

Expressing children's emotions through drawing

By

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Abstract

Before children learn to write and read, they first scribble, draw and use different colors. Based on the drawings made by the children, we can understand different elements of the children's personality and their character, temperament, and in addition to these, we can also understand special skills and talents that the child may possess. The main aim of this research is to know how much pre-school teachers can understand the emotional state of children through drawing and how much children are able to express their emotions through drawing. This research paper has been developed in collaboration with several pre-school teachers from preschool institutions of the Republic of Kosovo, a total of 37 pre-school teachers. Data were collected electronically by means of a questionnaire, which was created with Google Forms. Based on the results of this research, I conclude that, pre-school teachers manage to understand the emotional state of children quite well through their drawings.

Key words: Children, drawing, pre-school teacher, emotional state, color.

1. Introduction

Drawing is a form of children's expression and is considered as a genuine means of communication. Many of the children cannot express themselves in words but they can achieve it through their drawings because they have a wide imagination and are very creative, therefore it is much easier for them to communicate through drawings than face to face. The arts awaken creativity and imagination and help them better express their world. Drawing develops social, cognitive, emotional and physical skills, in children.

Children are happy when they are with each other. Staying together and in groups while painting, dancing or singing a song improves the development of social skills among them.

By painting and dancing, children learn simple things, such as: shapes, colors, etc.. When children are nervous or angry, some of them cannot express it in words, so by painting it is easier for them to express themselves and are more easily understood by others. Thus, children's confidence grows more and helps them to be more liberated from the condition that keeps them trapped.

Through drawing, children develop hand muscle control. If a child is abused in their family then they will draw their family members less often and in those cases they draw them it is when the family members position them further away from themselves, as if they want to protect themselves and isolate them. Another case is when some figures are drawn very large, while some are smaller, and in most cases the abuser is very large, while the child himself is small.

1.1 Education among pre-school children

Pre-school education represents the first level of education, during which children are

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educated in their families and in pre-school institutions from the age of 0-3 years and the age of 3-5 years. Part of this level is also the preparatory class (age of children 5-6 years) that can be organized in pre-school institutions and in preparatory classes.

"In the preparatory class (age 5-6 years), children, in addition to social skills and habits, create the basic foundations of learning, which represent the basic elements of reading, writing and operating with numbers, which increases their readiness for primary schooling and for life. (Ramqaj, 2020, p. 20)

1.2. Drawings of children

Attitudes about children's drawing are formed in the child's head, and what a pre-school teacher communicates to a child about his or her drawings can have a long-term impact. Children's drawings are those that reflect their inner world, thus depicting the feelings they experience. (Joseph H. Di. Leo, 1973, p. 112)

Children themselves certainly seem to regard drawing as a form of play, engaging in it willingly and immersing themselves in it as they do in their solitary play with material toys. (Silk, 1990, pp. 60-61)

The very young child who is just beginning to draw representational figures can probably manage a straight line and a roughly closed circular shape. In addition, he may be hindered by difficulties in recalling the various components that make up the object he wants to draw. Its drawing is likely to be quite minimal, depicting only a few necessary features. (Cox, 1992, pp. 114-115)

Buhler noted that young children always draw a sketch, rather than "drawing what they see," like a picture. The clear explanation that sketches "are easier to draw" has some truth, but the real reason is that the child sees them differently.

As children grow they use different drawing systems at different stages of development and this is the reason why children's drawings look so different from adults. (Willats, 2005, pp. 84-85)

When we begin to take an interest in children's drawings, it is important that we first start looking for the answer to the question: Why is it important to research children's drawings?

There are three (3) important reasons:

- 1. The development of children's artistic activities is closely related to their overall psychological, physiological and intellectual development;
- 2. Children's drawings are a reflection of their inner world, their experiences and understanding of the world around them;
- 3. Children's drawing synthesizes the features of the child's understanding, memory, thinking, experience with objects and communication with adults. (Zlateva, 2019, p. 18)

Drawing makes the verb more vivid and gives children a depth of impression of the concept of "flying". (Konomi, 2014)

Drawing enables young children to express what they know in a more comprehensive way than they would be able to if they were limited to doing so only through oral or written *Res Militaris*, vol.12, n°3, November issue 2022

Social Science Journal

communication. (de la Roche, 1996)

1.2.1. The importance of children's drawings

Drawing in children, like all other forms of intellectual development, is expressed according to the stages and steps that are in accordance with his age and mental level. It is a very good measure of several elements of development: motor skills, initiative, imagination, freedom, dexterity, insight, the way it perceives and reflects the world, etc. (Garuli, 2020, pp. 14-15)

An important factor to keep in mind is that creative work must be understood individually. Thus, we can appreciate the importance of creative drawings only by understanding the child and seeing his picture as part of his life. It happens that a child portrays an emotional event that has great personal significance, such as an accident in which he was involved. For adults it can be an ordinary drawing, it can be ugly from an aesthetic point of view. However, the work done can be an important solution in the child's own life. (Brittain, Creative and Mental Growth, 1957, p. 90)

1.2.2. Drawing topics, what children choose to draw

There are certain subjects that children prefer, which appear with considerable frequency in their drawings. Estrada (1987), who in his study analyzed 1382 drawings of children aged 2 to 9 years, came to the conclusion that the main themes of the drawing are: human figures, trees, the sun, houses. Meanwhile, other studies analyze the presence of elements in children's drawings from different perspectives, not only through concrete details.

Thus, in an analysis of children's drawings to understand how they choose to reflect the concept of good and evil in drawings, it was observed that children presented good by drawing the smile of the sun, and evil with a ugly drawing. (Garuli, Lorela, 2020, p. 54)

Children are influenced by what they see, when they remember that moment, and how they feel and think about it. Therefore, some psychologists have given the following answers to the question: What do children draw?

- 1. What is important for them: humans, animals, houses, trees;
- 2. What they know about the object;
- 3. What they keep in mind;
- 4. Colored ideas and feelings;
- 5. What they see;
- 6. An inner reality, not visual.

Therefore, children are expressionists for whom the object serves simply as a signal or catalyst. Whether children draw from a model or from memory, the result is the same. (Joseph H. Di Leo, 1973, p. 66)

1.2.3. Drawings with stories

Children first draw the symbolic and mythological phase (symbolic-religious paintings), then add people, animals, trees, houses and surroundings (paintings of landscapes, buildings, trees, houses) and finally draw according to reality. Having reached this last stage, the child has linked up with the present. (Foks-Appelman, 2004, pp. 116-117)

1.2.4. Spontaneous drawings

Although children of young age sometimes seem stuck in their ability to draw

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spontaneously, they are usually quite capable of doing so. Fantasy and reality work together harmoniously. It is important not to set rules about how the drawing should be done. It can be helpful to see which children are artistically gifted, but their self-criticism is usually not developed enough to stop them from drawing what's on their mind. They add more details to their drawings, such as: the sun, grass, birds, clouds, etc. The child is aware of the outside world and is able to describe his or her surroundings. If children draw a rainbow, this is a sign of hope as it can mean that something needs to be protected. (Foks-Appelman, 2004, pp. 117-118)

1.2.5. Traumatic events

School children can draw traumatic experiences; Events that are too horrible to imagine can be depicted by children in their drawings. Children sometimes also have an accompanying story to tell. Here again, the fear caused by an event can be somewhat controlled if the event is described. Furthermore, the child can share his or her feelings with someone else; he or she has some kind of testimony and doesn't feel so alone anymore. There have always been adults who have been able to help children in many situations, stimulating creative expression. (Foks-Appelman, 2004, pp. 118-119)

1.3. Emotional development

Emotion is a set of human psychic experiences, such as: joy, shame, fear, anger, sadness, etc., that appear under the influence of outer experiences or inner factors. The term "emotional development" includes the automatic development of emotions that can be functional and dysfunctional. (Cooper, 2009, p. 30)

Emotional development is the cornerstone of children's mental health well-being. Invest without shame to do the best, it is enough to be true with children and their emotions. (Toçe, 2016, p. 57)

Emotional development is related to children's ability to show the emotions they feel, to express them in the right way, to manage themselves in difficult situations and to avoid negative reactions in an appropriate manner.

1.3.1. Children's emotions

Emotions express a concern or spiritual disturbance, a similarity from the action of an object and their qualities. Emotions are processes based on which feelings are formed as personality properties. Thus, the child's feeling of love for the mother is formed as a result of concrete emotions: joy, satisfaction, gratitude, sadness, longing, bitterness and fear that arise in the various circumstances of life. (Hoti, 2012, p. 112)

1.3.2. Expressing of children emotions through drawings

Children's drawings are influenced by many factors where they can express the emotions around them, such as: family, the environment where they live and society. Through their drawings we can get a lot of information, including the feelings they experience.

It is true that an insignificant and timid work can anticipate the teacher in order to plan activities that will give the child the opportunity to develop confidence in his expression. A child will draw and paint what he feels. These feelings, desires, thoughts and explorations with pencil and color will all show up in the painting. Especially a small child, but to some extent everyone paints directly without thinking to hide their true feelings. (Brittain, Creativ and Mental Growth, 1957, pp. 112-113)

Children begin to take initiatives to express their emotions, feelings and thoughts

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around the age of 5-6 years. They can draw transparent images between the age of 5 and 7. (Ilhan, 1994). (Oguz, 2010, p. 72)

According to Oguz (2010), drawings are a unique tool that reveal a child's thoughts, interests and feelings. Oguz also stated that a child's drawing can be interpreted as a representation of his intelligence and emotional experiences, as well as indirectly reflecting the child's inner world.

"The child starts to make spontaneous drawings from an early age, on the basis of which many authors conclude about the different psychological characteristics of the child. For example, the drawing of the human figure at different ages of the child can serve as a very successful indicator of the child's intellectual development.

In addition to that, today some authors emphasize the importance of drawings and paintings for knowing the emotional side of the child's personality. Depending on whether the child uses different colors, whether he emphasizes figures, straight lines or just paints freely with a brush, different authors conclude about the emotional characteristics of the child. They think that if the child in drawings and paintings highlights more precise lines, certain shapes, then he is more stable in an emotional point of view and calm, stable and reasonable reaction dominates him. On the other hand, if the free use of colors dominates in the child's paintings, without emphasizing lines and shapes, then, in the opinion of these authors, we are dealing with impulsive emotional reactions, with non-sustainable emotional reactions. These authors conclude about the emotional characteristics of the child based on which colors the child uses more: "warm" (red, yellow) or "cold" colors (green, blue). (Juniku, 2015, p. 30)

Drawings can convey the mood, feelings and appearance of the event, despite the very obvious representational limitations that characterize the art of children.

Studies of Golomb (2004) were designed to investigate children's competence to describe feelings; they have shown that deeply felt experiences and meaningful themes can achieve a direct expression that, despite its simplicity, is attractive and appreciated by the child.

There is a "color psychology", which is a system of expression and communication of feelings, emotions, ideas. It means that the use of colors by children is not random, but an aspect that conveys significant information about how children feel and think.

Around the age of 3, when children begin to have particular interest in the use of colors, most of them prefer warm and strong colors, while only those who may present any emotional problems choose light and dark colors. cold. The absence of colors indicates an emotional void and an antisocial tendency.

Some of the special colors that children use, are:

- Yellow symbolic is related to the sun and expresses positive, happy feelings and energy;
- o **Blue** like the color of sky and sea and it expresses stability and depth of feelings;
- o **Green** rest, harmony, growth, sensitivity, balance, tranquility, security, hope, faith;
- **Red** it expresses liveliness, movement, passion, emotion, courage;
- o **Brown** between red and black, indicates sadness, seriousness, care;
- O **Black** it is related to feelings, such as: anxiety, intimidation, shyness, pain, stiffness, loss, death, but also elegance, authority, power and strength. (Garuli, Lorela, 2020, pp. 62-63) In conclusion, it is difficult for us adults to understand children's drawings and the



emotions they convey. It is difficult for us adults to understand the imagination and creativity that children can convey through their drawings.

1.3.3. Interpretation of children's drawings about their emotional state

Drawing is in the same realm of expression as play and speech. Children who draw are happy children. They express their fears, joys, dreams, pain, etc. through drawings and also give you information about their relationship with the world and other things. Drawing is an outlet for communication and children's artwork represents a snapshot of their personality.

When children draw, they feel free to express themselves, to transmit strong messages, positive and negative, as well as unimportant things.

Some information on the interpretation of drawings for the emotional state of children is given below:

Head: when the head is drawn *too big* it is an indication that the child overestimates mental and rational activity. Drawing a *small-sized* head is expressive of anxious thoughts that the person tries to suppress.

Face: the *pale* drawing of the facial features is an indicator of the person's social attractiveness. When the features are drawn with *more description and details* it is a form of expression of the great need to attract attention and to have social relations that are missing.

Eyes: when the eyes are drawn *small* or closed, they are indicators of self-orientation, introversion, and consequently of a difficulty in establishing relationships with the outside world. When the eyes are drawn *large* they are an expression of curiosity and the desire to explore. If the size of the eyes is *very exaggerated*, they indicate feelings of paranoia, fear, high alertness, or possible elements of aggressivity.

Mouth: the drawing of the mouth in *very large* sizes or, conversely, its absence in the drawing of the human figure, expresses the possible presence of problems of nutrition, speech, verbal aggressiveness. When the mouth is drawn *very small* or pale, it represents difficulties related to mutism, difficulties in articulation, anorexia. If the mouth is drawn *closed*, linear is considered an indicator of possible feelings of guilt that the child is experiencing; expression of tension and anxiety.

Nose: usually a symbol of sexuality. Teenagers can draw *very large noses*, expressing their sexual desires. The *absence of the nose* in the drawing at the age of puberty is an element of avoidance, shyness, fear.

Ears: if they are *extremely large*, out of proportion to the size of the face or if they are completely missing in the drawing, they are usually drawn by people with hearing problems or deaf. When they are *large and focused*, they express a hypersensitivity to external criticism.

Neck: when neck is *not drawn*, it is an expression of poor control and immaturity. It is interpreted as a high control of internal impulsive management. *Very short* drawing of the neck is usually characteristic of young and impulsive children. (Garuli, Lorela, 2020, pp. 109-111)

Cognitive development and drawing skills are important factors to consider when analyzing children's drawings. The information children have about an environmental issue will be crucial to its mental representation. Thus, children's drawings can provide valuable

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information for the development of childrens environmental perceptions.

The strategies used by children to make drawings are of interest not only because they allow us to make a more satisfactory analysis of children's art, but also because they open up the possibility of progress in understanding the development of planning and organizing skills in general. (Thomas & Silk, 1990).

1.3.4. Forms of emotional state interpretation through drawing

One form is the Wartegg test, which is a semi-structured project test named after its creator, Ehrig Wartegg. In this test, eight (8) boxes are drawn on a sheet, where each of them has one sign. The child will make a drawing in each box, starting from the corresponding sign. Then mark the order according to which he will draw, (place below the box the number from one (1) to eight (8) according to the order you drew). After completing the drawings, the child is invited to explain what it is that he has drawn from the first to the eighth. He is asked to choose a name, a characteristic of each drawing and is asked several questions:

- Which box was the most enjoyable to draw from the beginning?
- ➤ Which was least liked?
- Which one do you think you managed to draw better?
- ➤ Which do you think you drew least better?

This serves to establish contact with the child to initiate the clinical conversation, as the test should always be used as part of a battery of other tests during therapeutic work with him. (Garuli, 2020, p. 198)

But, it may be concluded that the three most used drawing tests are:

- Test draw a man;
- Test house tree man;
- Test of family kinetic drawing.

Test drawing a Man: Children are given a sheet of paper and a pencil. They are given the following instruction: "Draw the whole body of a man. Try to create the best drawing". No time limit is set, but 10-20 minutes is enough for children. To assess intelligence, the test administrator uses a quantitative scoring system. This system analyzes 14 different aspects of drawings (such as specific body parts and clothing) for various criteria, including presence or absence, details and proportion.

Drawing tests such as "Draw-a-man" or the "House-tree-man" test have been very useful for children since they cannot express well their feelings.

2. Research Method

This chapter presents a description of the methodology used in this research. The research was done based on a questionnaire addressed to educators of preschool institutions in Kosovo.

2.1 Research objectives

Implementation of this research problem has the following objectives:

- To identify how much we can get to know children through drawing;
- To know what is the attitude of pre-school teachers regarding the importance of drawing



for children;

• To inform pre-school teachers about the possibilities of getting to know children through drawing.

2.2. Research hypothesis

Bearing in mind the topic of the research as a topic of special importance, the following hypotheses have been presented:

H.1 Children's emotional state is easier to understand through their drawing and interpretation.

H.2 The pre-school teacher has the key role in motivating children to draw what they feel inside themselves.

2.3. Sample

Population of this research are the pre-school teachers of pre-school institutions in Kosovo, a total of thirty seven (37).

2.4. Research instruments

The research instrument is the questionnaire, which was created with Google Forms. Questions are closed type. The questionnaire contains a total of ten (10) questions with only one alternative.

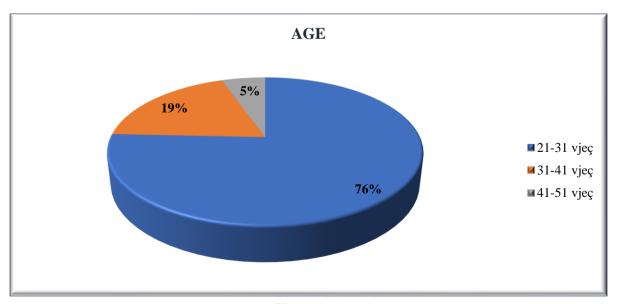
2.5. Scientific research methods

The quantitative method was used for this paper, which was adapted to the research. Through them, statistical data were analyzed and presented using descriptive analysis, such as: percentages (%).

3. Research Results

3.1 Analysis and interpretation of research results

In this chapter the results of the research are presented, where first the data of the participants will be presented and then we will present the results of the questionnaire questions and their interpretation



:Chart 1: Age data

Interpretation: Interpretation: As can be seen from the presented chart, 28 pre-school

teachers answered that they are younger, i.e. 21-31 years old, who work in preschool institutions. While 2 answered that they are older, 41-51 years old. 7 answered that they are of average age, 31-41 years old.

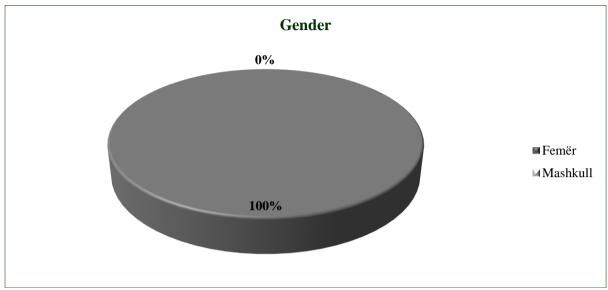


Chart 2: Gender data

Interpretation: Based on the results of the questionaire we have 37 pre-school teachers respondents to the questionaire and 100% result to be females and 0% males.

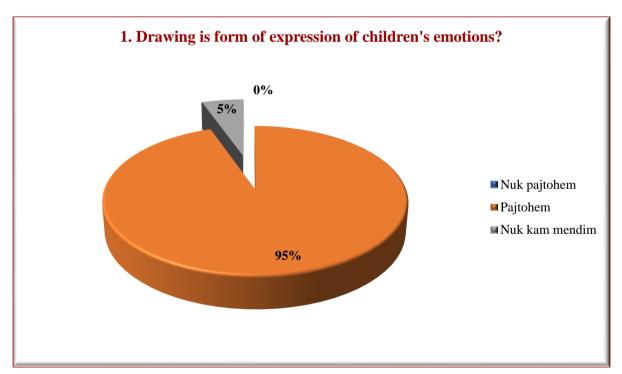


Chart 3: *Drawing is form of expression of children's emotions?*

Interpretation: In the results obtained from the question "Is drawing a form of expression of children's emotions?", we see that 95% of pre-school teachers see drawing as such. In the option "I have no opinion" we have a low percentage of only 5%, while in the option "I do not agree", it results in 0%.

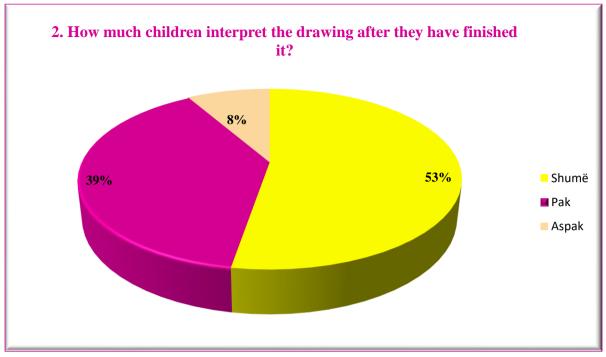


Chart 4: How much children interpret drawing after they have finished it?

Interpretation: When pre-school teachers were asked if children interpret their drawing, the majority said "A lot", 39% with "Little", while "Not at all" only 8%.

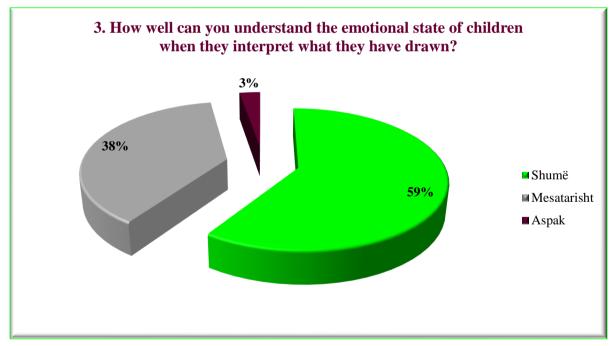


Chart 5: How well can you understand the emotional state of children when they interpret what they have drawn?

Interpretation: According to the presented chart, 59% of the pre-school teachers answered with "A lot", that is, they manage to understand the emotional state of the children through the interpretation of the children's drawing, 38% of them manage to understand their emotional state on average and 3% cannot understand at all.

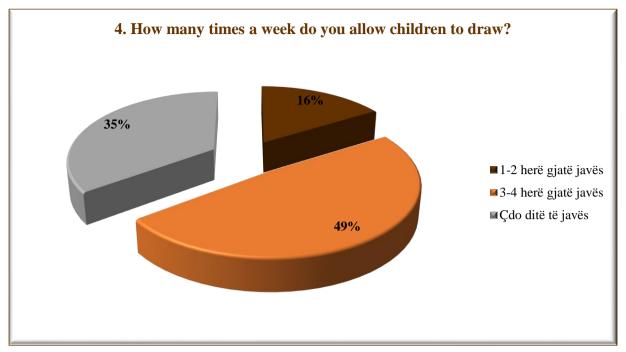


Chart 6: How many times a week do you allow children to draw?

Interpretation: Regarding the question "How many times a week do you allow children to draw?", in option "3-4 times a week" replied 49%, in option "Every day of the week" replied 35%, while in option "1-2 times a week" only 16%.

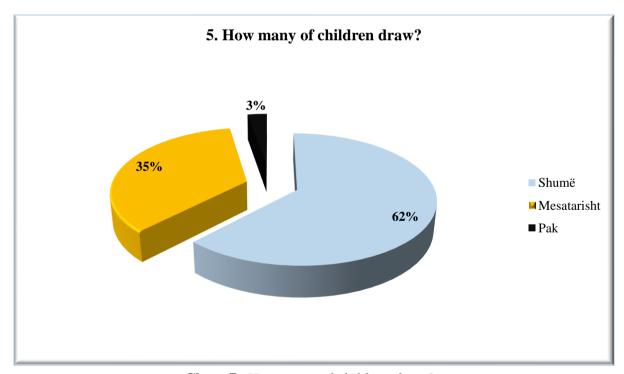


Chart 7: *How many of children draw?*

Interpretation: The next graph reflects the responses of the educators regarding the question "How many of the children draw?", we see that 62% of the educators responded indicating that many of the children draw, 35% of them responded to the "Average" option, and 3% of them have shown that only few children draw.

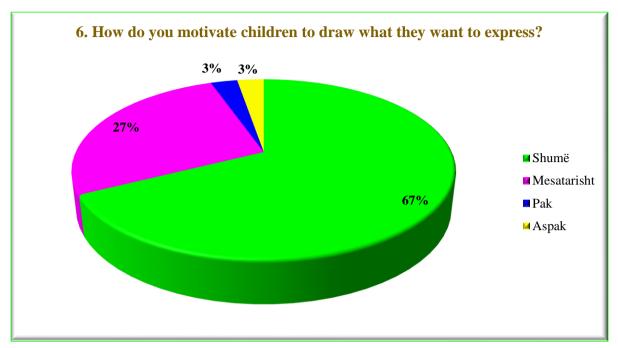


Chart 8: *How do you motivate children to draw what they want to express?*

Interpretation: According to the graph presented, from the responses of the pre-school teachers in the "Many" option, we have a higher percentage than the others, where they show that they motivate children to draw what they want to express. With 27% we have the "Average" option, while the "Few" and "Not at all" options came out with only 3%.

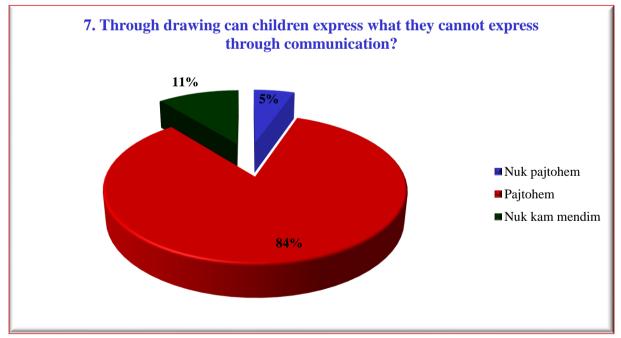


Chart 9. Through drawing can children Express what they cannot Express through communication?

Interpretation: Based on the answers given, 84% of pre-school teachers agree that children can express through drawing what they cannot express through communication, 11% of educators have no opinion, while 5% of them disagree.

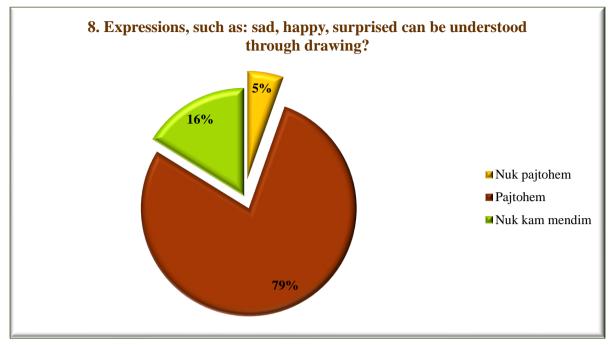


Chart 10: Expressions, such as: sad, happy, surprised can be understood through drawing?

Interpretation: Based on the answers of the pre-school teachers, we see that the largest percentage answered "I agree", they can notice these emotions in children through drawing, while 16% of them have no opinion and 5% of them disagree.

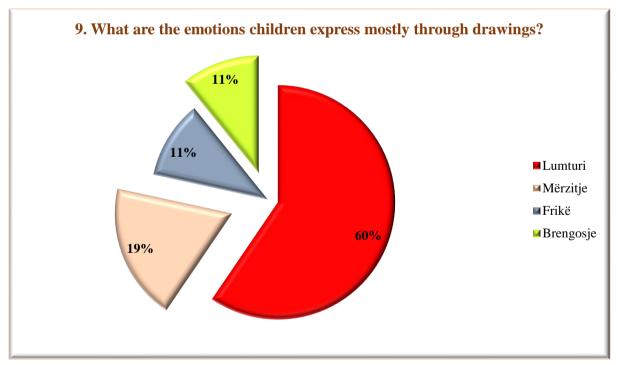


Chart 11: What are the emotions children Express mostly through drawings?

Interpretation: Based on the 12th graph, we see that the emotion that children express the most through drawing is happiness, then the options "Fear" and "Worry" came out with 11%, while 19% responded to the "Worry" option 19%.

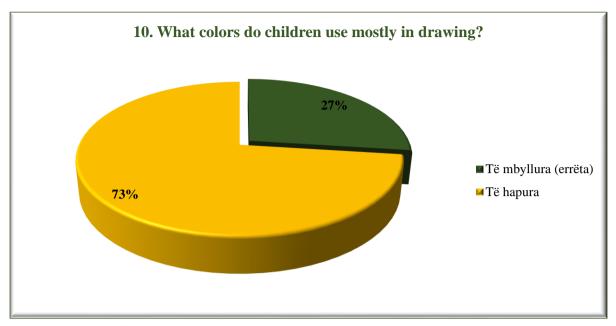


Chart 12: What colors do children use mostly in drawing?

Interpretation: For the last question, "What colors do children use the most in drawing?", 73% of pre-school teachers answered in the "Open" option, while only 27% answered in the "Closed (dark)" option 27%.

4. Discussion

The purpose of the research conducted within this paper was to see how important children's drawings are, the lines they use, shapes and colors.

From the data analysis of the results, we saw that these educators are quite aware of the importance of drawing in children. Most of them agree that drawing is a form of expressing children's emotions. The child's own interpretation of his drawing is also very important, so that educators can understand their emotional state through the drawing. Then, in the research it is seen that children usually use more light colors, which shows a good feeling in them.

In conclusion, drawings appear as one of the ways in which the child knows the world, explores and plays, since in every detail of his drawing the child expresses himself.

5. Conclusions And Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

The paper on "Expression of children's emotions through drawing" aims to describe the importance of drawing in understanding the emotional state of children, as well as identifying the application of drawing to understand children in preschool institutions.

The world of children is a complicated and difficult one to understand, therefore, there are different techniques to understand their inner world and one of them is the method through drawing, where if we add care easily we can understand their emotional state, thus analyzing the forms and ways of drawing, since often children do not know or even do not want to express their inner emotional state.



According to the statistics of the questionnaire addressed to teachers of preschool institutions, we can observe that: pre-school teachers are aware of the importance of drawing as an activity for identifying and expressing the emotional state of children. Most pre-school teachers use this as a method to make it as easy and attractive as possible for children to express their inner self, and it is easier for the educator to understand the inner world and emotional state of the child.

Based on the answers to the questionnaire and the analysis made during the examination of this topic, we come to the conclusion that drawing is one of the most effective methods for understanding the emotional state of children, their feelings and desires.

5.2 Recommendations

Recommendations for principals:

- o To conduct ongoing trainings for advancement of pre-school teachers;
- o To organize meetings and share experiences (director pre-school teacher);
- O To hire in preschool institutions, psychologists, speech therapists, pedagogues in order to help children when they encounter any difficulties.

Recommendation for pre-school teachers:

- o Pre-school teachers should allow children to draw every day;
- o Teachers should pay attention to children's drawing;
- o Allow children to draw whatever they want;
- o Perform various activities so that children can express their emotions;
- O Teachers should listen attentively when the child interprets his drawing so that the children consider the drawing as a support to show the feelings they have inside.

Recommendations for parents:

- o Provide opportunities for children to draw at home during their free time;
- O Listen attentively when children interpret their drawing;
- O Cooperate with the teacher, exchanging information about the emotional state of the children.

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