



**Developing an Evaluation Grid for the “Drawn Stories Technique”: Exploring the Indicators of Children's Socio-Emotional Development, Anxiety, and Depression Levels**

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**Abstract**

*Introduction* Since the first development of psychology, drawing has been considered a useful tool to understand an individual's development and personality. The graphic method is considered a useful way to express not only personality dimensions but also the child's emotions, and the affective tone with which children “emotionally invest” the context in which they live. In other words, drawing allows children to express something emotional and something meaningfully experienced that they have not yet categorized or verbalized. This study aims to develop an ad hoc evaluation grid for the “Drawn Stories Technique” to explore which drawing indicators (story outcomes, themes, emotional contents, and formal aspects) could reflect children's socio-emotional functioning in terms of emotional and social intelligences and clinical levels of anxiety and depression.

*Method.* The Drawn Stories Technique together with four self-reported questionnaires to evaluate trait Emotional Intelligence, Social Intelligence, Anxiety, and Depression respectively were administered to 228 primary school children in the group during class time.

*Results.* Negative outcomes were positively related to depression scores but not to anxiety scores while social intelligence was associated with fewer themes related to death, less hostile emotional contents, and more human characters designed more in detail. As regards emotional intelligence, it was negatively related to heavy traits in the draws. Moreover, children who show clinical levels of depression tend to significantly draw fewer themes related to fables and animals and more everyday life events while children who have clinical levels of anxiety showed differences in some formal aspects of the drawings such as fewer empty spaces and more heavy traits in the draws.

*Conclusion.* This study has shown the potential use of projective graphic techniques with primary school children to obtain potential indicators of maladjustment through the development of an ad hoc evaluation grid to collect information.