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

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ABSTRACT

The painting extracurricular activity provides elementary school students with the opportunity to engage in artistic activities while interacting with peers in a shared learning environment. However, how social interaction takes place through communication, responses, cooperation, and the experience of creating art together in painting extracurricular activities has not yet been extensively studied, particularly in the context of madrasah ibtidaiyah. This study aims to examine the social interactions of elementary school students in painting extracurricular activities at MI Ihyaul Islam Bolo through the perspective of symbolic interactionism. This study employs a qualitative approach using a descriptive research design involving nine informants, consisting of one extracurricular instructor and eight students in grades 1–4 who were selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews with students and the instructor, and documentation. Data validity was verified through triangulation of sources and techniques, while data analysis utilized the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. George Herbert Mead's concepts of "mind," "self," and "society" were employed as the interpretive framework. The results revealed six forms of social interaction: communication among students; cooperation and mutual assistance; responses to others' opinions; appreciation of peers' work; cross-grade interactions; and the instructor's role in facilitating these interactions. These interactions occurred through conversations about painting activities, sharing tools and materials, helping peers, responding to artwork, and the involvement of students from different grade levels. From a symbolic interactionist perspective, these findings demonstrate how social interaction occurs through communication, social responses, and engagement in a collaborative creative environment. This study confirms that the extracurricular activity of painting can serve as a context for examining social interaction in elementary school art education, moving beyond a focus on individual artwork.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Elementary education is a crucial stage in building students' academic skills while also developing their character and social skills. Students not only need to master knowledge and learning skills but also develop the ability to communicate, collaborate, respect differences, and build positive relationships with others. The school environment serves as a social space for students to interact with peers and teachers through various educational activities. Therefore, elementary education must provide learning experiences that are not only focused on academic achievement but also support the development of social skills through activities that involve interaction and collaboration [1]. One activity that can provide such an experience is an extracurricular activity, as it gives students the opportunity to develop their interests, talents, and creativity, while also fostering communication and social relationships through shared activities [2]. Extracurricular activities can also provide an environment that fosters students' social engagement through group activities. Research on Scouting extracurricular activities shows a correlation between participation in extracurricular activities and social intelligence among elementary school students [3]. In addition, extracurricular painting and coloring activities in elementary schools have also been studied as programs that provide opportunities for students to develop their creativity and engage in artistic activities [4].

One extracurricular activity with the potential to foster social interaction is visual arts, particularly painting. Painting is not only about the ability to create visual works but also involves the processes of observation, expressing ideas, selecting subjects, using color, and conveying meaning through visual language. During the creative process, students can express their experiences and ideas while interacting through activities such as observing artwork, exchanging opinions, offering feedback, and appreciating their peers' work. Visual arts serve as a medium for children to express their ideas, develop creativity, and build communication with their surroundings [5]. Drawing and coloring activities also give students the opportunity to explore visual ideas through their choice of objects, use of color, and development of shapes based on their imagination [6]. Studies on visual arts education in elementary schools also highlight the importance of hands-on activities and freedom of expression in providing students with creative experiences [7].

Collaborative art activities also provide students with opportunities to share, communicate, take turns, and work together in the creative process [8]. Such interactions can occur when students discuss the subject of a painting, exchange ideas about color, share tools and materials, and help classmates who are struggling. Collaborative drawing activities can provide a space for social-cognitive interactions through communication and visual activities [9]. Group-based art activities can also foster communication, empathy, and a sense of collective responsibility among students [10]. In addition, collaborative drawing and painting activities allow students to engage in dialogue and share their perspectives on the artwork [11].

Social interaction in art activities cannot be fully understood solely through their end results, such as cooperation or solidarity among students. It is also important to examine how these interactions take shape during the activities through communication, the exchange of symbols, the interpretation of actions, the offering of responses, and the

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construction of social meaning. The act of lending painting supplies, for example, can be interpreted as a form of care, while responses to a classmate's work can indicate a process of appreciation. In this process, instructors or extracurricular advisors play a role in providing direction, motivation, and guidance so that students participate actively [12]. Extracurricular art activities can also provide an opportunity to develop empathy and cooperation through shared activities [13]. Therefore, this study considers it important to understand social interaction not only based on observable behavior, but also based on the meanings that students construct during their interactions.

To understand this process, this study employs George Herbert Mead's symbolic interactionism, which explains three main concepts: mind, self, and society. The concept of mind relates to an individual's ability to use symbols and interpret meaning in interactions. The concept of self explains how an individual's understanding of themselves is formed through relationships with and responses from others. Meanwhile, the concept of society relates to social life, which is shaped through interactions and collective actions [13]. Mead's ideas were further developed by Herbert Blumer, who explained that people act based on meanings that emerge through social interaction and can change through the process of interpretation [14]. In the painting extracurricular activity, this perspective is used to understand how students interpret their peers' actions, comprehend symbols or visual expressions, develop an understanding of themselves, and form social relationships throughout the activity.

The context of this study is the painting extracurricular activity at MI Ihyaul Islam Bolo, which involves students from various grade levels. This setting facilitates interaction among students of different ages, experiences, and abilities. Activities ranging from preparing tools and materials, selecting subjects for paintings, developing ideas, using colors, to completing the artwork can create situations that foster communication, the exchange of opinions, cooperation, mutual assistance, and appreciation for peers' work. Interactions among students from different grade levels are an interesting aspect to examine because they can reveal how social relationships are built in an extracurricular setting.

A number of previous studies have examined the relationship between artistic activities and cooperation and social interaction. A 2021 study by Roisaningrum, Artharina, and Rofian examined the development of cooperative character traits through dance education [14]. A 2020 study by Hidayatullah and Tejapermana examined student interactions in cooperative-based acoustic guitar instruction [14]. A 2023 study by Rosilia, Aprillia, and Sulistyowati identified student collaboration in collage art activities through task division, coordination, responsibility, and communication [15]. A 2023 study by Takeda, Matsumoto, and Kuriyama examined the creative process through collaborative drawing and painting activities, as well as the dialogue that followed these activities [11]. A 2025 study by Lauss and Helm examined the relationship between the integration of the arts and students' social relationships in the classroom setting [16]. A 2023 study by Mailina and Kasmahidayat examined the development of social interaction through traditional games in dance education [17]. Meanwhile, a 2025 study by Istiqomah and Suwadi specifically examined the implementation of painting and coloring extracurricular

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activities in elementary schools, with a focus on program evaluation and the development of creativity [4].

Various previous studies have shown that art activities and extracurricular activities are linked to the development of communication, cooperation, and social relationships among students. These findings provide a basis for the idea that art activities are not only a means of developing creative skills but also a space for students to interact with their social environment. However, this study takes a different approach because it not only identifies the forms of social relationships that emerge but also examines how the process of social interaction unfolds during painting extracurricular activities at an elementary madrasah. More specifically, research into how students build interactions through communication, the use of symbols, the interpretation of actions, the provision of responses, and the construction of meaning in painting extracurricular activities still needs to be explored in greater depth. This study aims to fill this research gap by employing George Herbert Mead's symbolic interactionism perspective. Through the concepts of mind, self, and society, this study analyzes how students understand and interpret the actions of others, respond in interactions, and build social relationships during painting activities. Thus, this study is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the process of social interaction formation in visual arts activities within the elementary madrasah setting.

Based on this gap, this study views the extracurricular painting activity not merely as an activity for developing fine art skills, but as a space for social interaction among students. The novelty of this study lies in its examination of the process of social interaction in the extracurricular painting activity at MI Ihyaul Islam Bolo through the lens of George Herbert Mead's symbolic interactionism. This study aims to analyze how communication, the interpretation of symbols, the giving of responses, and the formation of social meaning occur through the concepts of mind, self, and society. Theoretically, this study is expected to enrich the study of art education in the context of elementary education. Practically, the research findings are expected to serve as a basis for teachers and extracurricular advisors to understand the dynamics of student interactions and to design painting activities that foster communication, cooperation, appreciation, and positive social relationships among students.

2. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a descriptive research design. This approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of the process of students' social interaction in the extracurricular painting activity, particularly as it relates to communication, the use and interpretation of symbols, the giving of responses, and the construction of meaning in student-to-student relationships. The qualitative approach allows the researcher to understand social phenomena based on the participants' experiences and the natural context in which these phenomena occur [18]. The study was conducted at MI Ihyaul Islam Bolo in August 2026. There were nine research informants, consisting of one extracurricular painting instructor and eight students in grades 1 through 4. Each grade level was represented by two students-one boy and one girl-ranging in age from 6 to 10 years. Students in grades 2 through 4 had been participating in the painting

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extracurricular activity for approximately eight months, while first-grade students had been participating for approximately two months. Informants were selected purposefully, taking into account their direct involvement in the activity and its relevance to the research focus.

The research data consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through direct observation and interviews with students and instructors, while secondary data was obtained through documentation in the form of photographs of activities and students' paintings. Observations were conducted over two sessions, each lasting approximately 120 minutes. Observations focused on communication among students, the exchange of ideas, cooperation, acts of mutual assistance, the sharing of painting tools and materials, appreciation of peers' work, student interactions with instructors, and relationships among students from different grade levels. Observation results were recorded in the form of field notes. Interviews utilized a semi-structured technique. Two interviews were conducted with the instructor, and interviews with eight students were conducted in a group setting, with questions posed alternately to each student. The interviews were designed to explore the informants' experiences, perspectives, and interpretations regarding social interactions during the extracurricular painting activities. The interviews were not recorded using audio devices; therefore, the information provided by the informants was written down by the researcher and subsequently compiled into narrative notes. In this study, the researcher served as the primary instrument, conducting observations, interviews, data recording, organization, and interpretation. Supporting instruments included observation guidelines, student interview guidelines, instructor interview guidelines, and documentation guidelines.

Data analysis using the interactive model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which includes data condensation, data presentation, and drawing conclusions and verification [19]. Data condensation was carried out by selecting and grouping information from observations, interviews, and documentation based on its relevance to the research focus. The data were then presented in the form of descriptive analyses to reveal patterns of communication, actions, responses, and social relationships that emerged during the painting activities. Conclusions were drawn by interpreting patterns and relationships among the data, then cross-checking their validity against field notes, interview results, and documentation. Data interpretation employed George Herbert Mead's symbolic interactionist perspective through the concepts of mind, self, and society. The concept of "mind" is used to understand communication, the use of symbols, and the interpretation of meaning; the concept of "self" is used to analyze students' self-expression and responses to others; while the concept of "society" is used to understand the social relationships formed through cooperation, mutual assistance, and group interactions [20].

Data validity was examined through source triangulation and methodological triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information from students and instructors, while methodological triangulation was conducted by comparing data from observations, interviews, and documentation. These comparisons were used to verify the consistency of the information and to understand the differences in the informants' experiences and perspectives. To conduct the study, the researcher communicated with school officials and obtained the principal's approval to carry out the research. Students

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were given an explanation of the study's objectives and activities in easy-to-understand language and were given the opportunity to express their willingness to participate.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Results

The research findings indicate that the painting extracurricular activity at MI Ihyaul Islam Bolo not only serves as a space for students to engage in visual arts but also as a setting for social interaction through communication, the exchange of ideas, mutual assistance, feedback, and appreciation of peers' work. Based on observations, interviews with students and instructors, and documentation of the activities, several forms of social interaction were identified during the painting extracurricular activities. These findings include communication among students, cooperation and mutual assistance, a willingness to express opinions, appreciation for peers' work, interactions among students across classes, and the role of instructors in facilitating social interaction.

3.1.1. Communication among Students During Painting Activities

Communication among students took place during the painting extracurricular activity, particularly when students were working on their pieces, asking questions about the painting process, discussing colors, and sharing their opinions on the works they were creating. The interview results showed that all students who served as informants engaged in communication with their peers throughout the activity. This communication was not only related to the technical needs of completing their works but also took place through conversations and the exchange of information among students. The observation results showed that students communicated when they encountered difficulties in the painting process, when they needed tools or materials, and when they viewed works created by their peers. Students asked questions, offered feedback, and responded to conversations taking place around them. These interactions demonstrated that the painting activity provided a setting that allowed students to use verbal communication and actions to interact with their peers during the art activity.

3.1.2. Cooperation and Mutual Assistance

Cooperation and mutual assistance were among the forms of social interaction observed during the extracurricular painting activities. Students offered help to peers who were struggling, shared painting supplies, and assisted one another in completing their current tasks. Based on interview results, students reported that they had both given and received help from peers while participating in the painting activities. Observations also revealed instances of mutual assistance among students, including interactions between students from different grade levels. One example of such assistance was when second-grade students helped first-grade students with their painting activities. These interactions occurred in situations that allowed students to interact directly and respond to the needs of their peers. In addition to providing assistance with the artwork itself, students also shared the materials used during the activities.

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3.1.3. Students' Responses to Others' Opinions and Reactions

During the painting extracurricular activity, students displayed a variety of responses when interacting, expressing their opinions, or receiving feedback from peers and instructors. Interview results showed that seven out of eight students expressed a willingness to ask questions or communicate during the activity, while one student still appeared shy when interacting. These differences indicate that student engagement in communication during the painting activity was not uniform. Observations revealed that some students actively responded to questions, expressed their opinions, and engaged in conversations throughout the activity. Meanwhile, less active students required encouragement and guidance to participate in interactions. The instructor provided opportunities for students to ask questions and express their opinions and encouraged students who were not yet active to participate. Students' responses to others' opinions and feedback were also evident in their interactions when discussing the artworks they created. Students offered comments, accepted feedback, and engaged in conversations about their artwork. These forms of response indicate student engagement in the communication process that took place during the painting extracurricular activity, although the level of participation and responsiveness varied among students.

3.1.4. Appreciation and Acceptance of a Friend's Work

Appreciation for classmates' artwork is one form of interaction that takes place during the painting extracurricular activity. Interview results show that all students who participated as informants have praised their classmates' artwork. This appreciation is expressed through comments on the artwork, while some students also offer suggestions or opinions when discussing their classmates' work. Observations revealed that students paid attention to their peers' artwork, offered feedback, and engaged in conversations about the paintings. These interactions involved not only praise but also the exchange of opinions and responses to differences in the resulting artwork. The instructor confirmed that during the painting activity, there were differing opinions among students as they discussed the artwork or the creative process. This exchange of appreciation and feedback demonstrated that the paintings served as a catalyst for student interaction. Through their artwork, students had the opportunity to express their opinions, receive feedback, and engage in conversations with peers throughout the activity.

3.1.5. Interactions among Students Across Classes

The painting extracurricular activity involved students from first through fourth grade, allowing for interaction among students from different grade levels. Interview results showed that students interacted with peers from other classes during the activity, although the intensity of these interactions varied based on their experience and closeness to the peers involved. Observations revealed that cross-grade interactions among students took place through conversation, acts of mutual assistance, and the sharing of painting supplies. These interactions occurred not only among students from the same grade but also involved students from different grade levels. One observation finding showed a second-grade student helping a first-grade student during the painting activity. The

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instructor also noted that students from first through fourth grade were able to interact with one another during the activity. These cross-class interactions demonstrate that the painting extracurricular activity provides a space for students to engage in social relationships with peers from different grade levels and with varying levels of experience in the activity.

3.1.6. The Role of Instructors in Facilitating Social Interaction

Instructors play an active role in supporting students during the painting extracurricular activity, particularly by providing guidance, assistance, and encouragement so that students can participate in the activity and interact with their peers. Interview results indicate that all students reported having received assistance from instructors while participating in the painting activity. This assistance related to the process of creating their artwork as well as when students encountered difficulties during the activity. Observation results show that instructors provide guidance to students, respond to questions, and encourage students to engage in the activities. Instructors also pay attention to students who are less active in interacting and provide opportunities for students to ask questions and communicate with their peers. This guidance takes place throughout the painting activity and is part of the dynamic interactions that occur among students. In one situation during the activity, a student who was falling behind in completing the task was given the opportunity to ask a peer for help. This situation demonstrates that the instructor's guidance does not always take the form of direct assistance but can also create space for students to interact and receive help from peers during the painting activity.

3.1.7. Summary of Research Findings

Based on the overall findings, the painting extracurricular activity at MI Ihyaul Islam Bolo revealed various forms of social interaction that took place through communication, the exchange of opinions, cooperation, mutual assistance, appreciation for peers' work, and interactions among students across classes. These interactions occurred while students were working on their pieces, facing difficulties, discussing their work, and responding to the actions and opinions of their peers and the instructor. The research findings also revealed differences in student engagement during the activities. Some students demonstrated active engagement in communication and expressing their opinions, while others still required encouragement and guidance. Instructors played a role in providing direction, assistance, and opportunities for students to engage in these interactions. Overall, the painting extracurricular activity serves as a space for student social interaction through artistic activities, peer relationships, and instructor involvement during the activity.

3.2. Discussion

The painting extracurricular activity in this study demonstrates that visual arts activities can serve as a space for social interaction involving communication, cooperation, responsiveness to others, appreciation, and relationships among students across different classes. Painting activities not only engage students in the process of creating visual works but also place them in social situations where they share tools and materials, convey ideas,

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observe their peers' work, offer feedback, and receive assistance throughout the activity. These conditions demonstrate that the process of creating visual art has a social dimension that can be examined through students' interactive experiences within the educational environment [20].

From the perspective of symbolic interactionism, social interaction is understood as a process in which individuals act based on the meanings they ascribe to things, while those meanings are formed and developed through interaction with others and the individuals' own interpretive processes [14]. Therefore, the extracurricular painting activity can be understood as an interactive environment in which students engage not only with tools, materials, and visual works but also with the actions, responses, ideas, and social experiences of their peers and instructors. This study employs the concepts of "mind," "self," and "society" as an interpretive framework to understand how social interactions take place in the extracurricular painting activity at MI Ihyaul Islam Bolo.

3.2.1. Communication and Interpretation of Meaning in Painting (Mind)

The research findings show that communication among students takes place through conversations about colors, painting techniques, the use of tools, and the works they are currently creating. This communication demonstrates that painting activities provide a setting that allows students to express ideas, ask questions, observe their peers' creative processes, and respond to information that emerges during the activity. The conversations that occur during painting activities are part of the students' engagement in shared activities, so the creative process does not take place entirely on an individual basis but also involves the exchange of information and social experiences.

Communication in visual arts activities is characterized not only by verbal language but also by visual objects, actions, and ongoing experiences. When students discuss color, shape, technique, or artwork, the objects being discussed can serve as a shared focal point that facilitates their engagement in interaction. Collaborative drawing activities can provide a context for the exchange of ideas, social-cognitive interaction, and engagement in a shared visual process [9]. In the context of this study, the projects students are working on and the tools they use are part of the situation that encourages students to communicate during extracurricular activities.

This communication can be analyzed through the concept of "mind" in George Herbert Mead's thought. The concept of "mind" relates to an individual's ability to use symbols that have social meaning, to consider actions, and to respond to situations through a thought process that develops through social interaction [20]. In painting activities, students find themselves in situations that allow them to understand questions, observe their peers' actions, consider their responses, and adjust their own actions when faced with specific needs or situations. This process demonstrates students' engagement in communication that takes place through social activities.

The symbolic interactionist perspective also views meaning as something that is not automatically inherent in objects, but rather is formed through individuals' interactions with and interpretations of the situations they encounter [14]. In painting activities, colors, tools, techniques, and visual works can have different meanings for each student based on

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their experiences and the interactions that take place. When a student asks a classmate about the use of a color or technique, this action can be understood as part of the process of responding to a social situation based on the understanding that is being developed through interaction.

The findings of this study provide stronger evidence of communication, information exchange, and responses to the creative process than of in-depth symbolic interpretation. Therefore, the concept of "mind" in this study is used to explain students' engagement in the processes of communication and social response that occur during painting activities, rather than to conclude that students have developed specific symbolic thinking abilities. This interpretation is important to ensure that the application of theory remains consistent with the empirical evidence obtained through observation and interviews.

Communication during extracurricular painting activities can be understood as part of a social process that enables students to engage in the exchange of ideas, understand shared situations, and respond to the actions of others. Painting activities provide a context for interaction that brings together verbal language, visual objects, and social actions into a single creative experience. These findings demonstrate that communication is a form of social interaction that can be studied in art education through the lens of symbolic interactionism.

3.2.2. Social Responses and Students' Understanding of Themselves (Self)

The research findings indicate that students exhibit diverse responses when participating in extracurricular painting activities. Some students demonstrate engagement by asking questions, expressing opinions, and communicating with peers, while others show more limited engagement. These differences reveal that social interaction during painting activities takes place through diverse responses depending on the situations students encounter while creating their artwork. It is important to understand this diversity of responses because social interaction does not always occur with the same level of engagement among every individual. Students may demonstrate engagement through conversation, acts of helping, observing, offering feedback, or responding to instructions given during the activity. In the context of visual arts activities, student engagement can take various forms of behavior that are interconnected with the activities and social experiences they encounter.

The concept of the self in George Herbert Mead's thought explains that an individual's self develops through the process of social interaction, as the individual learns to understand himself or herself through the responses, attitudes, and perspectives of others [20]. The formation of the self is not only related to an individual's independent actions, but also to how the individual interacts with their social environment. In the context of the painting extracurricular activity, students find themselves in a situation where their ideas, actions, and artwork are met with responses from their peers and instructors.

When students express their opinions, showcase their work, receive feedback, or engage in conversation during painting activities, they are in interactive situations that allow for social responses to their actions. These responses can be part of a social

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experience related to how students understand their actions and their position within the group. However, these interactive experiences do not automatically indicate changes in students' self-concept or self-confidence; rather, they provide a social context that can be analyzed through the lens of self-formation.

Visual art can also be part of a child's social experience because the resulting images can be observed, discussed, and responded to by others. Children's artwork can be used to understand their social experiences and the world they represent, but interpreting the social meaning of their work requires consideration of the context, their experiences, and their own explanations [21]. In the painting extracurricular activity, showing their artwork to classmates can create an interactive situation in which students receive feedback and engage in communication about their work.

In this study, the varied student responses indicate that painting activities provide a social context that allows students to participate in diverse ways. Students who speak actively and those who are more reserved in their communication are both part of an interactive environment involving peers and the instructor. This suggests that social interaction cannot be understood solely based on the volume of conversation, but also on how students engage with and respond to the social situations that unfold during the activity.

The concept of "self" was used to interpret students' experiences when encountering social responses in the extracurricular painting activity. The findings of this study provide insight into the interactive situations related to students' self-experiences; however, they cannot yet be used to conclude that there have been longitudinal changes in self-concept, self-confidence, or social identity development. Placing these interpretations in proper perspective maintains consistency between the theoretical framework and the empirical data of the study.

3.2.3. Cooperation, Mutual Assistance, and the Formation of Social Ties (Society)

The research findings indicate that cooperation in the extracurricular painting activity is manifested through sharing tools and materials, helping peers who are struggling, and providing support during the creative process. These actions demonstrate that painting not only engages students in the individual creation of artworks but also provides space for social interaction through peer relationships. Sharing and mutual assistance become part of the interactions that occur when students face needs and situations that arise during the activity.

Cooperation in visual arts activities can take place through simple actions directly related to the needs of the creative process, such as taking turns using tools, helping peers use materials, providing information, and responding to peers' difficulties. These actions demonstrate that social relationships can form through activities with a shared purpose and situations that allow students to interact with one another. Collaborative drawing activities can involve social-cognitive interactions that allow participants to engage in the exchange of ideas and actions as the visual process unfolds [9].

According to the social perspective developed by Mead, individuals exist within a social environment that allows actions, understanding, and social relationships to develop

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through interaction with others [20]. From this perspective, society is understood not merely as a collection of individuals, but as a social environment shaped by interaction, communication, and the process of understanding others' actions. In the extracurricular painting activity, these social relationships can be observed through students' actions as they share, help one another, and engage in joint activities.

Acts of mutual assistance during painting activities demonstrate that students are not only focused on completing their own works but are also engaged in situations where their peers' needs become an integral part of the ongoing activity. When students offer help or share materials, these actions serve as a response to the social situations they encounter. These actions need not be understood as a form of cooperation that is always planned, but can arise through spontaneous interactions when students are in a collaborative creative environment.

Social interactions that take place through acts of sharing and helping also demonstrate that relationships among students are formed not only through conversation but through actions that have consequences for others' activities. Students who offer help enable their peers to continue their creative activities, while students who receive help engage in social relationships through their responses to those actions. These relationships show that visual arts activities can provide a context for interconnected social actions to unfold.

From the perspective of symbolic interactionism, acts of mutual assistance can be understood as actions that arise when individuals respond to situations based on the meanings they perceive within the interaction. The meaning of an action is determined not only by the form of the action itself but also by the social context in which it occurs and how it is understood by the individuals involved [14]. In painting activities, sharing materials or helping friends can be understood as part of a social response to the needs and activities taking place within the group.

The findings of this study show that cooperation in extracurricular painting activities is not only related to the completion of art projects but also to the social relationships that develop through student engagement. Actions such as sharing, helping, and providing support constitute forms of interaction that can be empirically observed. Thus, the concept of "society" provides a framework for understanding how social relationships within extracurricular groups are formed and maintained through collaborative artistic activities.

3.2.4. Appreciation, Exchange of Views, and Acceptance of Differences

The research results show that students expressed appreciation for their peers' work, offered feedback, and responded to differences in ideas and the resulting artworks produced during the extracurricular painting activities. This appreciation was evident through comments on the artworks, expressions of praise, and responses to the observed works. These findings indicate that visual artworks form part of an interactive context that enables students to engage in communication and social responses.

Appreciation of peers' artwork is a form of interaction that involves paying attention to the work of others. In painting activities, visual artwork serves as an object that

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can be observed and discussed, giving students the opportunity to express their responses to the form, color, or specific elements of their peers' work. This interaction demonstrates that artwork is not merely the result of individual activity but also becomes part of a social experience when it is displayed and responded to by others.

Children's artwork can serve as a context for understanding social experiences, as the visual representations they create may relate to their experiences, environment, and the social world as they perceive it [21]. In the painting extracurricular activity, classmates' artwork serves as a visual object that can elicit attention, comments, and responses. Nevertheless, in this study, appreciation of classmates' artwork is best understood as a form of social interaction that takes place through visual works rather than as evidence that students have developed specific aesthetic abilities or artistic judgment.

From the perspective of symbolic interactionism, individuals ascribe meaning to objects based on their interactive experiences and the interpretive processes that occur in social situations [14]. The visual artworks that students observe can become objects that gain meaning through conversations, responses, and experiences that take place during painting activities. When students offer praise or feedback on their peers' artwork, they engage in interactions that bring together visual art, understanding, and social responses.

Exchanging opinions about the artwork also demonstrates that students can engage with ideas or creations that differ from their own. These differences become part of the interactive situation as students express their responses, listen to their peers' comments, and participate in conversations about the resulting artworks. In visual arts activities, differences in artworks are a condition that can be observed through the diversity of visual outcomes; however, acceptance of social differences must be analyzed based on students' actual actions and responses found in the data.

If students provide feedback on their peers' works without dismissing or rejecting the existence of different works, such actions can be discussed as a form of interaction that occurs through response and appreciation. However, acceptance of differences should not be interpreted as the development of tolerance or a permanent social attitude unless the study specifically measures or observes such changes. This study more accurately demonstrates how students respond to their peers' works and opinions in the context of painting activities.

Appreciation of and the exchange of opinions regarding artworks constitute a form of social interaction that takes place during extracurricular painting activities. Visual artworks provide a shared object that allows students to observe, offer feedback, and engage in communication. These findings demonstrate that interaction in art education can occur through the artworks produced, not merely through direct verbal communication.

3.2.5. Interactions among Students Across Classes and Shared Social Environments

The research findings indicate that the extracurricular painting activity enables students from different classes to engage in a shared activity setting. Cross-class interactions occur through conversation, sharing materials, helping peers, and participating in collaborative painting activities. Although the intensity of these interactions varies based on students' experiences and familiarity with one another, the activity provides

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opportunities for students to connect with peers who are not necessarily from their own class.

Extracurricular activities provide an interactive context that allows students to engage in shared activities outside of class-based learning groups. In painting activities, students from different grade levels are in the same activity environment and face similar needs, situations, and creative experiences that can foster interaction. The existence of these cross-class groups creates a social context that enables relationships between students to develop through shared activities.

From a societal perspective, social relationships develop through individuals' involvement in interactive environments that allow for interconnected actions and responses [20]. Cross-grade interactions in painting extracurricular activities can be understood as part of social relationships when students engage in joint activities, respond to their peers' actions, and participate in group-based creative situations. These relationships are not determined solely by shared grade levels, but also by participation in the same activities and shared social experiences.

Cross-class interactions also demonstrate that students' social relationships can unfold through various forms of action. Students can interact with peers from different grade levels by offering help, engaging in conversation, sharing materials, or responding to artwork. These actions show that collaborative creative activities can serve as a context for interaction that enables students to engage in more diverse social relationships.

However, the research findings also indicate that cross-class interactions do not occur uniformly. Differences in students' closeness, experiences, and levels of engagement can influence how interactions unfold during activities. These conditions suggest that the existence of a shared activity environment does not automatically result in the same relationships among all students. Social interactions still occur through actions and responses influenced by the specific situations each student faces.

According to symbolic interactionism, social relationships are understood as processes that unfold through the interpretation of actions and responses toward others; thus, social relationships are determined not only by an individual's membership in a group but also by the interactive processes that take place [14]. In the extracurricular activity of painting, cross-class interaction can be understood as a process in which students engage in relationships through actions that take place within the context of shared activities.

The extracurricular activity of painting can provide a space for cross-class interaction through students' involvement in collaborative artistic activities. These findings demonstrate that visual arts activities can serve as a social context in which relationships among students develop through communication, assistance, responses, and shared participation in the same activities. This study does not conclude that extracurricular activities automatically eliminate social differences or foster equal relationships, but it does indicate the presence of opportunities for cross-class interaction that can be observed during the activities.

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3.2.6. The Role of Instructors in Facilitating Symbolic Interaction

The results of the study indicate that instructors play a role in facilitating social interaction during extracurricular painting activities. This role is evident through the provision of guidance, assistance when students encounter difficulties, encouragement to communicate, and efforts to engage students in creative activities. Instructors are not only involved in providing technical guidance on painting but also serve as part of the social environment that influences interactions among students.

During extracurricular activities, instructors find themselves in situations where students need guidance, assistance, and support to continue their creative work. The guidance provided by instructors may relate to the use of tools, techniques, the completion of artwork, or student involvement in the activity. These situations allow instructors to interact with students while simultaneously facilitating peer relationships as students encounter needs during the painting process.

The instructor's role can be understood through the perspective of symbolic interactionism, which views actions and responses as part of the social interaction process. Individuals act based on the meanings they understand within a social situation, while those meanings can evolve through interaction and the interpretation of others' actions [14]. In painting activities, the instructor's guidance and responses are part of the social situation students encounter as they create art, ask questions, receive help, or interact with peers.

Instructors can also facilitate interaction by managing the activity context—for example, when students encounter difficulties, need materials, or require encouragement to participate in the activity. In the context of this study, the instructor's actions in providing assistance and encouraging communication demonstrate that social interaction is not solely driven by students' spontaneous actions but is also shaped by the activity context managed by the instructor.

The role of the instructor in visual arts activities can be understood not only as a provider of technical knowledge but also as a manager of the activity context, ensuring students have the opportunity to participate. When instructors provide guidance, encourage students to communicate, and help students overcome difficulties, these actions become part of the conditions for interaction within the group. However, this study does not directly measure the effectiveness of the instructor's strategies; therefore, this role is more appropriately discussed based on the facilitative actions observed during fieldwork and interviews.

From a societal perspective, the instructor is part of the social environment engaged in a relationship with students. Interactions between the instructor and students, as well as those facilitated among students, form part of the dynamics of the extracurricular group that unfold through shared activities [20]. Therefore, the instructor can be understood as a facilitator of an interactive environment that supports communication, assistance, and student engagement in painting activities.

The instructor's role in extracurricular painting activities is related to providing guidance, assistance, and an activity environment that enables students to interact with one another. These findings indicate that social interaction in visual arts activities can occur

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through relationships among students, instructors, and artistic activities that serve as a shared context. The instructor's role thus becomes part of the dynamics of social interaction that can be analyzed through the perspective of symbolic interactionism.

3.2.7. Integration of the Concepts of Mind, Self, and Society in Social Interaction During Painting Activities

The research findings indicate that social interaction in extracurricular painting activities can be understood through the interrelationship of the concepts of *mind*, *self*, and *society*. These three concepts are not regarded as independent aspects but rather as perspectives for explaining the processes of social interaction that occur through communication, responses, cooperation, appreciation, and relationships among students during collaborative artistic activities.

The concept of *mind* is used to understand communication and the processes through which students respond to social situations through the exchange of ideas, questions, and actions during painting activities. The concept of *self* is used to interpret students' experiences when responding to social feedback, expressing ideas, and engaging in interactive situations. Meanwhile, the concept of *society* is used to understand social relationships that develop through sharing, helping one another, interacting across grade levels, and participating in joint activities. These three concepts are integral to Mead's theoretical framework, which positions social processes as the foundation for the development of individual understanding and action [20].

In extracurricular painting activities, communication becomes part of the situation in which students understand and respond to their peers' actions. Social responses occur when students encounter the feedback, ideas, and actions of others. Social relationships are established and maintained through students' participation in shared activities, including sharing art materials, providing assistance, and appreciating one another's artwork. These processes demonstrate that social interaction in painting activities involves interconnected aspects of communication, action, and relationships.

The perspective of symbolic interactionism provides an understanding that social interaction cannot be viewed merely in terms of students' presence in the same activity, but also through the processes by which students respond to others' actions and assign meaning to the situations they encounter. Meanings constructed through interaction can influence individual actions, while the process of interpretation enables individuals to adjust their actions in response to changing social situations [14]. In painting activities, these processes can be examined through communication, mutual assistance, responses to artwork, and students' involvement in the activity environment.

The integration of the concepts of *mind*, *self*, and *society* in this study provides an interpretive framework for understanding extracurricular painting activities as a context for social interaction. However, the empirical support for each concept varies in degree. Findings related to cooperation, sharing art materials, providing assistance, and relationships among students more concretely demonstrate the dimension of *society*. Communication and the exchange of ideas support the discussion of *mind*, although an in-depth interpretation of symbols has not yet been fully revealed. Meanwhile, *self* is more

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appropriately understood through social responses and students' experiences of participation rather than through claims of changes in self-concept that have not been measured.

This study demonstrates that extracurricular painting activities can be examined as a space for social interaction through the perspective of symbolic interactionism. The framework of *mind*, *self*, and *society* helps explain the relationships among communication, social responses, and the formation of relationships among students in visual arts activities. This approach offers a perspective for understanding extracurricular painting activities not merely as activities for developing visual skills, but also as a social context in which actions and relationships among students unfold through shared artistic experiences.

3.2.8. Theoretical Contributions and Research Implications for Visual Arts Education

This study contributes to the field of visual arts education in elementary schools by positioning social interaction as an aspect that can be examined through extracurricular painting activities. Painting activities in this study are understood not merely as processes of producing visual artworks, but also as contexts in which students engage in communication, cooperation, responses to others, appreciation, and cross-grade social relationships. This perspective demonstrates that visual arts activities can be examined through the social dimensions that emerge from shared artistic experiences.

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in the application of the symbolic interactionism perspective to understanding social interactions that occur during extracurricular painting activities among elementary school students. The concepts of *mind*, *self*, and *society* are used to interpret communication, social responses, and relationships among students based on the actions and interactional situations identified in the study. The application of this perspective enables painting activities to be examined as a social context involving interactional processes rather than merely as activities oriented toward visual products.

This study also demonstrates that social interaction in visual arts activities can occur through various forms of action directly related to artistic processes. Communication about colors and techniques, sharing art materials, helping peers, appreciating artwork, and cross-grade interactions indicate that visual arts activities provide opportunities for students to establish relationships through shared experiences. Collaborative drawing activities can serve as a context for socio-cognitive interaction when participants engage in the exchange of ideas and shared visual processes [9].

From a methodological perspective, this study demonstrates that social interaction in extracurricular painting activities can be examined through observations of actions occurring during the activities and interviews concerning the experiences of students and instructors. Observations of communication, assistance, responses, and student engagement provide data on how interactions take place within the context of these activities. The use of visual artworks as part of the documentation can also provide context for the activities being carried out; however, interpretations of the meanings of the artworks should remain

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connected to the situations in which they were produced and supported by relevant data [21].

The implications of this study for visual arts education are that extracurricular painting activities can be considered a learning environment that provides opportunities for students to engage in both individual activities and social interactions. Organizing activities that provide opportunities for students to communicate, share art materials, exchange feedback, and interact with peers from different grade levels can be an important consideration in designing visual arts activities. These implications do not constitute a claim that painting activities automatically improve social skills, but rather indicate that painting activities provide a context for social interaction that can be observed and developed through activity management.

This study broadens the understanding of extracurricular painting activities in visual arts education by positioning social interaction as an integral part of shared artistic experiences. The perspective of symbolic interactionism provides a framework for understanding how communication, responses, and social relationships develop through visual arts activities. This contribution provides a foundation for further research into the dynamics of social interaction in visual arts activities in elementary schools, particularly in extracurricular programs involving students from different grade levels and with varying experiences.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that extracurricular painting activities at MI Ihyaul Islam Bolo provide a social space for elementary school students to engage in communication, cooperation, mutual assistance, appreciation of peers' artwork, exchange of opinions, and cross-grade interactions. These interactions take place through artistic activities, sharing art tools and materials, responding to peers' opinions, assisting students who experience difficulties, and participating in activities facilitated by the instructor. The instructor also plays a role in supporting these interactions by providing guidance, encouraging communication, and offering assistance throughout the painting activities.

From the perspective of symbolic interactionism, these findings can be understood through George Herbert Mead's concepts of *mind*, *self*, and *society*. Communication and the exchange of ideas demonstrate students' involvement in responding to social situations, while responses to peers and instructors provide a context for understanding the dimension of *self* in interaction. Meanwhile, cooperation, mutual assistance, and cross-grade interactions provide more concrete evidence of the social relationships formed within the extracurricular group. However, the findings of this study do not establish changes in students' self-concept or self-confidence, nor do they fully reveal the processes of in-depth symbolic interpretation.

This study contributes to visual arts education in elementary schools by positioning extracurricular painting activities as a context for examining social interaction rather than merely as activities focused on individual artistic outcomes. Nevertheless, this study is limited to a single educational setting, a relatively small number of participants, and a short observation period. Future research could involve multiple schools, longer observation

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periods, and more in-depth explorations of the meanings of visual symbols and students' social responses to gain a broader understanding of social interaction in visual arts activities in elementary schools.

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