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Extracurricular Painting and Elementary Student's Social Interaction: A Symbolic Interactionist Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Painting extracurricular activities provide elementary school students with opportunities to develop artistic abilities while engaging in social interaction beyond the formal classroom setting. However, studies examining how painting extracurricular activities shape students' social interaction through a symbolic interactionist perspective, particularly in elementary *madrasahs*, remain limited. This study aims to analyze how painting extracurricular activities shape social interaction among elementary school students at MI Ihyaul Islam Bolo from a symbolic interactionist perspective. This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach involving nine informants, consisting of one painting extracurricular instructor and eight students. The eight students comprised one male and one female student from each of Grades 1–4, all of whom actively participated in the painting extracurricular activity. The informants were selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through observation, semi-structured group interviews with students, instructor interviews, and documentation. Data credibility was established through source and technique triangulation. Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, while George Herbert Mead's concepts of *mind*, *self*, and *society* were used as the theoretical framework for interpreting the findings. The findings indicate that the painting extracurricular activity provided opportunities for students to communicate, cooperate, assist one another, share materials, appreciate peers' artwork, exchange opinions, and interact across grade levels. The instructor facilitated these interactions by providing guidance, encouraging communication, and supporting students who experienced difficulties. These interactional processes can be understood through Mead's concepts of *mind*, *self*, and *society*: students interpreted and responded to others during communication, developed responses to peers' and the instructor's reactions, and participated in recurring patterns of cooperation within the extracurricular group. The study contributes to elementary visual arts education by demonstrating how painting activities can provide a contextual setting for the construction of social interaction through communication, mutual assistance, and participation in a shared artistic environment.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education at the elementary level is concerned not only with students' academic development but also with the development of their social abilities. The school environment provides an important context in which students learn to communicate, cooperate, understand differences, and participate in social relationships. Within this context, extracurricular activities provide learning experiences beyond formal classroom instruction and support students' personal, social, and developmental needs [1], [2]. Such activities create opportunities for students to engage in social experiences that may be less structured than those typically encountered in classroom learning.

Visual arts education provides one relevant context for such experiences. Painting allows students to express ideas, feelings, and experiences through visual forms that can be communicated and interpreted by others [3]. Therefore, painting is not limited to technical skills and visual aesthetics but also involves expression, communication, appreciation, and interaction. During painting activities, students may discuss ideas, exchange opinions, respond to peers' work, and collaborate in completing artistic tasks. These processes make painting a potentially meaningful context for examining how social interaction develops through creative activity.

Previous studies have identified various social and developmental benefits of extracurricular and collaborative arts activities. Lestari [1] found that extracurricular activities can support students' self-confidence and social development. Haryanto [4] reported that collaborative art activities in elementary school facilitate interpersonal communication and cooperation among students. Similarly, Hidayat [5] demonstrated that collaborative arts-based learning can strengthen cooperation and students' sense of social responsibility, while Astuti and Kurniawan [6] highlighted the contribution of collaborative art activities to social solidarity. The role of the instructor has also been identified as important in creating a participatory environment that supports students' social interaction [7]. These studies collectively demonstrate that extracurricular and collaborative art activities can provide opportunities for communication, cooperation, self-expression, and the development of social relationships.

Nevertheless, previous studies have primarily examined the social outcomes of extracurricular or collaborative art activities, such as self-confidence, cooperation, responsibility, and solidarity. Less attention has been given to the processes through which students construct and negotiate social meanings during painting activities. In particular, the relationship between painting extracurricular activities and students' social interaction has received limited attention when examined through a symbolic interactionist perspective in an elementary *madrasah* context. This distinction is important because social interaction is not only reflected in observable behaviors but also involves how individuals interpret symbols, respond to others, and construct meanings through interaction.

George Herbert Mead's symbolic interactionist perspective provides a relevant framework for examining these processes. Mead [8] explains social development in relation to interaction and the interpretation of symbols, while the concepts of mind, self, and society describe interconnected processes through which individuals interpret situations, develop

self-awareness, and participate in social relationships. Blumer [9] further explains that people act toward objects and situations based on the meanings those objects and situations have for them, while such meanings emerge through social interaction and are modified through interpretation. From this perspective, visual expressions, discussions, peer responses, appreciation, and collaboration during painting activities can be understood as symbolic processes through which students communicate and construct meaning.

The painting extracurricular activity at MI Ihyaul Islam Bolo provides a relevant empirical setting for examining these processes. The activity involves students from Grades 1–4 in a shared creative environment, creating opportunities for interaction beyond their regular classroom groups. The activities include communication during the preparation and painting process, exchange of ideas about painting subjects and colors, assistance among peers, appreciation of classmates' artwork, and collaborative artistic tasks. These activities provide opportunities to observe how students communicate, respond to one another, and develop social relationships through shared artistic experiences. The instructor also plays a role in facilitating participation, providing guidance and motivation, and maintaining a supportive environment for interaction [7].

The research gap addressed in this study is therefore twofold. First, although previous research has demonstrated the social benefits of extracurricular and collaborative arts activities, there is limited empirical attention to the specific interactional processes occurring within painting extracurricular activities. Second, these processes have rarely been examined through Mead's symbolic interactionist concepts of mind, self, and society in an elementary *madrasah* setting. The present study addresses this gap by examining painting not simply as an extracurricular program that produces social outcomes, but as a social and symbolic space in which students interpret visual expressions, respond to others, develop self-understanding, and construct social relationships.

The novelty of this study lies in connecting the empirical context of painting extracurricular activities in an elementary *madrasah* with Mead's symbolic interactionist perspective to explain the construction of social interaction through artistic practice. Rather than focusing solely on whether painting activities improve particular social skills, this study examines how communication, self-expression, peer appreciation, collaboration, and cross-class interaction become processes through which social meanings and relationships are constructed.

Based on this research gap and novelty, the study addresses the following research question: How does the painting extracurricular activity shape social interaction among elementary school students at MI Ihyaul Islam Bolo through processes of symbolization, communication, and social meaning construction?

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the relationship between painting extracurricular activities and elementary students' social interaction from a symbolic interactionist perspective, with particular attention to communication, collaboration, self-expression, appreciation, and social relationship formation. Theoretically, the study contributes to the application of Mead's symbolic interactionist perspective in visual arts education, particularly within an elementary *madrasah* context. Practically, the findings provide educators and extracurricular instructors with an understanding of how painting

activities can be designed not only to develop students' artistic abilities but also to create meaningful opportunities for communication, collaboration, and positive social interaction.

2. METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to examine how extracurricular painting activities shape social interaction among elementary school students. A qualitative approach was selected because the study focused on understanding students' social interactions, communication processes, cooperation, and the meanings emerging from their participation in painting activities. The descriptive design was used to provide an in-depth description of naturally occurring interactions during the extracurricular painting activities without manipulating the learning situation [10]. George Herbert Mead's symbolic interactionist perspective, particularly the concepts of *mind*, *self*, and *society*, was used as the theoretical framework to interpret the social interaction processes found in the study.

The research was conducted at MI Ihyaul Islam Bolo in August 2026. The school was selected as the research setting because it conducts an extracurricular painting activity involving students from Grades 1–4. Data collection consisted of two observation sessions, with each session lasting approximately 120 minutes. The observations were conducted during the regular implementation of the painting extracurricular activity to capture students' social interactions in their natural learning environment.

The participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in the extracurricular painting activity [11]. The study involved nine informants consisting of one painting extracurricular instructor and eight students. The eight student participants represented Grades 1–4, with one male and one female student from each grade. The students were approximately 6–10 years old. Students in Grades 2–4 had participated in the painting extracurricular activity for approximately eight months, whereas Grade 1 students had participated for approximately two months. The selection of students from different grade levels was intended to provide a broader description of social interaction among students with different levels of experience in the extracurricular activity.

Data were obtained from primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected through observations of the painting extracurricular activities and interviews with the instructor and student participants. Secondary data consisted of photographs of the activities and students' artworks. The primary data focused on student communication, cooperation, mutual assistance, appreciation of peers' artworks, interactions between students and the instructor, and interactions among students from different grade levels. These aspects were selected because they directly reflected the social interaction processes occurring during the extracurricular painting activity.

Data collection was conducted through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation [12]. Observation was conducted during two extracurricular painting sessions, each lasting approximately 120 minutes. The researcher used field notes rather than a structured observation sheet. The field notes documented naturally occurring interactions during the activities, particularly communication, cooperation, mutual assistance,

appreciation of artworks, interactions between students and the instructor, and interactions among students from different grades. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with one painting instructor and eight students. The instructor was interviewed twice, corresponding to the two observation sessions, with each interview lasting approximately 10–20 minutes. The eight students were interviewed together in a group rather than individually. During the group interview, each question was addressed to the students in turn, allowing each student to provide a response. The interviews focused on students' experiences in the painting extracurricular activity, communication with peers, cooperation, helping one another, appreciation of artworks, interactions with the instructor, and interactions across grade levels.

The interviews were not audio-recorded. Instead, the researcher recorded the participants' responses in written notes during the interview. The interview notes were subsequently organized and elaborated into narrative records based on the responses provided by the participants. Documentation was used to complement the observation and interview data through photographs of the extracurricular painting activities and students' artworks. These materials supported the description of the activities and strengthened the interpretation of the observed social interactions. The researcher served as the primary research instrument, supported by field notes, written interview records, and documentation.

The credibility of the data was examined through source and technique triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from the painting instructor and the student participants. Technique triangulation was conducted by comparing findings obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation. For example, information concerning student cooperation was compared between observed interactions, students' interview responses, and photographic documentation of the activities. Similarly, information regarding interactions between students and the instructor was examined by comparing observations with the instructor's statements and students' responses. This process was used to determine whether information obtained from different sources and techniques showed consistent patterns.

Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing [13]. Data analysis was conducted throughout the research process. Data reduction involved selecting and organizing relevant information from the field notes, interview records, and documentation, particularly information related to communication, cooperation, mutual assistance, appreciation, student–instructor interaction, and cross-grade interaction. The reduced data were then organized into descriptive categories and thematic patterns to identify recurring forms of social interaction during the extracurricular painting activities. Finally, conclusions were drawn by identifying patterns and interpreting the meaning of the observed interactions. The empirical findings were subsequently interpreted using Mead's concepts of *mind*, *self*, and *society*. The concept of *mind* was used to interpret students' processes of communication and meaning-making; *self* was used to understand students' self-awareness and responses to others; and *society* was used to interpret the formation of social relationships and shared interactions within the extracurricular group.

The research was conducted after the researcher communicated with and obtained approval from the school principal. No formal institutional ethical approval was obtained because the research did not undergo a separate institutional ethics review process. The student participants were informed about the interview activity and voluntarily agreed to participate. The interviews were conducted in a group setting, and the questions were limited to the students' experiences and interactions during the extracurricular painting activity. The identities of individual students are not disclosed in the reporting of the findings. Parental or guardian consent was not obtained separately; however, the research was conducted with the knowledge and approval of the school principal, and student participation in the interviews was voluntary.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Results

This section presents the findings obtained from observations, group interviews with eight students, interviews with the painting instructor, and documentation of the extracurricular painting activities at MI Ihyaul Islam Bolo. The findings indicate several patterns of social interaction during the activities, including interpersonal communication, cooperation and mutual assistance, students' willingness to express themselves, appreciation and acceptance of differences, interaction across grade levels, and the instructor's role in facilitating interaction. These findings were interpreted using George Herbert Mead's concepts of *mind*, *self*, and *society* [8].

3.1.1. Interpersonal Communication Among Students

The findings show that communication occurred actively among students during the painting activities. Based on the student interviews, all eight students reported that they frequently communicated with their peers while painting. Most conversations concerned the choice of colors, painting techniques, and the completion of their work. For example, Student 1 stated, "What color should I use next?" while Student 6 explained that students sometimes asked how to color a particular part while also looking at their friends' work. Student 8 similarly stated that students asked about the next color and sometimes talked with one another so that they would not become bored.

The observation findings supported these interview responses. During the first observation session, students were observed communicating with one another while working on their paintings. Communication occurred when students asked questions, responded to peers, and discussed the colors or techniques they were using. The instructor also reported that students commonly communicated by asking questions to friends sitting beside them. These findings indicate that communication during the painting activity involved the exchange of information and responses between students. These interactions can be interpreted through Mead's concept of *mind*, in which communication enables individuals to interpret situations and respond to others [8]. Questions concerning colors and painting techniques demonstrate how students used interaction to understand and respond to information provided by their peers.

3.1.2. Cooperation and Mutual Assistance

Cooperation was also evident during the painting activities. Students reported that they frequently helped one another, particularly when coloring or when they experienced difficulties with colors and painting materials. Student 2 stated that they sometimes asked friends to "color together," while Students 3–8 reported asking friends for help when they did not know which color to use or when they did not have the necessary tools. The sharing of materials was another form of cooperation. Student 6 reported sometimes borrowing a pencil from a friend, while Student 7 explained that students sometimes complemented one another by lending crayons, pencils, or scratching tools. Student 8 similarly explained that students borrowed materials when they did not have the required equipment.

The instructor confirmed that students sometimes helped one another, particularly when the activity was approaching its completion time. According to the instructor, students helped each other so that they could finish their work together, although some students did not want to receive assistance. This indicates that cooperation occurred in different forms and was not experienced uniformly by every student. The observation also showed students coloring together and lending equipment to one another. During the first observation session, a Grade 2 student helped a Grade 1 student who was behind in completing the coloring task and did not understand which colors to use. These interactions reflect Mead's concepts of *mind* and *society*. Students recognized the needs of their peers and responded through assistance and sharing. At the same time, these actions contributed to patterns of interaction within the extracurricular group [8].

3.1.3. Students' Willingness to Express Themselves

The findings indicate differences in students' willingness to communicate and express their opinions. Seven of the eight students reported that they were willing to ask questions or communicate during the painting activity. Student 3 stated that they usually asked the instructor when they had difficulties, while Students 4–8 reported asking both friends and the instructor. However, Student 2 provided a different response, stating that they did not feel more confident because they were still shy. This response demonstrates that participation in the painting activity did not result in the same experience for every student.

The instructor also reported that some students were initially reluctant to communicate. According to the instructor, some students gradually became willing to communicate after observing their peers interacting and after they needed to ask questions about colors or painting techniques. To encourage participation, the instructor asked students whether there was anything they did not understand and approached students who appeared reluctant to communicate. Observation findings showed that students generally participated actively and responded when the instructor asked questions. The interaction between students and the instructor therefore provided opportunities for students to express questions and opinions during the activity. These findings relate to Mead's concept of *self*, particularly the development of self-awareness through interaction with others [8]. Students' willingness to ask questions and respond to peers or the instructor illustrates how participation in social interaction provided opportunities for students to express themselves. At the same time, the continued shyness reported by Student 2 shows that students' experiences varied.

3.1.4. Appreciation, Acceptance, and Respect for Peers' Work

Students demonstrated appreciation for their peers' paintings through praise and suggestions. All eight students stated that they praised their friends' work. Some students also reported giving suggestions when they considered a particular color inappropriate. Student 4 stated that they sometimes gave suggestions when a friend used an incorrect color. Student 6 explained that students sometimes praised one another and exchanged suggestions, while Student 8 reported that students sometimes corrected a friend's work according to the example provided by the instructor.

Students also described how they responded when they had different opinions about colors or paintings. Student 3 and Student 4 stated that they exchanged opinions, while Students 5–8 explained that they accepted differences because everyone had different preferences. The instructor confirmed that differences of opinion sometimes occurred, particularly when one student commented that another student's color was not appropriate. These interactions show that students encountered different opinions and responded through discussion, suggestions, or acceptance. These findings can be related to Mead's concepts of *self* and *society*. Through interaction, students encountered perspectives different from their own and responded to evaluations or opinions expressed by others. The exchange and acceptance of different opinions demonstrate the development of social relationships through interaction [8].

3.1.5. Interaction Across Grade Levels

The extracurricular painting activity also provided opportunities for interaction among students from different grade levels. Most students reported interacting with students from other grades, although the degree of interaction varied depending on whether they already knew one another. Student 3 stated that they did not interact with students from other grades because they did not know them. In contrast, Student 4 reported interacting with students from other grades because they already knew them. Student 5 explained that even when students did not know each other, they could introduce themselves and gradually become acquainted.

Observation findings supported the existence of cross-grade interaction. During the first observation session, students from different grades interacted as peers. A Grade 2 student was observed helping a Grade 1 student who experienced difficulty with coloring. The instructor also described interactions among students from Grades 1–4 as generally natural and similar to interactions among peers. These interactions can be understood through Mead's concept of *society*, which emphasizes that individuals develop through participation in social relationships and shared activities [8]. The painting activity brought students from different grade levels into the same social setting, allowing them to communicate, assist one another, and participate in a shared activity.

3.1.6. Instructor's Role in Facilitating Social Interaction

The instructor played an active role in facilitating students' communication and cooperation. All eight students reported receiving assistance from the instructor when they experienced difficulties. Students described the instructor as someone who helped and

explained what to do when they encountered problems during the painting activity. The instructor explained that communication was encouraged by asking students whether there was anything they did not understand and by approaching students who appeared reluctant to communicate. The instructor also encouraged students to inform one another about the colors and materials needed for their paintings. This approach provided opportunities for students to communicate directly with their peers.

The instructor further reported that some students who were initially quiet became more willing to communicate after observing their peers and when they needed to ask questions about colors or techniques. However, the instructor also mentioned that some students did not want to be helped and that there were occasions when a student became upset during the activity. These observations indicate that students' responses to interaction and assistance varied. The observation findings were consistent with the instructor's account. During the first observation session, the instructor asked questions to students, and students responded to those questions. The instructor therefore functioned not only as a source of technical guidance but also as a facilitator of communication and participation.

One specific situation described by the instructor involved a student who was behind in completing the activity and subsequently asked a peer who had already finished for assistance. This situation illustrates how the activity provided opportunities for students to seek assistance directly from one another. From Mead's perspective, the instructor's role can be related to *mind*, *self*, and *society*. Through questions and guidance, the instructor encouraged students to interpret situations, express themselves, and respond to others. At the same time, the instructor helped establish conditions in which communication and cooperation could occur within the extracurricular group [8].

3.1.7. Overall Findings

Overall, the findings show that extracurricular painting activities provided opportunities for students to communicate, cooperate, help one another, appreciate peers' work, exchange opinions, and interact across grade levels. Questions about colors, painting techniques, and materials were common forms of communication. Cooperation was evident through shared coloring activities, assistance, and lending materials. Students also demonstrated different levels of willingness to communicate, with most students reporting that they were willing to ask questions, while one student continued to experience shyness.

The findings from the instructor interviews and observations supported these patterns. Students were observed communicating and cooperating during the painting activities, while the instructor facilitated interaction by asking questions, approaching less-active students, and encouraging students to communicate with one another. The findings indicate that social interaction in the painting extracurricular activity emerged through everyday communication and shared artistic activities. These processes can be interpreted through Mead's concepts of *mind*, *self*, and *society*, which highlight the role of communication, individual self-development, and social relationships in the formation of social interaction [8].

3.2. Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that extracurricular painting at MI Ihyaul Islam Bolo provides a context in which students engage in communication, mutual assistance, cooperation, appreciation, and interaction across grade levels. Rather than functioning only as an activity for developing painting skills, the activity created repeated opportunities for students to respond to one another while working on a shared artistic task. The findings are particularly relevant to George Herbert Mead's symbolic interactionist perspective because students' social interactions emerged through communication, interpretation of others' responses, and participation in a shared social environment. The discussion below interprets these findings primarily through Mead's concepts of *mind*, *self*, and *society* and compares them with previous studies.

3.2.1. Communication as a Process of Symbolic Meaning-Making

One of the most evident findings was the frequent communication among students during the painting activity. Students commonly asked peers about color choices, painting techniques, and materials. This pattern suggests that communication emerged from the practical needs of the artistic activity rather than being imposed as a separate social exercise. Because students worked on their paintings in close proximity, difficulties encountered during the process naturally became opportunities to ask questions, exchange information, and respond to peers.

This finding supports previous research showing that collaborative art activities can provide opportunities for communication and social interaction among students [14], [15]. However, the present finding extends this understanding by showing that communication in the painting activity can be interpreted as a process of symbolic meaning-making. Students did not simply exchange words; they interpreted suggestions, questions, and responses from their peers in relation to the painting task.

This process corresponds primarily to Mead's concept of mind. For Mead [8], the capacity for meaningful interaction develops through the use of significant symbols and the ability to interpret the responses of others. In the context of the present study, a question such as asking which color should be used represents more than a request for technical information. It involves recognizing another student as a source of knowledge, anticipating a response, and adjusting one's own action based on that response. The painting activity therefore provided a concrete context in which students could practice interpreting and responding to others.

An important aspect of this finding is that communication occurred in a relatively informal extracurricular setting. Students could ask peers directly when they did not understand a color or technique, and they could also communicate while continuing to work. This may help explain why communication appeared naturally during the activity. However, because the study was conducted at only one school and involved a limited number of observations, this finding should be understood as a characteristic of the observed setting rather than a general effect of extracurricular painting.

3.2.2. Cooperation as the Formation of Shared Social Action

The findings also show that cooperation was closely connected to the practical process of completing artwork. Students reported helping friends with coloring, lending crayons and other materials, and asking peers for assistance when they experienced difficulties. Observation further showed an interaction in which a Grade 2 student helped a Grade 1 student who was behind in completing the coloring task.

Previous studies have similarly identified collaborative art activities as contexts that encourage cooperation and social responsibility [5], [6]. The present study supports these findings but provides a more specific explanation of how cooperation emerged. Cooperation did not appear primarily because students were assigned formal cooperative roles. Instead, it developed from immediate needs within the artistic process. A student who lacked a particular color, did not understand a technique, or was behind in completing a task could turn to a peer for assistance. The artistic task therefore became a practical reason for students to establish reciprocal interactions.

This finding can be understood through the relationship between Mead's *mind* and *society*. At the level of *mind*, students interpreted the situation of another person and recognized the need for a response. At the level of *society*, repeated acts of helping, lending materials, and working together contributed to shared patterns of interaction within the extracurricular group. Cooperation, therefore, was not simply an individual behavior but part of an interactional process in which students responded to one another.

The data also reveal that cooperation was not completely uniform. The instructor reported that some students did not want to receive assistance. This variation is important because it demonstrates that social interaction cannot be assumed to produce identical responses among all students. The meaning of assistance was negotiated by individual students according to their own circumstances and willingness to participate. This observation strengthens the symbolic interactionist interpretation because it highlights the active role of individuals in interpreting and responding to social situations.

3.2.3. Self-Expression and Social Evaluation

The findings concerning students' willingness to communicate demonstrate that participation in the activity was experienced differently by individual students. Most students reported that they were willing to ask questions of peers or the instructor, while one student stated that they remained shy. The instructor similarly reported that some students were initially reluctant to communicate but became more willing to ask questions when they needed clarification. These findings should not be interpreted as evidence that the activity universally increased students' self-confidence. Rather, they suggest that the painting activity provided opportunities for students to express themselves in interaction, although the extent of participation differed among individuals. This distinction is important because the qualitative design and limited observation period do not allow a direct measurement of changes in self-confidence.

Mead's concept of self provides a useful explanation for this variation. The self develops through social interaction because individuals become aware of themselves partly through their responses to the attitudes and reactions of others [8]. During the painting

activity, students were placed in situations where they could ask questions, receive responses, give suggestions, and have their work viewed by peers. These interactions provided opportunities for students to position themselves within the group and to respond to how others interacted with them. The finding therefore adds an important dimension to previous research concerning students' confidence in art activities. Rather than viewing confidence solely as an internal characteristic, the findings suggest that willingness to speak and participate can be understood as an interactional process. Students' participation was connected to the presence of peers, the availability of assistance, and the instructor's efforts to engage less-active students. At the same time, the continued shyness of one student demonstrates that opportunities for interaction do not automatically result in the same level of participation for every student.

3.2.4. Appreciation and Negotiation of Differences

Another important finding concerns students' responses to their peers' artwork. Students reported praising one another and, in some cases, providing suggestions about colors. When differences of opinion occurred, several students stated that they exchanged opinions or accepted differences because artistic preferences could vary. This finding complements previous studies that associate collaborative art activities with social interaction and respect for others [6]. More importantly, the present findings show that appreciation and disagreement occurred within the same interactional process. Students did not always agree about colors or artistic choices, but differences could become an opportunity to exchange opinions rather than an immediate disruption to the activity.

This pattern can be explained through Mead's concept of *self*. To respond appropriately to another person, an individual needs to consider the perspective of the other. When students recognized that their peers could have different preferences, they were not simply accepting a fixed rule; they were responding to another perspective within the interaction. The process also relates to *society* because repeated exchanges of opinions contribute to shared expectations concerning how students communicate and respond to one another. Thus, appreciation in this context should not be understood only as giving praise. It also includes the ability to encounter different opinions while maintaining interaction. This finding contributes to a more interactional understanding of social learning in art activities: students learn about social relationships not only when they agree, but also when they encounter differences in artistic judgment.

3.2.5. Cross-Grade Interaction and the Formation of a Shared Social Environment

The painting extracurricular activity also brought students from Grades 1–4 into a common interactional setting. Most students reported interacting with students from other grades, although one student stated that they did not interact with students from another grade because they did not know them. Observation provided a concrete example of cross-grade interaction when a Grade 2 student helped a Grade 1 student who was experiencing difficulty with coloring. Previous research has indicated that extracurricular activities can broaden students' opportunities for social interaction beyond their formal classroom groups [16]. The present study supports this view while providing a more specific interpretation

through Mead's concept of society. The extracurricular group functioned as a social environment in which students who normally belonged to different formal classes could participate in the same activity and respond to one another.

From Mead's perspective, society refers not simply to the presence of other people but to the organized social environment through which individuals learn to respond to shared expectations and the attitudes of others [8]. In the present setting, students encountered peers with different ages, experiences, and levels of familiarity. The painting activity provided a common context in which these differences could be negotiated through communication and assistance. The finding that one student did not interact with another grade because they did not know the student is also theoretically relevant. It indicates that cross-grade interaction is not automatic merely because students occupy the same physical space. Familiarity and previous interaction appear to influence whether students initiate communication. Consequently, the role of the extracurricular activity is better understood as providing opportunities for cross-grade interaction, rather than automatically producing social integration.

3.2.6. The Instructor as a Facilitator of Symbolic Interaction

The findings also highlight the instructor's role in creating conditions for student interaction. Students reported receiving assistance when they experienced difficulties, while the instructor described strategies such as asking students what they did not understand, approaching students who were less willing to communicate, and encouraging students to exchange information about colors and materials. This finding is consistent with Kusumaningrum [7], who emphasizes the role of extracurricular instructors in creating environments that support student interaction. However, the present study contributes a more specific symbolic-interactionist interpretation. The instructor did not simply deliver technical instruction; the instructor also helped initiate and sustain situations in which students could communicate with one another.

The instructor's questions were particularly important because they created opportunities for students to respond. When the instructor approached a less-active student and asked about their understanding, the student was given an opening to participate in interaction. Similarly, encouraging students to inform one another about colors and materials shifted some communication from instructor–student interaction toward student–student interaction. Within Mead's framework, the instructor's role can therefore be understood in relation to all three concepts. The instructor's questions and explanations provide symbols that students interpret through *mind*. Students' responses to the instructor and peers provide opportunities for the development of *self*. The organization of the extracurricular activity creates a shared interactional environment that relates to *society*. The three concepts are therefore interconnected rather than functioning as separate categories.

3.2.7. Theoretical Contribution

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in showing how Mead's symbolic interactionist perspective can be applied to an elementary-school visual-art extracurricular setting. Previous research has generally emphasized the outcomes of art activities, such as

communication, cooperation, confidence, and social development. The present study shifts attention toward the interactional processes through which these behaviors emerge. The findings suggest a systematic relationship among Mead's three concepts. *Mind* is most visible when students interpret and respond to symbols during communication, particularly when discussing colors, techniques, and materials. *Self* becomes evident when students respond to the reactions, suggestions, and evaluations of peers and the instructor, including situations involving willingness or reluctance to speak. *Society* becomes evident through recurring patterns of cooperation, mutual assistance, and interaction among students from different grade levels.

This relationship indicates that social interaction in visual-art activities can be understood not merely as an additional outcome of artistic learning but as something constructed through the activity itself. Painting provides concrete objects, actions, and situations around which students can communicate and interpret one another. In this sense, the artistic activity becomes a context for symbolic interaction. The contribution should nevertheless be understood within the boundaries of the study. The findings are based on one extracurricular painting setting at MI Ihyaul Islam Bolo and therefore do not establish that the same interactional patterns will occur in all elementary schools or all visual-art extracurricular activities.

3.2.8. Practical Implications

The findings have practical implications for instructors and schools implementing visual-art extracurricular activities. First, painting activities can be intentionally organized to provide opportunities for students to ask questions, exchange ideas, share materials, and assist one another. Second, instructors can facilitate interaction by identifying students who are less willing to participate and providing direct opportunities for them to communicate. Third, activities involving students from different grade levels can be maintained as opportunities for peer interaction, while recognizing that some students may require support to initiate communication with unfamiliar peers.

These implications do not mean that painting activities should replace other forms of social learning. Rather, the findings suggest that social interaction can be integrated naturally into visual-art activities when the learning environment allows students to work, communicate, and respond to one another.

3.2.9. Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations. First, it was conducted at only one school, MI Ihyaul Islam Bolo, so the findings are context-specific. Second, the study involved two observation sessions, which limits the extent to which changes in students' social behavior over a longer period can be established. Third, student interviews were conducted as a group, which may have influenced how individual students expressed their experiences. Fourth, the interviews were documented through written notes rather than audio recordings, limiting the availability of verbatim interview data. Finally, the study focused on eight students and one instructor, and therefore does not represent the experiences of all students participating in painting extracurricular activities.

Future research could examine similar interactional processes across several elementary schools or different types of visual-art extracurricular activities. Longer-term studies could also investigate how patterns of *mind*, *self*, and *society* develop as students participate in artistic activities over an extended period. Future researchers may additionally combine qualitative observation with other forms of evidence to examine differences in interaction according to students' age, grade level, or duration of participation. Overall, the study suggests that extracurricular painting at MI Ihyaul Islam Bolo provides a concrete setting for symbolic interaction among elementary school students. Through communication, assistance, response to others, and participation in a shared artistic environment, students engage in processes that can be interpreted through Mead's *mind*, *self*, and *society*. The findings therefore extend the discussion of visual-art education by highlighting not only what students produce artistically, but also how social meanings are constructed through interaction while they create.

4. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine how extracurricular painting activities provide opportunities for social interaction among elementary school students at MI Ihyaul Islam Bolo from the perspective of George Herbert Mead's symbolic interactionism. The findings indicate that the painting activity created opportunities for students to communicate, exchange information about colors and techniques, assist one another, share materials, appreciate peers' artwork, and interact across grade levels. Although the extent of participation varied among students, these interactions emerged naturally from the practical demands of the painting activity and were also supported by the instructor's facilitation. Thus, the study answers the research question by showing that social interaction in the painting extracurricular activity was constructed through ongoing processes of communication, response, mutual assistance, and interpretation among students and between students and the instructor.

The findings contribute to the application of Mead's symbolic interactionist perspective in elementary visual arts education. The concept of mind helps explain how students interpreted and responded to significant symbols during communication, particularly when discussing colors, techniques, and materials. The concept of self helps explain how students responded to peers' and the instructor's reactions, suggestions, and evaluations, including differences in willingness to participate. Meanwhile, society helps explain the recurring patterns of cooperation, mutual assistance, and cross-grade interaction within the extracurricular group. The study therefore highlights that the social dimension of painting activities can be understood as an interactional process in which students construct meanings and social relationships while engaging in artistic activities, rather than merely as an additional outcome of learning art.

Practically, the findings suggest that teachers, extracurricular instructors, and elementary schools can design painting activities that allow students to communicate, share materials, assist peers, and exchange opinions while completing artistic tasks. Instructors can also provide opportunities for less-active students to participate and facilitate interaction among students from different grade levels. However, these implications should be

considered within the context of the study. The research was conducted at a single school with nine informants and was based on two observation sessions. The use of group interviews and written interview notes rather than audio recordings also limited the availability of detailed individual interview data. Therefore, the findings should not be generalized beyond the context of MI Ihyaul Islam Bolo.

Future research could examine similar processes across several schools to compare different educational and extracurricular contexts. Longitudinal studies could investigate how patterns of mind, self, and society develop over longer periods of participation. Research involving larger and more diverse participant groups, as well as mixed-method approaches, could also provide broader evidence regarding the relationship between visual-art extracurricular activities and students' social interaction.

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