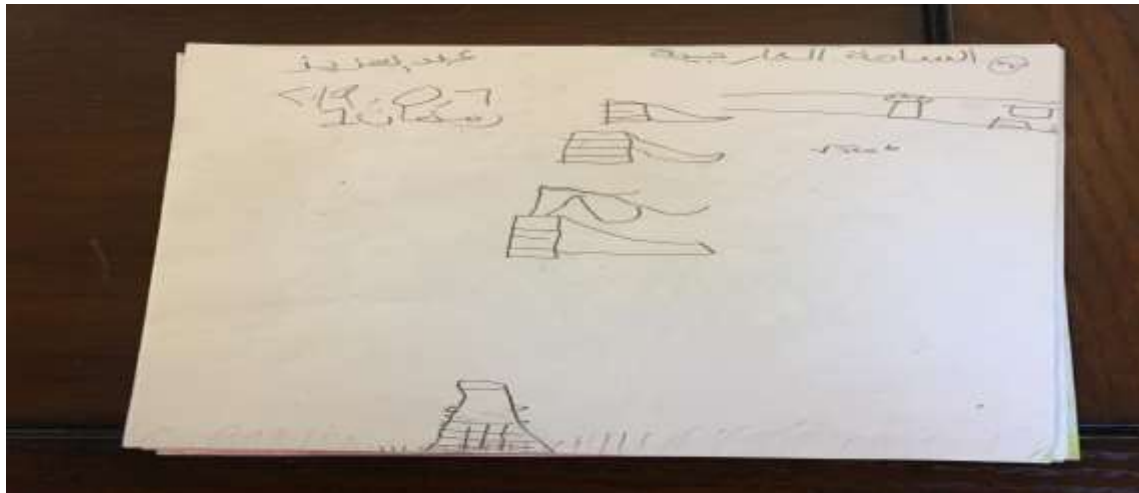


(Fig. 5: the outside schoolyard drawn by a KG2 girl).

Not only did children draw school entrance, but also the schoolyard, with the sun shining sometimes colored in green (image 14), unlike most children who colored the sun in yellow. Children also drew the playground of their school to express how much they liked to play there with friends as was reflected by image (2). One child even showed his patriotism and love for his country, like what appeared in image (8). The child who drew this image declared in his dialogue that he drew the national flag over the school building to show his loyalty to his country.



(Fig. 14: Green sun above school drawn by a KG2 girl).



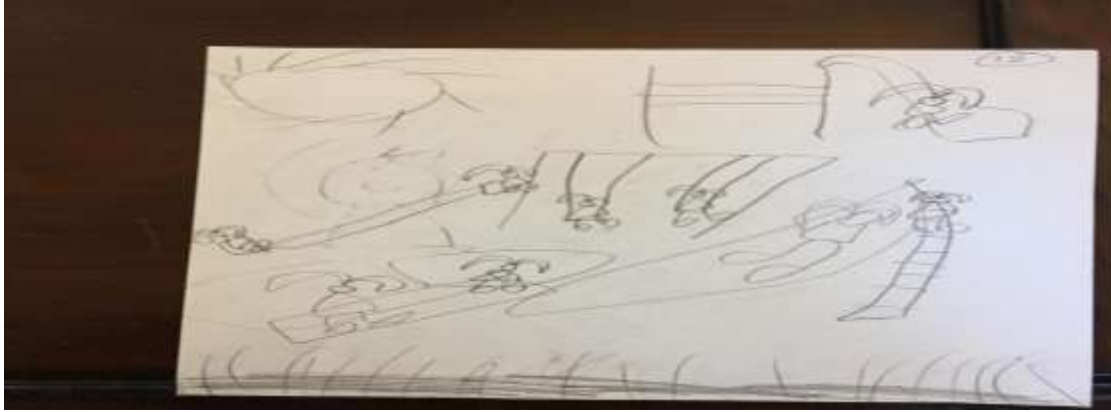
(Fig. 2: School playground drawn many times by a KG2 Boy).



(Fig. 8: School background drawn by a KG2 girl)

Drawing parks

The third category children drew in this research was ‘public parks’. An example of this was image (12) drawn by a KG2 girl. When asked about the image she drew, the girl answered that the weather was sunny and fine, indicating this in her image by drawing the sun shining at the top. She added that a group of her friends was present at the public park so that they could participate in the sport activities.



(Fig. 12: Public Park drawn by a KG2 girl).

The girl was able to explain clearly, what she had drawn; guided by the researcher's questions in the dialogue. She talked about swings, slides, seesaws, the water pool, and the warm and sunny weather that prevailed over the place:

Researcher: many children are playing here?

Girl: yes, these are my friends.

Researcher: and what are you playing?

Girl: these are swings. This is seesaw.

researcher: and what is this slide?

Girl: we love this because it leads to a water pool.

Researcher: and who is this woman here?

Girl: this is my mum watching us as we play.

Although it was not easy to see an adult in the image, but the girl, depending on Jordanian culture, might have supposed that her mother was already there monitoring and taking care of the children while playing.

Another example of drawing parks is shown in image (10), which is a community park, with swings, slides and a hiking track. The KG2 boy who created the image drew himself looking sad, and when asked about that, he said that it started to rain and he would not be able to go on playing. He said he was sad because his mom expected rain and told him not to go out, but he insisted and went to play ignoring his mother's advice. The boy could not show his sadness in drawing, and a dialogue had to be initiated to uncover any hidden meanings or feelings that were not clearly demonstrated by the drawing:

Boy: I went to play in the nearby park.

Researcher: is this the park you went to?

Boy: yes

Researcher: what is in the park?

Boy: swing and slides.

Researcher: who is this child?

Boy: this is me.

Researcher: what are you doing there?

Boy: I am feeling sad.

Researcher: why is that?

Boy: it started to rain and I could not play. My mum told me not to go.

Researcher: Why?

Boy: she expected rain to fall anytime. But, I insisted on going.



(Fig. 10: Public Community Park drawn by a KG2 boy).

Unclassified Drawings

Some drawings were not easily classified into a specific category, because they covered a wide range of topics rather than focusing on the same theme. Two boys, for instance, were interested in drawing items and symbols related to the month of Ramadan, when adult people in Jordan fast from morning to evening. This month is often highly valued and is given great consideration by Jordanians, and many families celebrate the coming of this month by electric decorations similar to those of Christmas and New Year. Below are two images (6 and 9), related to this month drawn by two *KG2 boys* who seem to be effected by the surrounding culture in their society.



(Fig. 6: 'life' drawn by a KG2 boy).



(Fig. 9: Ramadan drawn, by a KG2 boy).

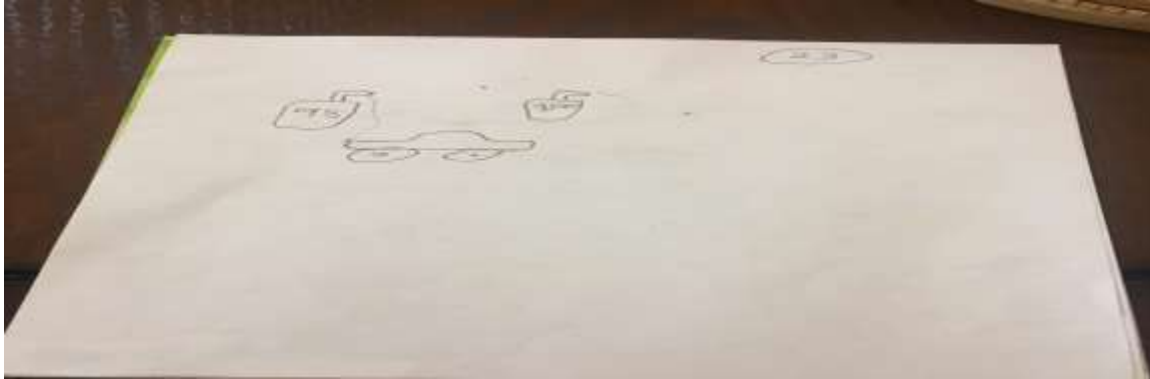
Children look eagerly to the start of this month, because they anticipate some rewards in the form of gifts and pocket cash money given by adults after the end of this month, on the day called the 'Eid'; which corresponds to the Christmas Eve and New Year in the west. This may be considered as proof of how children all over the globe think similarly regardless of their cultures and religions, as was wittingly recognized by Piaget in the sixties of the twentieth century (Thomas, 2013). The boy who drew image (9) said that he only colored the shape of the crescent and wrote 'Ramadan Kareem'. As for the child who drew image (6), no sign of 'Ramadan' was apparent in his image, except the two Arabic words 'Ramadan Kareem'.

Image (23), on the other hand, portrayed a car stopping at a petrol station, with the driver choosing to fill it with the cheaper gas (octane 95), reflecting the difficult economic conditions in his community. This boy seemed to have been imitating his father's behavior when filling his car with petrol. Another boy, in the image (28), drew a tall strange building that he called a 'minerate', with strange and unusual decorations (Crescents and balloons). He said it is used to call people for prayers, referring to the functional aspect of the image.

One unique image in this unclassified category was that drawn by a KG2 girl, namely image (21), in which the girl assured that the image represented her when she would become a 'queen' with a 'golden' big crown on her head. The girl even knew that queens live in palaces and that she was enjoying the day alone in front of her palace, which actually was no more than two tall trees and some grass.

The child who drew image (18) expressed in his dialogue his emotions and feelings through drawing one big bird smiling on the tree and another small bird frowning away from the tree. The

big bird was smiling, said the boy, because it was happy since it was sitting on the tree, while the small bird was sad, since it could not sit on the tree. The child even drew the happy bird to be larger in size than the sad one, corresponding to what Wimmer (2019) believed of children's drawings.



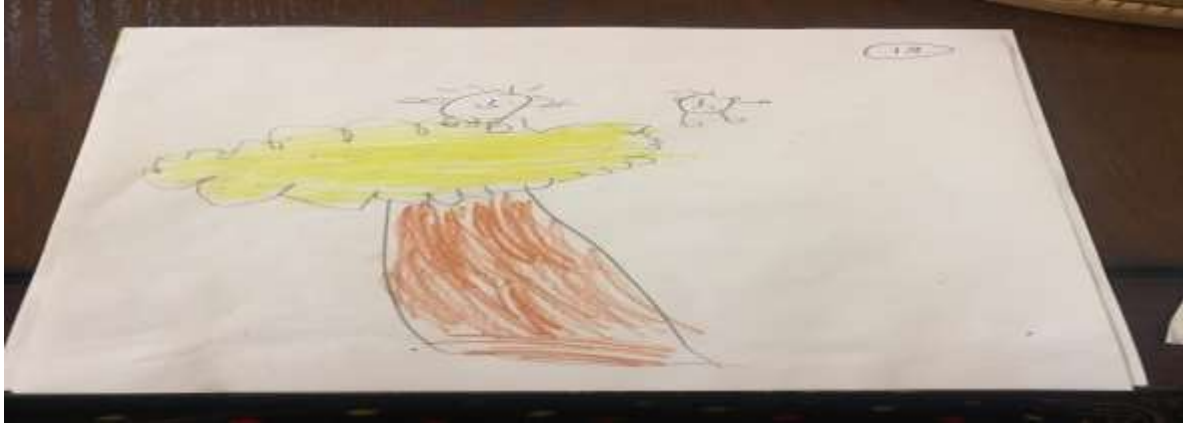
(Fig. 23: car at petrol station drawn by a KG2 boy).



(Fig. 28: a minerate drawn by a KG2 boy).



(Image 21: self-portrait queen drawn by a KG2 girl).



(Image 18: two birds on a tree drawn by a KG2 boy).

Children's drawings and the dialogues that followed them uncovered the impact of Micro- and Meso-systems of their immediate environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1993). However, there seems to be no complete consistency between what children drew and what they said in the after-drawing dialogues. This urged the researcher to ask questions that aim at disclosing some vague elements in the images created by children. Most children, however, drew images that could show clear details by mere looking at them. Only few images needed clarification of some details, by initiating after-drawing dialogues.

Children's drawings were found to be the same almost in all countries of the world; they draw the same thing but in different styles depending on the environment where they live. For example, children in the United Arab Emirates drew tents and camels beside luxurious cars, indicating a merge between Western and Arab cultures. Children in the Jordanian environment, on the other hand, drew images of their houses, familiar people, familiar places and other items from the nature, like the sun, the sky, trees and the moon (Ahmad, 2018). The most unique theme in children's drawings was coloring the sun in green, as was discussed earlier in image (14) portrayed by a KG2 girl.

Children preferred to draw something that did not represent familiar styles of the houses which were popular in their community, which helped in making familiar things appear strange and interesting (Mannay, 2016). Most preschool children's drawings of their school building and their houses followed the regular style known in the art lessons, with the front door opening on the front yard and two windows drawn on the front wall (Bland, 2012). Some houses, however, came as an exception, whether in the shape of the house or in its colors.

Such drawings of unfamiliar houses and images can be understood in light of children's wide imagination and attempts to draw something strange to prove their individuality and strong personal point of view. This was evident in children's answers to the questions posed by the researcher, such as the KG2 girl who drew the sun in green although she knew it is usually drawn

yellow, and the KG2 boy who drew his house in strange style and colors, knowing that this was strange in his community.

Mannay (2010), found that participant children in her study were inclined to draw some things and items that were not popular in their immediate community. Children in Mannay's study drew clean streets with garbage containers, although they lived in an unclean environment, with no such containers. This corresponds well with preschool children in the present study who drew their houses with colors and shapes that are not similar to houses in their environment.

Gender differences could be detected in the type of images drawn by preschool children. Boys, for instance, tended to draw images of playing group games like football in their schoolyards. Girls, on the other hand, tended to draw situations of socializing with their teachers or their parents. When drawing images of parks, boys again drew 'football pitches', with peers practicing group games, while girls drew slides or swings that suit single players individually. In the unclassified images, five boys drew something that reflected their 'masculinity' and girls drew things that suited their feminine roles.

In all, four houses were drawn by four of the KG2 boys. Eight images of schools, on the other hand, were drawn by three boys and five girls. Almost all children drew the entrance of their school, or the playground where they practice physical activities. Children who drew those images declared, in their dialogues, that there were some friends, relatives or teachers with whom they socialized. In some cases, however, those friends were not evident in the image, but only referred to in the dialogues.

When the images drawn by girls were compared to those drawn by boys, it may be noticed that there are gender differences in things liked by both genders. Girls often express their likes of their teachers and reflect that in more classically feminine taste; while boys prefer to express their likes of more masculine oriented images. This, of course, does not come from vacuum; it is rather influenced by the society's perception of gender roles regarding these issues (Moslah & Abo-Dalboh, 2005; Al-Zyood & Al-Rugub, 2008). In the Jordanian culture, girls are expected and encouraged to take a classically feminine role in all aspects of their lives; boys, on the other hand, are encouraged to acquire choices that are more masculine.

These results seem to contradict with what Dinella et al (2017) found out in their research about gender-typed preferences of preschool children in the East Coast of the United States, in which girls, for instance, played with a wide variety of all types of masculine, feminine and neutral toys than with feminine toys only. Some preschool children in the present research, also showed their preferences without being influenced, as expected, by their gender; both chose to play with slides, swings, seesaws, wooden animals and hide and seek, which are considered 'neutral' games.

Conclusions

The creative method adopted in this research was free drawing followed by explanatory dialogues, which resulted in four main themes: drawing houses, drawing parks, drawing the school and an unclassified category. Each image in the drawing activity provided the research with at least two points of view: one of them came from the researcher's understanding of the image, and the other came from the child's interpretation in the after-drawing dialogue (Rodriguez-Carrillo et al, 2020; Coyne et al, 2021). For these reasons, the data analysis of the images drawn by participant children, and the after-drawing dialogues initiated with those children, both suggested that drawing might be considered an appropriate method of data collection used in such cases.

The researcher studied every image first, and tried to understand what is reflected in that image; and then, the after-drawing dialogue provided the researcher with deeper understanding , by adding the perspective of the child who created the image (Mannay, 2016). Since children's imagination at this age is so wide, special notice was given to distinguish between what is based on children's experience and what is mere fantasy, without neglecting what children are saying (Einarsdottir, 2007). This phenomenon may explain why some children mentioned, in their after-drawing dialogues, certain aspects that could not clearly be seen in the image itself.

Most studies carried out in Jordan seemed to ignore children themselves and focus instead on adults' opinions about children (Oliemat et al, 2020; Barakat, 2019). A draw-and-tell activity was the adopted method of data collection in this research, to detect what children themselves felt or thought of events in their environment.

It is recommended, based on the results, to adopt the drawing as a method of data collection, since it proved to be highly effective in such qualitative studies. Researchers are also advised to initiate dialogues after children's creation of images, in order to obtain clearer and deeper understanding of their drawings. This is a practical application of the 'Semiotic' (or Auteur) theory which both call for a dialogue after creating the image to get two points of view (the researcher & the image creator) instead of one (Mannay, 2016; Rose, 2016).

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