



Optimizing Children's Creativity through Drawing Activities and Its Implications for Cognitive Development

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Abstract

This study explores the effects of drawing-based media stimulation on the creativity and cognitive development of early childhood learners. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, the research was structured in two phases: the first conducted prior to any form of intervention, and the second carried out after the introduction of stimulus-based images aligned with thematic learning materials. The analysis revealed a significant enhancement in various creative and cognitive indicators. Children demonstrated a broader diversity of ideas, greater spontaneity in expressing visual concepts, and a more confident use of varied colors to represent emotions, forms, and imaginative scenes. Additionally, their visual accuracy and coherence improved noticeably, especially in depicting objects or themes previously presented by the teacher. Beyond technical improvements, the findings indicate that drawing activities function as multidimensional learning tools. They encourage children to engage in reflective thinking, strengthen memory recall, and support the development of early symbolic understanding. Drawing also provides a low-pressure environment where children can construct meaning, externalize thoughts, and exercise problem-solving skills through experimentation with shapes, lines, and compositions. Overall, this study affirms that drawing-based stimulation is not merely an artistic activity but a pedagogical medium that nurtures cognitive growth, emotional expression, and foundational intellectual development during early childhood.

Keywords:

Drawing based media, Early childhood creativity, Cognitive development, Thematic learning stimulation, Visual expression in education

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INTRODUCTION

Creativity is a fundamental aspect of human development, playing a crucial role not only in individual growth but also in the advancement of society as a whole. In the context of early childhood education, creativity functions as a medium that enriches holistic development, particularly through the cultivation of divergent thinking, symbolic exploration, and the ability to approach problems from multiple perspectives. This perspective aligns with Vygotsky's (2004) view, which emphasizes that creativity and imagination are essential elements in children's symbolic and representational development. According to Vygotsky, imaginative processes enable children to construct meaning, create mental representations of experiences, and connect the real world with new possibilities through symbols and visual expression. The early years of a child's life are a critical developmental period where all aspects of growth moral, religious, cognitive,



linguistic, social-emotional, and physical unfold in alignment with age-appropriate developmental stages (Miranda, 2019). To develop their abilities, children need opportunities to try, revise, and try again to improve their work (Rismayanti, 2013).

In this context, creativity should not be narrowly understood as the ability to produce artistic products, but rather as a multifaceted capacity encompassing flexibility of thought, problem-solving skills, and expressive competence. During early childhood, children exhibit an intense curiosity and a natural inclination toward exploration. Creativity, when nurtured through meaningful learning experiences, helps children become adaptive, resilient, and open-minded individuals capable of thriving in various social and educational environments. Art-based learning plays an essential role in this regard, serving as a channel to enhance children's cognitive functions by integrating imagination, sensory input, and emotional responses.

From a developmental standpoint, early childhood education must be tailored to suit children's unique learning needs, making it imperative for educators and parents to provide learning opportunities that stimulate cognitive, psychomotor, and socio-emotional capacities simultaneously (Mulyani, 2017). In light of this, educational approaches should emphasize experiential and expressive learning, in which art especially drawing acts as both a cognitive tool and a creative outlet. Drawing is one of the most effective mediums for stimulating various aspects of early development. Through the act of drawing, children learn to translate abstract thoughts and feelings into tangible visual expressions, which activates multiple domains of development including fine motor skills, spatial cognition, language acquisition, and emotional articulation. In addition to enhancing children's concentration, the use of learning media can also improve creativity in early childhood. This is because media stimulate children to experiment and create new works that reflect their creativity and abilities (Septianingsih, Asmawati, & Sayekti, 2017). It also allows them to make sense of their experiences, constructing meaning and narratives that contribute to their cognitive schemas. As such, drawing becomes more than a playful activity; it is a pedagogical strategy that can support and enhance early cognitive growth (Widyasanti, 2021).

This highlights the urgent need for educational innovations that prioritize cognitive stimulation in early learning settings. Drawing, as a developmentally appropriate and accessible form of creative expression, offers a promising avenue to address this educational gap. Moreover, quality education in early childhood should focus not only on content acquisition but also on learning processes that emphasize cognitive engagement. According to Fardiah et al., (2019) instructional strategies that prioritize children's participation in active, reflective, and expressive activities are more likely to facilitate cognitive development. These strategies involve presenting children with meaningful stimuli and encouraging them to respond in ways that challenge their thinking and broaden their perspectives. In this way, cognitive learning is viewed as an interactive process, where children construct knowledge through repeated engagement with visual, emotional, and linguistic stimuli (Khaeriyah et al., 2018).

Therefore, it is essential to prepare educational programs that can optimally support various aspects of early childhood development. Early childhood education plays a crucial role in developing children's potential from an early age as preparation for life and adaptation to their environment (Anggraini, 2019). This study adopts that principle by introducing visual learning through drawing wild animals a theme designed to evoke curiosity and cognitive exploration. While previous research has investigated the role of art in children's development, few studies have specifically examined how drawing activities can be used systematically to optimize both creativity and cognitive development. This study fills that gap by analyzing the pedagogical application of drawing as a means of stimulating higher-order thinking and symbolic reasoning in early learners. In contrast to

earlier works that focused primarily on the visual products of children's artwork, this research emphasizes the underlying cognitive processes how children conceptualize, compose, and construct visual narratives based on their internal knowledge structures and interpretations of reality. Furthermore, this research seeks to explore how visual stimulation and creative drawing activities can scaffold children's understanding of visual-spatial composition, thematic relationships, and symbolization. Portfolio assessment is highly effective for identifying the continuous cognitive development of children. A portfolio is a collection of children's work that demonstrates their performance and reflects their cognitive and motor development (Handayani, 2022). By examining the transformation of children's drawing abilities before and after structured stimulus exposure, the study aims to identify specific improvements in creativity indicators such as originality, fluency, elaboration, and cognitive flexibility. Recognizing the diversity of colors found in vegetables and fruits can stimulate various aspects of child development, including cognitive and language domains. Children's cognitive ability refers to comprehensive skills related to reasoning, memory, problem-solving across various objects, and the ability to recognize colors (Norlaila, 2015)

Visual instructional media are integral to effective teaching because they enhance the clarity of content and support learners in deriving meaning. According to Mayer (2009), multimedia learning is strengthened when learners process information through both visual and verbal modalities, enabling the formation of meaningful mental structures. For young children, drawing media operate not only as channels for creative expression but also as scaffolding tools that make abstract ideas more tangible. This perspective is consistent with Vygotsky's (1978) emphasis on symbolic systems such as drawings as mediators of children's cognitive growth within socially guided learning environments. Using visual media grounded in real-world imagery further aids children in understanding abstract concepts by linking them to familiar contexts. Bruner (1966) highlights the importance of the iconic mode of learning where images serve as intermediaries between concrete experiences and symbolic reasoning. When children engage with drawing tasks that incorporate recognizable visuals, they can anchor new meanings to existing knowledge. As a result, drawing becomes both a form of creative expression and a cognitive support system that enhances comprehension, memory retention, and the early development of representational thinking.

The significance of this research lies in its potential to inform both theory and practice. Theoretically, it contributes to the growing body of literature on the interconnection between creativity and cognition, particularly within early childhood education. Practically, it offers educators and curriculum developers concrete guidelines for designing and implementing visual based learning strategies that promote both imaginative and intellectual growth. By incorporating drawing as an intentional and structured activity within early education, this research provides a foundation for pedagogical innovation that aligns with developmental goals. In addition to enhancing children's concentration, the use of instructional media can also improve creativity in early childhood. Each child experiences unique and distinct growth and development, both physically and spiritually, which continues throughout their lifetime (Septianingsih et al., 2017). Based on the characteristic of children who enjoy playing, it is necessary to provide learning experiences that allow them to develop creative and productive thinking skills through meaningful and engaging activities. Meaningful learning serves as one of the solutions to create an ideal learning process (Andrian, 2017). The learning process becomes more effective when there is intensive communication and interaction between teachers and students (Amalia, 2019). Quality learning can facilitate and support students optimally by developing their existing abilities. To achieve this effectively, it is necessary to set goals that focus on the students' needs and capabilities (Maranatha & Putri, 2021).

METHODS

The specific approach employed in this study is descriptive qualitative. Sugiyono (2014) explains, descriptive research is aimed at portraying an accurate representation of the object under study through collected data without making generalized analytical conclusions. This approach allows the researcher to describe children's drawing activities and their cognitive engagement in a detailed and contextualized manner.

This study was carried out on Wednesday, 16 July 2025, with the data collection period extending over one week until 22 July 2025. The research involved four early childhood learners enrolled at Yayasan An-Nur in Bandung. The participants consisted of two girls Arsyah, aged 4.5 years, and Naomi, aged 5 years, both of whom were enrolled in Class A, and two boys Alfatih and Hasbi, both aged 6 years, who were enrolled in Class B. Throughout the sampling period, children's drawings were collected as the primary qualitative data to examine their creative expression and developmental characteristics. All drawing activities were integrated into their regular classroom routines to preserve ecological validity and ensure that each child participated naturally without instructional pressure. The research procedures were conducted with permission from the school and adhered to ethical guidelines for studies involving young children.

The research was conducted in two stages: a pre-stimulation phase and a post-stimulation phase. During the initial stage, children were asked to draw freely based on their imagination. Observations, field notes, and informal interviews with teachers provided data about children's initial drawing behavior, cognitive engagement, and use of visual elements. In the second stage, visual stimuli in the form of thematic images aligned with subjects such as "animals," "nature," and "daily life" were introduced to the children. These images served both as references and prompts for drawing tasks.

Visual learning media are crucial educational tools designed to enhance clarity and meaning in instructional communication. In this context, drawing media act not only as creative outlets but also as scaffolding tools that help young learners visualize concepts more concretely. Visual media, particularly those based on real-life imagery, help bridge abstract concepts and everyday experiences, allowing children to anchor their understanding in familiar references.

The data in this study were analyzed using Thematic Analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). This method was selected because it effectively identifies patterns of meaning that emerge from children's drawings, their spoken narratives, verbal expressions during drawing activities, and their social interactions with peers and teachers. The analysis followed six structured phases, beginning with familiarization, coding, searching and reviewing themes, defining theme categories, and producing the final interpretive report. Through this approach, the researcher was able to identify themes related to children's creativity, divergent thinking, the interplay between visual and verbal expression, and the role of social support during collaborative storytelling and drawing sessions. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the study employed triangulation and teacher validation as key validation strategies.

Triangulation was conducted by comparing data from multiple sources drawings, children's oral explanations, observational notes, and classroom interaction records in line with Patton's (1999) recommendations for enhancing credibility. Additional validation was achieved through teacher-based member checking, following the guidelines of Lincoln and Guba (1985), allowing teachers to confirm the accuracy of the researcher's interpretations regarding children's behaviors and creative outputs. An audit trail was also maintained throughout the research process, as advised by Creswell (2018), to ensure analytical consistency and confirmability. These validation techniques collectively strengthen the credibility and contextual accuracy of the study's conclusions.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Results

Describes the outcome can be an increase in knowledge, skill or product. The results also reveal the level of achievement of the target activity. If in the form of objects there needs to be an explanation of product specification, its advantages and disadvantages. Output writing should include photos, charts, graphs, charts, drawings and more. The discussion is sequential in the order in which the objectives are, and it has been described first. The discussion is accompanied by a logical argument by linking the results with theories, other results and/or research results.

The implementation phase of the drawing-based stimulus was carried out over several weeks in a classroom setting. It began with baseline observations where children were engaged in unguided drawing activities to assess their initial creative tendencies and cognitive behaviors. These sessions allowed educators and researchers to gain insight into each child's comfort with drawing materials, preferred subjects, and initial motor coordination levels. Therefore the development of creativity has a significant impact on various aspects of children's growth and development (Astuti & Aziz, 2019). The ideal creativity of children aged 5–6 years includes the ability to create a variety of different shapes, recognize and mix colors, identify forms, and produce their own works independently (Aisyah, 2017).

Following this, visual stimuli were introduced in the form of colorful printed images, digital projections, and storytelling sessions integrated with visual cues. The selected images corresponded with themes explored in the learning curriculum, such as wild animals, underwater creatures, and environmental scenes. The visual material was curated to ensure cultural relevance and age-appropriateness, capturing the children's interest while prompting them to observe, describe, and eventually draw these them. Meaningful learning occurs when a person associates new phenomena with a child's existing knowledge structure (Baharuddin, 2020).

Teachers played a pivotal role during this phase, not merely as facilitators but as active co-participants. They encouraged children to ask questions about the images, describe the physical characteristics and emotional expressions of the subjects, and relate them to prior knowledge or personal experiences. This dialogue-rich environment helped create a scaffold for children to make sense of visual data and translate it into creative output.

Drawing activities were conducted in a semi-structured format, combining freedom of expression with specific prompts that encouraged theme development. For example, children were asked to imagine what happens before and after the image shown such as "What does the lion do at night?" or "Where is the bee flying to?" These open-ended prompts led to diversified responses and more elaborate drawings. The drawing sessions also emphasized the process rather than the final product. Children were encouraged to discuss their sketches with peers, revise their ideas, and share stories related to their images. This created a dynamic feedback loop where cognitive reflection and social interaction became integral components of the drawing experience. Teachers documented these interactions through field notes, audio recordings, and image portfolios to support ongoing assessment.

During the stimulus phase, the learning environment was intentionally designed to foster interactive and visual based engagement. The classroom layout allowed children to work individually while remaining within the scope of teacher supervision.



Figure 1. A captured moment during the administration of the drawing stim

As illustrated in Figure 1, the stimulus session took place in a collaborative and interactive classroom setting. Children were actively involved with visual materials while guided by the teacher. This moment highlights the integration of instructional scaffolding with hands-on exploration, where drawing was not just a mechanical act but a cognitively engaging experience. The figure emphasizes the pedagogical structure of the RWD approach, showing how learners receive both visual prompts and interpersonal support.

The drawing activity continued with close observation of children's engagement, focusing on visual attention, color usage, and hand positioning during drawing.



Figure 2. Children concentrating as they translate visual stimuli into their own drawings

Figure 2 shows a pair of children deeply focused on their artwork. The intensity of concentration, posture, and material usage suggests a strong link between drawing and cognitive planning. This visual documentation supports the study's claim that guided drawing sessions foster not only fine motor skills but also thoughtful problem-solving and creative autonomy. It further reflects the effective integration of stimulus material with student output.

As part of the RWD (Space, Time, Flatness) method, the whiteboard served as a central display for the visual references during the stimulus phase.



Figure 3. The visual stimuli of wild animals used during the guided drawing session

Figure 3 displays the primary stimulus used to inspire the children's artwork. The images of wild animals, including a lion, whale, jellyfish, and bee, served as referential anchors for symbolic translation. These visuals are developmentally appropriate and recognizable, allowing for creative interpretation while also guiding spatial orientation and thematic alignment. The figure underscores the importance of stimulus design in supporting representational accuracy and symbolic learning in early childhood contexts.

The outcomes of this implementation strategy demonstrated that flexible drawing activities can significantly enhance children's cognitive engagement. More importantly, they provided a space for children to express complex emotions, develop visual literacy, and construct meaning through artistic language.

The findings of this study provide strong evidence that drawing activities, when integrated with structured visual stimuli and narrative support, have wide-ranging implications for early childhood education. First, drawing functions as a multimodal learning tool that merges visual, linguistic, and emotional learning pathways. As such, it enables children with diverse learning styles and backgrounds to engage meaningfully with educational content. Educators should consider incorporating drawing not just as an arts-based enrichment activity, but as a core instructional strategy that complements literacy, science, and social-emotional learning. For example, after a storytelling session, children can be asked to draw key scenes, characters, or emotional responses, thereby enhancing comprehension and memory retention. Similarly, drawing scientific phenomena such as plant growth or animal life cycles can help children internalize abstract processes more. Furthermore, the act of drawing fosters a nonverbal outlet for children who may have limited verbal skills or those experiencing emotional stress. This makes it a valuable strategy for inclusive education, especially in diverse classroom settings where linguistic or developmental differences may be present. Through drawing, educators can gain insight into children's thoughts, fears, and imaginative worlds, which might otherwise go unexpressed.

In terms of curriculum design, drawing activities should be sequenced in alignment with cognitive milestones. For instance, younger children may start with exploratory mark-making, while older preschoolers can be guided toward representational drawing and story sequencing. Teachers should also be trained to provide constructive feedback that emphasizes process over perfection, thereby nurturing growth mindsets and creative confidence.

This study also highlights the importance of teacher-student interaction during drawing activities. Teachers who ask open ended questions, acknowledge children's effort, and create space for peer sharing contribute significantly to a vibrant, creativity-rich learning environment. Moreover, parental involvement through take-home drawing projects can reinforce learning at home and strengthen school-family partnerships.

In conclusion, drawing is an accessible, adaptable, and deeply effective educational tool that should be leveraged to support the full spectrum of early childhood development cognitive, emotional, linguistic, and social.

Table 1. Comparison of Drawings and Explanations Before and After Stimulus Intervention


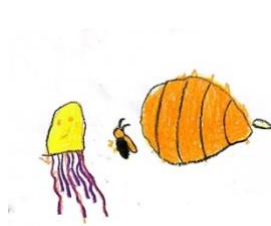
No	Before	After
1		

Figure 4. Visual Representation by Arsyia

Arsyia drew an animal he referred to as a lion before being shown any examples or stimuli related to wild animals. His drawing features a large body, with the animal's torso represented by a big yellow oval shape, which the child likely perceives as the lion's main body. The head is small, with an added green area on top, possibly intended to represent the mane. The legs are depicted as simple, straight lines, and the tail is a striking orange. This indicates that the child possesses a basic conceptual understanding of what a lion looks like.

In the background, there is a single diagonal green line, which may be interpreted as grass or another environmental element, suggesting that the animal is situated in a natural setting. However, the drawing does not yet emphasize the characteristic of the lion being 'wild' or ferocious. The overall drawing style remains very typical of young children, prioritizing symbolic use of shape and color over realistic form.

Figure 5. Visual Representation by Arsyia

Following the introduction of visual stimuli depicting wild animals, the child identified jellyfish and bees as animals he perceived to be dangerous. He explained that jellyfish are capable of stinging, while bees can chase and sting humans, often resulting in painful skin sensations. In his drawing, the jellyfish was rendered in yellow, an intentional color choice that reflects the child's creative and symbolic thought process. This suggests that the child was not simply reproducing visual features from reality, but instead expressing a personal interpretation shaped by perception, emotion, and conceptual understanding. Such symbolic representation is indicative of cognitive and affective engagement, and highlights the importance of supporting these forms of expression in early education. Encouraging this level of individual meaning-making is essential in nurturing divergent thinking skills and fostering creative autonomy.

2



Figure 6. Visual Representation by Alfatih

Alfatih created this drawing and identified it as a snake before being shown any examples or stories related to wild animals. The snake's body is illustrated as a long, horizontally extended form, filled in with thick black coloring emphasizing a sense of something frightening or mysterious. At the front, a small head is drawn as an extension of the body, complete with dot-like eyes. A yellow segment is added at the end, possibly intended to represent the tail.

Although the drawing remains simple and symbolic, it reflects the child's foundational understanding of the snake's basic characteristics: long, slippery, and legless. This representation illustrates the child's capacity to convey key features of an animal through minimal but meaningful visual elements.

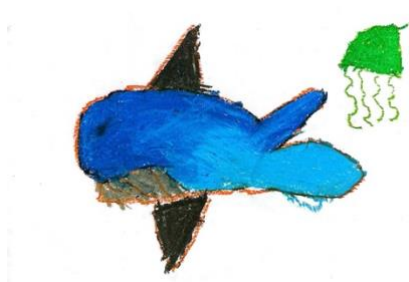


Figure 7. Visual Representation by Alfatih

After receiving the stimulus, the child identified jellyfish and sharks as animals he considered wild or dangerous. The shark was depicted as very large, using a gradient of dark to light blue, which according to the child represented its habitat in the deep sea. He explained that sharks can attack humans swimming in the ocean. The shark's eyes were drawn angled upward, conveying an angry and menacing expression.

In addition to the shark, the child also illustrated a jellyfish using green hues, an imaginative choice symbolizing seaweed or marine plants. This drawing reflects the child's conceptualization of wild animals as large, slippery, and aquatic creatures. His visual representation demonstrates not only his understanding of habitat and behavior but also his emotional interpretation of what makes an animal appear dangerous.

3



Figure 8. Visual Representation by Hasbi

Hasbi identified the drawing as a crocodile, created prior to being shown



Figure 9. Visual Representation by Hasbi

In this drawing, Hasbi demonstrates his understanding of wild animals after

any real-life examples or visual references of the animal. In the illustration, the crocodile has a long green body with a disproportionately large head positioned on the left side. Red coloring around the head area is interpreted as representing sharp teeth or an open mouth. At the end of the body, a grey form appears, which may symbolize the tail or possibly something the crocodile is eating. Although the visual proportions are not anatomically accurate, the drawing effectively conveys the child's conceptual understanding of a crocodile as a powerful, frightening creature that lives in the wild. This reflects the child's ability to express not only physical attributes but also emotional and behavioral associations through symbolic representation.

receiving the stimulus. He illustrated a blue shark with visible fins and a wide-open mouth, symbolizing the shark's ability to attack. Next to it, he drew a yellow-orange beehive accompanied by small bees nearby. Additionally, a brightly colored jellyfish appears at the bottom of the page, with hanging tentacles that represent its stinging ability.

The child's drawing goes beyond depicting physical forms; it also conveys meaningful associations between each animal and its behavior through the use of shape and color. This indicates an emerging ability to link visual elements with conceptual understanding, reflecting both symbolic reasoning and emotional interpretation.

4



Figure 10. Visual Representation by Naomi

Before receiving visual stimulation, the child had not yet been able to fully express his imagination of wild animals through drawing. He illustrated a purple jellyfish with curved tentacles at the bottom and a smiling face, indicating a blend of imaginative expression and emerging understanding of form. In the center of the drawing, a golden-yellow beehive is visible, with a small green-bodied bee flying toward it.

The drawing reflects the child's developing ability to construct a visual narrative, suggesting that wild animals can be identified by both their habitat



Figure 11. Visual Representation by Naomi

This drawing was created by the child, who identified the subject as a lion, prior to being exposed to any visual examples of wild animals. He depicted the lion with easily recognizable features: a black mane surrounding the head, a brownish-orange body, and four small legs. The coloring appears uneven and unrefined, reflecting the early stages of fine motor development and the child's growing familiarity with art materials.

The lion's face is drawn with a cheerful expression, suggesting that the child perceives the lion as a strong yet non-threatening creature. This indicates that the child's concept of "wild" is still

and their manner of attack. This largely shaped by imagination and composition marks an early stage of personal experience, rather than by connecting visual elements with realistic or stereotypical portrayals of behavioral meaning, demonstrating dangerous animals. growth in symbolic and conceptual thinking.

To illustrate the developmental changes observed through the research process, several representative cases from the study are presented here.

Case A: A 5-year-old girl initially drew a fish with simple circular shapes and minimal detail. Her use of color was inconsistent, and she offered little narrative when asked about the drawing. After receiving stimulus images depicting various sea creatures, she redrew the fish with distinctive fins, scales, and a setting that included waves and bubbles. When prompted to explain her work, she said, “This is a happy fish in the ocean with her friends,” and proceeded to name the other sea animals she added.

Case B: A 6-year-old boy began with a drawing of what he called a lion, although the figure had only a round head with jagged lines to represent a mane. The legs and tail were missing, and the color was hastily applied. After stimulus exposure and teacher dialogue, he added claws, teeth, and background elements like trees. He stated, “The lion is hunting because it’s hungry.”

This shows the development of visual narrative, symbolic detail, and conceptual understanding. Case C: A 4-year-old child drew what resembled a “bee,” but it appeared as a yellow circle with stripes and lacked wings or antennae. After being shown real-life photos and illustrations of bees and beehives, the child began to add wings and used more appropriate color placement. The drawing evolved to include a flower, and the child described the bee “drinking from the flower,” revealing early ecological knowledge and creative storytelling.

These case studies underscore the value of scaffolding in drawing activities. Children not only improved in technical execution (such as proportion, use of space, and detail), but also in the ability to express ideas and connect them to prior learning. The development of symbolic, spatial, and narrative abilities is evident, showing that drawing is a multifaceted activity that supports comprehensive learning.

Moreover, the observed changes were not uniform; each child demonstrated growth in different areas. Some showed leaps in symbolic detail, others in narrative fluency, and others in emotional expression. This variability highlights the personalized nature of creative learning and the need for differentiated instructional strategies to support each child’s developmental trajectory.

Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that drawing activities, particularly those designed in two phases pre- and post-visual stimulation significantly contribute to the development of both creativity and cognitive abilities in early childhood. These findings underscore the importance of drawing not only as a form of artistic expression but also as a pedagogical tool capable of stimulating critical thinking, logical reasoning, and exploratory skills in children.

The use of drawing media within a stimulus-driven framework has proven effective in fostering creativity and cognitive development among young children. Results indicate that thematic image prompts encouraged children to create more detailed, colorful, and

conceptually consistent drawings. This suggests that drawing can serve dually as an avenue for expression and a structured instructional medium. Thus, embedding drawing within early childhood pedagogy is highly beneficial, as it cultivates divergent thinking, strengthens idea communication, and stimulates critical reflection. Moreover, when implemented alongside storytelling or guided dialogue, drawing further enhances children's language abilities, social engagement, and emotional awareness. This article demonstrates the influential role of drawing-based media in supporting children's creative and cognitive progress. Drawing operates not merely as expressive art but as a cognitive instrument that facilitates meaning making, analytical thinking, and emotional interpretation. Through purposeful stimulation and responsive educational strategies, drawing shifts from a simple pastime to a central learning method. The study illustrates that combining visual prompts, exploratory tasks, and interactive dialogue deepens both the technical and conceptual elements of children's artworks. These improvements extend to broader developmental areas, such as cognitive flexibility, language growth, and emotional intelligence. Overall, the research reinforces the importance of creative teaching practices in early education. By utilizing drawing as a powerful pedagogical tool, educators can nurture children who are more engaged, expressive, and intellectually curious, building a foundation for long-term creativity and well-rounded development.

This interpretation is supported by the theory of Istiqomah (2017), who stated that creativity is an integral part of human life and must be cultivated from an early age. When children are given the opportunity to draw based on a specific theme, they demonstrate the ability to merge imagination with concrete experiences they already possess. This suggests that creativity does not appear spontaneously but can be developed systematically through structured visual stimulation.

From a cognitive development perspective, this research aligns with the findings of Natacik (2018) who emphasized that drawing geometric shapes can stimulate children's logical thinking, including skills in categorization, spatial and temporal recognition, and visual classification. Children not only express their imagination artistically but also engage in systematic thinking processes.

Furthermore, the findings are supported by Fakhriyani (2016) who explained that children's creativity can grow optimally through play activities that allow for open exploration. In this study, drawing activities designed in a playful atmosphere encouraged children to explore colors, shapes, and visual narratives freely, which was reflected in the improved quality of their drawings. The learning media used also played an essential role in stimulating children's creativity and cognition. (Debeturu & Wijayaningsih, 2019), as well as (Kartini et al., 2020), highlighted the importance of utilizing media that aligns with children's developmental characteristics. This study employed thematic visual stimuli tailored to the learning context, which effectively maintained children's focus and increased their engagement during the learning process.

Contrary perspectives suggest that free, unstructured play may be more effective in fostering creativity. However, in this study, visual stimuli were not used to impose limitations but rather to guide and expand the child's imaginative exploration. This is supported by (Miskawati, 2019) who argued that creative children show a high sense of curiosity and the ability to produce works based on their experiences in play and learning.

The consistency of these findings with those of reinforces the importance of meaningful learning design. When children are able to connect personal experiences with drawing activities, they not only develop self-expression but also internalize cognitive concepts more deeply. This indicates that drawing can serve as a bridge between concrete and abstract knowledge.

Overall, the results of this study demonstrate that thematic drawing activities foster two essential aspects in early childhood development: creativity and cognitive ability. The

uniqueness of the two-phase approach and the use of triangulated data, through observation, informal interviews, and visual documentation, enhance the validity of these findings. Therefore, this research provides both theoretical contributions and practical implications for designing effective and child-centered learning strategies in early childhood education.

CONCLUSION

Drawing media, when implemented with a stimulus-based approach, has proven to be a powerful tool for enhancing early childhood creativity and cognitive abilities. This study demonstrated that visual stimulation in the form of thematic images encouraged children to produce drawings that were not only richer in content and color, but also more aligned with previously introduced concepts. This development indicates that drawing can be employed as both an expressive outlet and a structured educational medium. The integration of drawing activities within early childhood education should thus be prioritized. These activities support children's ability to think divergently, articulate ideas, and reflect critically. Furthermore, when accompanied by dialogue and narrative building, drawing contributes to the development of language, social interaction, and emotional understanding.

This journal has examined the significant role of drawing-based media in optimizing children's creativity and cognitive development. Drawing is not only a medium of personal expression but also a cognitive tool that facilitates meaning-making, critical thinking, and emotional understanding. Through structured stimulation and responsive teaching, drawing can transform from a leisure activity into a central pedagogical method. The research shows that integrating visual stimuli, open ended prompts, and social dialogue into drawing activities enhances not only the technical aspects of children's drawings but also their conceptual depth and narrative fluency. These developments reflect broader gains in cognitive flexibility, language acquisition, and emotional intelligence. In essence, this study reaffirms the value of creative pedagogy in early childhood settings. By harnessing the power of drawing, educators can foster more engaged, expressive, and intellectually curious learners laying a foundation for lifelong creativity and holistic development.

In conclusion, drawing media holds substantial pedagogical value within early childhood education. As a learning tool, it not only facilitates active participation but also strengthens children's capacity for self-expression, interpretation, and problem-solving. Through the act of creating images, children are encouraged to externalize their ideas, explore possibilities, and make decisions that reflect their emerging cognitive and emotional understanding. This process supports deeper engagement with learning materials and allows children to construct meaning in ways that are developmentally appropriate and personally meaningful. Moreover, drawing as an instructional medium fosters the development of creative, thoughtful, and communicative learners—qualities that are increasingly essential in navigating the complexities of the modern world. By integrating visual expression with verbal narration, collaborative storytelling, and reflective dialogue, drawing activities nurture divergent thinking, enhance linguistic abilities, and strengthen social-emotional skills. Such integrative learning experiences help children build confidence in expressing their thoughts, communicating with others, and approaching challenges from multiple perspectives. Ultimately, the use of drawing media in early education not only enriches the learning environment but also lays a strong foundation for lifelong creativity, holistic development, and adaptive intelligence.

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