

THE REFLECTION OF FAMILY LIFE ON CHILDREN DRAWINGS

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to determine what the children feel about their family life, to reflect their relations with family members and reveal the views of mothers on their family. The sample consists of twenty students studying fourth grade at Elçibey Primary School in Sivas, Turkey and their mothers. It is based on a qualitative study by gathering the data with semi-structured interview and the drawings of children. In order to provide reliability of the data, mothers of the children are interviewed with four questions. The data gotten from the students and their mothers are compared and commented on. The children expressed their feelings with drawings and different reflections were gathered from different family life styles. These drawings are generally representations of sibling jealousy, being happy with family members or having communicational gaps with them. These reflections were verified with the data gathered from their mothers. As a result of study, drawing should be used in the school guidance and counseling service to determine their problems and help them in this subject.

Key Words: Child, Drawing, Family Life, Parental Behaviours, Relations with Siblings

1. INTRODUCTION

Childhood is a period when a person experience and learn so much things related to the real life. In this period, drawing is a good vehicle for the child to reflect what is lived. Adults just see the life and evaluate; yet, children can describe what they conceive from the life by drawing in simple. Drawing, a way of reflecting themselves, is a vehicle to show their relations with adults and reflect their inner world. In that context, children find an opportunity to reflect their feelings, ideas and attitudes on their inner life and situations around them.

The images used in drawings are equivalent with things learnt in the real life and a version of expressing themselves. The more children experience many things, the more details drawn are increase. These images are affected by some factors such as age, visual stimulus, family, school, cultural environment (Buyurgan and Buyurgan, 2012; Artut, 2010). In that point, the figures drawn, themes in the drawing can give an idea about psychology, cultural values, socio-economic conditions, social life etc. Child drawings can inform about communication gap, socio-economic condition, family environment, realtions with sibling and friends, jealousy, behaviour disorder, aggression, hyperactivity, eye hand coordination (Tütüncü, 2006; Artut, 2010). Colours used, symbols, themes, proportion of objects, places of figures, proximity and distance are significant clues to comprehend what is drawn. Colours are the vehicles to give messages on the

psychological condition of child. The effects of colours on a person are related to bright colours and cold colours used in the drawing. Each colour represents a meaning on psychology. White is a representation of innocence and purity (Mennan, 2002; Buyurgan and Buyurgan, 2012). Using white, a person gets rid of problems and negative ideas. White is based on hope, cooperation and synergy (Arda, 1999). On the contrary, black is thought as a representation of darkness, hatred, evil, crime, sin etc (Mennan, 2002; Buyurgan and Buyurgan, 2012). Brown reflects characteristics such as maturity and seriousness (Buyurgan and Buyurgan, 2012). Red is a reflection of exciting, brightness and encouraging in positive meaning; a representation of anger, hatred and evil in negative meaning (Mennan, 2002; Buyurgan and Buyurgan, 2012). Orange has a feature that increases a person's will to live, enhance morale and mood (Sözen, 2003; Buyurgan and Buyurgan, 2012). Green is a colour representing of concentration, management skills and sensitiveness. It gives confidence to people, provides autonomous skills and feelings of confidence (Arda, 1999; Buyurgan and Buyurgan, 2012). Blue with its comfortable effects is used in meditation and yoga. That colour provides creative ideas, power of decision and thinking skills (Kalmık, 1950; Buyurgan and Buyurgan, 2012). Pink stimulates love, affection and femininity and has a relaxing effect on person (Buyurgan and Buyurgan, 2012). Yellow resembling of gold is a representation of wealth, sincerity and abundance (Buyurgan and Buyurgan, 2012). Purple expresses pessimism, pain and melancholy (Kalmık, 1950; Buyurgan and Buyurgan, 2012). In addition to colours, children benefits from great and small relations to show feelings. Children can draw the people that are significant, adorable ones for them in great proportions and ones that are not loved even hated people in small proportions (Altınköprü, 2003; Yavuzer, 2007; Buyurgan and Buyurgan, 2012). It is generally seen that children draw the figures that are not wanted and not loved in an imperceptible and a colorless way at the corner of the paper (Artut, 2010). When disagreement is excessive, the figure not loved can not be drawn in the paper by the child (Altınköprü, 2003). These are generally seen in problematic family membership. By the help of these perceptions, psychological situations of children can be understood. Especially feelings of jealousy, hatred, cheer and pain are reflected on the drawings (Artut, 2010).

Developmental stages in drawing are separated in six periods. These periods are known as scribble stage (2-4 ages), pre-schema stage (4-7 ages), schematic stage (7-9 ages), preadolescence stage (9-11 ages), logical stage (11-13 ages) and crisis of adolescence (13 and above) (Kırıçoğlu, 2002). As the study group consists of fourth grade level students, it is beneficial to give some details for this period. Between 9-11 ages is known as preadolescence period. Children are conscious about gender discrimination between girls and boys. Girls are mostly interested in groom-bride, queen, hearts and love themes; boys mostly draw football, war, gun themes (Buyurgan and Buyurgan, 2012). Also children are aware of being a member of the society and reflects this reality to the lines in drawing. Children draw in more detail and realistic manner (Yavuzer, 2007). In that context, this research aims to determine the feelings of children about their family life and reflect their relations with family members and reveal the views of mothers on their family. In that context, this research is thought as beneficial for parents to be conscious about their family relations.

2. METHOD

2.1. Research Model

This research is based on qualitative method in terms of collecting data with 'semi-structured interview' with mothers and evaluating the children drawings on their family life (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008: 187).

2.2. Population/Sample

In this research, criterion sampling method was used. The criterion sample is defined as group fit with the criterias determined for the research by researcher before (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2004: 87). The

school chosen is a middle level school in the city. As the school did not consist of discriminant differences, it was chosen to represent the objective reflection of the family life. The criterions consisted of the fourth grade students that had siblings. Also their mothers were chosen regarding the problems faced at home and a well-built atmosphere at home. In this research, the sample consisted of twenty students studying fourth grade at Elçibey Primary School in Sivas, Turkey and their mothers. The children at the same age were chosen in to 10 girls and 10 boys for the research.

2.3. Data Collection

In this research, how the students' relations with the family members are, what they live in their inner world and whether the responses of mothers verify the children feelings are reflected. First of all, the school was got into touch and at the end of the information gotten from principle and primary school teacher, twenty students and their mothers were contacted. The students, distinguished by some criterias such as having siblings, having problems in family and being happy with family, were given A₄ paper, crayons at school and are required to draw their family. Children drew their figures in a comfortable atmosphere without any direction. Children finished drawing were interviewed about their figures and got information from them about what they want to show us. Also, an expert opinion about the figures, colours were gotten. In order to provide reliability of the data, mothers of the children were interviewed with four questions. The questions were: a)What is the most dominant characteristic on your child? Why do you think that this characteristic is the most dominant one?, b)Who frequently takes care of your child?, c)How is the relation between your child and his/her sibling?, d)What do you do to build bridges between your child and his/her sibling?. Each interview longed 10-15 minutes. The data gotten from the students and their mothers were compared and commented on.

2.4. Data Analysis

While interviewing with mothers, notes were taken and after analysing them, related themes were brought out. Percentage and frequency of responses were given in descriptive analysis. Also, drawings of students were analyzed and commented.

3. FINDINGS

Findings of the research are given in two parts. In the first part, the frequency, percentage of mothers' responses to four questions asked and some sample sentences of mothers are given in the tables. In the second part, some sample drawings of children are given and commented on.

PART-1**Table-1** Mothers' views on the dominant characteristic of their children

What is the most dominant characteristic on your child? Why do you think that this characteristic is the most dominant one?	f	%	Mothers' Direct Sentences
Jealous	4	20	M-2: My daughter is really jealous! She envies even me from her father! I think she is genetically jealous. M-8: My daughter is very jealous. She became so jealous after her sibling was born. M-12: My son is jealous. He envies his sibling, cousins. I don't see why he is so.
Friendly	2	10	M-9: My son is very friendly. He feels happy when he helps some one. I think he likes being helpful to everybody.
Stubborn	2	10	M-3: My son is really stubborn! He looks like his father. What they want should be done!
Tidy	1	5	M-7: My daughter is very tidy! I think she behaves due to my obsessions in the house. I make everything be in regular!
Messy	3	15	M-15: My son is very messy. He does not tidy his room. I think it is due to me, because I always tidy his mess! M-20: My son is messy one in our family! We did not give him any responsibilities and he does not care his mess!
Shy	2	10	M-19: My daughter is a shy girl! My husband is so strict that my daughter behaves like this.
Selfish	2	10	M-5: My daughter is selfish! She could not make friends as we live in an apartment and we do not have much contacts.
Calm	2	10	M-1: My son is calm. He gets on with everybody. We are already a peaceful family.
Cheerful	2	10	M-13: My daughter is cheerful. She knows how to be happy and shines out her environment.
Total	20	100	

As a result of the interview with the mothers, nine themes for the question of what the most dominant characteristic on their children was and why the mothers thought that the characteristic was the most dominant one on their children. These nine themes were distributed in this way: jealous with twenty percent, firendly with ten percent, stubborn with ten percent, tidy with five percent, messy with fifteen

percent, shy with ten percent, selfish with ten percent, calm with ten percent and cheerful with ten percent'. As it is seen from the percentage of dominant characteristic of children, being jealous is the most one with twenty percent, being messy is the second one with fifteen percent and being tidy is the least one with five percent. These characteristic can be originated from many reasons; yet according to the mothers, there are some common factors that affect their children. The reasons can be categorized in mother/father behaviours, sibling factor, genetic factors etc. According to mothers, being jealous is mostly due to sibling envy and a genetically feature; some features are due to the models (mother, father or else) affect them like in these ones (being stubborn, tidy, shy and calm); being messy is due to the mothers' behaviours, as they do their duties instead of giving them their self responsibility.

Table-2 Mothers' views on the person taking care of their children

Who frequently takes care of your child?	f	%	Mothers
Mother	6	30	M-2, M-6, M-8, M-12, M-14, M-17
Father	3	15	M-4, M-16, M-18
Mother-Father	4	20	M-5, M-11, M-15, M-19
Mother's Mother	2	10	M-3, M-10
Father's Mother	3	15	M-7, M-9, M-20
Elder Sister	2	10	M-1, M-13
Total	20	100	

As a result of the interview with the mothers, six themes for the question of who frequently took care of the child in the family were brought out. These six themes were distributed in this way: mother with thirty percent, father with fifteen percent, mother-father with twenty percent, mother's mother with ten percent, father's mother with fifteen percent, elder sister with ten percent. It is seen that mothers are the most group that care their children, mother-father group is the second one who cares equally, father and father's mother are the third group that care the children and mother's mother, elder sister are the last group that care of children.

Table-3 Mothers' views on relations between her child and their siblings

How is the relation between your child and his/her sibling?	f	%	Mothers
Perfect	4	20	M-1, M-9, M-10, M-13
Good	3	15	M-7, M-11, M-15
Medium	6	30	M-4, M-6, M-14, M-16, M-18, M-19
Bad	7	35	M-2, M-3, M-5, M-8, M-12, M-17, M-20
Total	20	100	

As a result of the interview with the mothers, four scales were made for the question of how the relation between their child and their siblings was. The four scales were distributed in this way: perfect with twenty percent, good with fifteen percent, medium with thirty percent, bad with thirty-five. It can be seen that the relation between the children and their siblings is dominantly bad. The second rate is medium, the third one is good and the last one is perfect.

Table-4 Mothers' view on building bridges between their child and siblings

What do you do to build bridges between your child and his/her sibling?	f	%	Mothers' Direct Sentences
Conduct a series of activities (drawing, swimming, basketball etc.)	7	35	M-9: I generally organize joyful and beneficial activities to have fun and learn together. M-13: My daughters are really good at drawing and we often draw something and hang them. M-15: My son likes basketball. We go to his matches and watch him. As we share something together, it works.
Have picnics, spend time in nature	2	10	M-6: We have a farm out of the city and we go there to have some fresh air and have picnics at weekends.
Go to cinema	3	15	M-1: We are fan of art! Thus we like going cinema and criticize together.
Do shopping	3	15	M-4: We are monsters of shopping! Everybody finds something for self at shopping.
Nothing	5	25	M-16: I can not find time to do something together. Infact, I am generally tired due to my work. I can not deal with them. M-20: Particularly my son is very closed. Thus I can not manage their relation. M-19: She already does not want interaction. She is quite shy. I can not manage!
Total	20	100	

As a result of the interview with the mothers, five themes for the question what they did to build bridges were brought out. Five themes were distributed in this way: conducting a series of activities with thirty-five percent, spending time in nature with ten percent, going cinema with fifteen, shopping with twenty and doing nothing with twenty percent. It can be concluded that mothers try to do something for their children such as going cinema, doing activities; yet, a quarter of mothers can not do something for them and this result is quite remarkable.

PART- 2

Some sample drawings of the children and comments made on the drawings are presented in the following.

Figure-1 (Fourth- Grade, girl, has an elder brother)

In this period, child generally draws related to his real life (Kehnemuyi, 2009). Thus, some clues for what the child felt, live and think can be found in the drawings. In this drawing, she shows her mother, father, herself and her elder brother. She draws her parents in the same size and this indicates that she likes them equally. She draws a sun on her family and the sun is between the clouds. This symbolic theme means that she lives in a happy family and she does not want pessimism (clouds) on their family. When analyzed the places of objects, it can be seen that there is some one who is symmetrical, as she draws every object in an equal rate. Maybe, she is symmetrical or her mother, father or some one else is so and she is affected in that condition. Generally, she has a good family life.

Figure-2 (Fourth- Grade, boy, has two siblings)

In this drawing, hot colours are mainly used. The house is coloured in pink, the curtains are orange, the chimney of the house is drawn and the smoke is arising. These figures are the determiners of the calmness, peacefulness, dynamism in the house. Holding his father's hand, he wants to show his good relationship with his father. As his mother with her newborn baby is drawn far from his family, it can be concluded that he feels his mother is inclining away from him and his elder sister due to the newborn baby. He is probably jealous of his new sibling and as he can not share his mother, he feels angry towards mother.

Figure-3 (Fourth- Grade, girl, has three siblings)

Drawing her mother and father higher than standarts, she shows us she loves and gives importance to them. There are four children; yet, the fourth child is drawn so little that it can not be seen in the paper. Drawing him as the least, at the corner of the paper indicates that she has not accepted him yet. Also, drawing herself next to her father and the other siblings aside show that she feels she is the nearest one to her parents and has a bit sibling jealousy, yet quite much for the fourth one. Although she is jealous of her siblings, she is stil a cheerful child drawing hearts, butterflies, sea gulls and using hot, lively colours etc.

Figure-4 (Fourth- Grade, girl has two siblings)

In this period, girls are fond of fancy dressess in their drawings (Kehnemuyi, 2009). She gives importance to drawing details in clothes; as, father is quite smart wearing evening dress, she and her mother look also elegant. When analyzed in detail, it can be seen that she draws herself and her mother in the same style from head to foot. This can indicate that she adores her mother intensively. Also she can not share her with anyone, as she does not draw her two siblings in her family drawing. She is jealous of her siblings and she thinks her family will be happier without them.

DISCUSSION

Depending on the drawings, it can be seen that the children reflect their family life and inner world by this way. Children who live in peaceful atmosphere draw sun, flowers, butterflies, hearts, happy looks and uses lively colours. Yet, the ones who have problems with family members draw mostly the figures far away from themselves, draw their siblings quite small or even do not draw them in the paper. Similar reflections on drawings are seen in some studies, too (Coşkun, 2003; Dülger, 2008). In these studies, children reflect their problems with family members, sibling jealousy by drawing the person far away from them or drawing in small proportion or not drawing them. According to Öztürk (1994), the figure, composition and the colours in drawings by the children who have problems in family differ from the ones

who are happy in family. In this study, the children expressed their feelings with drawings and different reflections were gathered from different family life styles. These drawings are generally representations of sibling jealousy, being happy with family members or having communicational gaps with them. These reflections were verified with the data gathered from their mothers. Firstly, mothers share their child's dominant characteristics and the reason why it is so. The characteristics of children vary from child to child; yet, a quarter of the children are jealous due to their siblings and genetical factors. It can be inferred from that some children changed their attitudes in family after their siblings. This is due to sibling envy; as, they want to be first and do not share their sources especially mothers with new shareholder. Also being tidy is another noteworthy result of this part; as, it is the least one with just five percent. When compared with the comments on being messy ones, it can be inferred that mothers fulfill responsibilities of their children and do their duties; thus, the majority of children is messy and the minority of them is tidy. In this way, children are generally shaped with their parental behaviours and parents play critical roles in affecting their characteristics.

According to the findings of second part, it is seen that the mothers are the ones who mostly take care of their children. This can be derived from many reasons; yet, giving more responsibilities at home to women can be the main reason of it. In especially Asian societies, men are still more dominant than women and their roles are determined in lines (Merter, 2007). This approach causes to give certain roles to men and women and there occurs a gender discrimination. Demirbilek (2007) states that gender discrimination occurs especially at education, economy, politics and social life. In these areas, men are generally more prominent than women. Men are given opportunities at out works and women are given roles at home works. Domestic works are for women and out works are for men. Thus, caring child is mostly seen as a duty of women. Infact this feeling is loaded to women by our cultural values to gender. It is stated that women care children, do house works, make happy family members; because these roles are expected from women and women are programmed to do these. This situation does not change for whether the women work out or at home (Onur Cansız, 2004). When analyzed it can be seen that the results are coordinated with each other from a quarter of children are jealous, the majority of children are cared by their mothers and to the relations with their siblings are mainly bad. It can be thought that the children often contact with their mothers and they can not share them with their siblings. This causes sibling envy and thus the relation with them is not so good. This can be one of the reason of having a bad relation with siblings. Yet, parental roles are also important in having relations with siblings. The child can think the parents love sibling much more than themselves and fell jealous of them or the child are genetically jealous and can not share anything with siblings. These are all just possible reasons of having a bad relation with siblings. Still parents have really crucial roles in building bridges between siblings. Parents should be careful about their attitudes and they should make feel the equal love between children and make the relations lively. Parenting practices and attitudes influence relations (Brown and Bakken, 2011). According to the findings of mothers' effort to build bridges between children, it is seen that the majority of them try to do something such as drawing, swimming or else; yet, the second rate of them is doing nothing. It is a noteworthy result that some part of the mothers try to organize something and some parts of them do nothing to make relations good due to some reasons such as having shy children, not finding time to do something together. In this study, the reasons why they do nothing are not analyzed and whether organizing something for them works or not is not known and this gap should be researched by researchers. As drawing is an equipment for reflections of child inner world, it can be used in the school guidance and counseling service to determine their problems and help them in this subject.

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