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## THE MEANING OF WAR AND PEACE FOR THE MIGRANT SYRIAN STUDENTS AT TERTIARY LEVEL IN TURKEY: AN ART-BASED STUDY

*Research Article*

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## Abstract

The present study aimed to determine the definition of war and peace by the migrant Syrian students at tertiary level; their image of war via their artistic drawings, as well as to reveal their expectations from peace. For this purpose, the study was conducted in the 2018-2019 academic year with an art-based research approach, employing art as a method, a form of analysis and as an object. The participants comprised 25 Syrian students between the age range of 17-20 years old who emigrated from Syrian war zones to Turkey. The analysis of the data focused on the definitions of war and peace, Syrian students' drawings, and their verbal expressions about the drawings that help develop an analytical framework. The findings of the study demonstrated that most of the drawings reflected real images of war and peace; the participants rendered both visual and verbal symbolizations as the main expression of their suffering during the war and longing for peace. The drawings provided clues that could help them cope with the possible traumatic incidents they could experience at the present or in the future, and preserve their identity destructed by factors out of their control.

*Keywords:* Syria, war, peace, art, Syrian students, tertiary level, immigrants

## 1. Introduction

The war and peace have been an integral part of the humanity since the beginning of the human history. Humankind has achieved great success in controlling the nature and has overcome several fatal diseases but could not find a solution to murder. For this reason, the major enemy of humankind is humankind according to certain psychologists. Bloch reported in the article titled "The Future of War" that there were 3130 years of war and 227 years of peace between 1496 BC and 1861 BC. In the one hundred and forty years long history of the United States, there was a hundred and twenty-three years of peace and seventeen years of war (Eckhardt, 1917). It was believed that the concept of war was the first to be understood in history. Even the youngest children perceive war in concrete terms such as combat, weapons and soldiers, and all children have a definition of war, but they cannot fully express what peace means (McLernon & Cairns, 2001). War is an act where force is employed, and there is no limit to the use of force in war (Clausewitz, 2017). According to Cicero, war is a means to resolve conflicts with coercion (Grotius, 2001). Tolstoy (2007) argued that the war is induced by the buildup of several factors rather than the will of an individual. On the other hand, Shakespeare described wars and conflicts as a game where the good fight against the evil (Page, 2000). Sometimes the word war could refer to different concepts in different ideologies. For realist or liberal philosophers who approach the events from a distinct perspective, war may not mean the same thing. Certain liberal philosophers argued that the war takes place for reasons such as lack of interaction and communication or misunderstanding between the actors, while realists claimed that the system fuels the conflicts based on the thesis of the unavailability of war. As is known, although Kant

described war as an abnormality, Hegel considered war legitimate and functional (Dağı, 2004). According to Hobbes, if there is a desire to possess the same thing among people, people become enemies. They try to destroy each other or dominate them. Hobbes argued that there were three main reasons for conflict in human nature: competition, distrust, and glory (Hobbes, 1985). The issue of how war leads to peace created an important and problematic anxiety in all approaches (Carr & Porfilio, 2012). War is in fact a consequence of our intention to eliminate conflicts and differences when we lose hope with the peace process (Schrumpf, Crawford & Bodine, 2007). Unlike war, when we consider the concept of peace from a narrower and more traditional perspective, the concept seems complex practically; however, it is conceptually quite simple (Smith, 1993). Peace is the process of reacting to conflict and differences with tolerance, imagination, and flexibility. In other words, peace is consensus, harmony and mutual understanding (Hakvoort, 2010). Harris and Morrisson (2003) described peace as a positive force that aims to forgive and respect others, to cooperate with them, and to avoid all forms of violence. In short, peace tends to resolve conflicts without war or psychological force. Perkins (2002) analyzed the concept of peace with five models. These five models include friendly peace, ethical peace, interdependence peace, legal peace, and retaliation peace dimensions. The friendly peace model is based on harmony and trust between the parties. The ethical peace model reflects the case when the parties act in an ethical, just and rightful manner in their mutual relations. The interdependence peace model means that the parties interact with their common interests in mind. The legal peace model refers to the peace based on legal mechanisms such as law, justice, and courts. Finally, the retaliation peace model reflects the cases where peace is maintained with preventive attacks when war is inevitable.

Some studies have based the conceptual development of war and peace on a cognitive development context. Thus, it was argued that the understanding of war develops before the understanding of peace and young children focus on the concrete aspects of war, while older children could also understand the abstract aspects of war (Cooper, 1965; Hall, 1993). These developmental differences were associated with cognitive developments in children's ideation as defined by Piaget (1952). Students first learn the concept of war and peace based on their relationships. Competition, collaboration, and individual experiences play a key role in children's perceptions about these concepts. In fact, the recognition of the children's conception about war is the first step in helping them to cope with their emotions about war. Especially in education, awareness of the students on the conceptual dimension of peace could help professionals find ways to help them to identify positive, non-violent acts against war (Walker, Myers-Bowman & Myers-Walls, 2003). In reality, we all have abstract concepts about war and peace in our minds; however, the conceptualization might differ significantly in the mind of an individual who experienced the actual trauma of war (Özer et al., 2018).

Art functions as a source of spirituality that provides aesthetic pleasure; it is considered a silent form, since it provides individuals, who could not talk about events or decide whether these events were positive or negative, the opportunity to do all these via impressive drawings (Kollontai, 2010). Hsieh and Tsai (2016) concluded that drawings could be an alternative approach to determine the emotional problems of students. Indeed, the consequences of wars affect large masses and future generations. Wars could lead to irreversible constructive and destructive consequences. Thus, it is necessary to understand and analyze wars and steps towards peace. Art is one of the most effective methods that serve this goal. Literature review revealed that art-based studies on war and peace were mostly conducted with younger children in the literature (Ålvik, 1968; Barton & McCully, 2005; Brunick, 1999; Buldu, 2009; Çengelci-Köse & Gürdoğan-Bayır, 2016; Gardner, 1980;

Grauer, 1994; Jabbar & Betawi, 2019; Lambert, 1994; Özer et. al, 2018; Stiles, Gibbons & De Silva, 1996; Sundström, 1981; Walker, Myers-Bowman & Myers-Walls, 2003; Tanay, 1994; Tuneu et. al, 2015; Yedidia, T. & Lipschitz-Elchawi, 2012). The number of studies conducted with higher education students are quite limited (Aktaş, 2015; Droba, 1931; Madzarac et. al, 2003; Shehi, Ozcan & Hagen, 2018). The attitudes of the Syrian individuals who attend the higher education system in Turkey towards war and peace is important since they could utilize the education they received in the host country for the benefit of their motherland and would be ready to work towards the development and progress in their country as qualified individuals.

The migration from Syria to Turkey started on April 29, 2011 250-300 people fleeing from the clashes that started in March 2011 and when these individuals requested asylum (Ihlamur-Öner, 2015). The open-door policy adopted by Turkey led to the migration of over 3.5 million Syrians to Turkey and the country became the host nation for the highest number of refugees in the world. As is known, migration means a profound transformation in life for many immigrants (Kırılmaz & Öntaş, 2020). The resettlement process is described as a 'secondary trauma' for migrant children and their families due to various difficulties such as a new school system, job market, accommodations, and the requirement to learn a new language (McArdle & Spina, 2007). Bearing the heavy burden of war and migration alone leads to challenging life experiences (education system, language, etc.), especially for students. It is clear that such a large number of people, who try to start a new life after escaping from the war, are in a disadvantaged and fragile position due to the difficulties inherent in the war and the migration process. Emotional difficulties and responsibilities experienced by the adults and children with war trauma, who lost their family and relatives, could be severe. Separation from the home environment, loneliness, alienation, lack of self-worth, absence of relatives and the regret due to leaving them behind could affect students' perceptions about war and. Syrian students' drawings about war and peace based on their own experiences could provide clues and critical information about their mood. Brunick (1999) emphasized that the power of creating art and especially the artistic images are important in the demonstration of the past traumatic experiences of refugee students, and we could find the signals that these milestones could have extensive effects on their present and future relations. The present study aimed to determine how the effects of war reflected by tertiary level migrant Syrian students in their artistic drawings of war and peace and to reveal their expectations about peace. Therefore, research questions of the study can be formulated as follows:

1. How do tertiary level migrant Syrian students in Turkey reflect their hopes about the future, and their country's peaceful approach upon their drawings of 'peace'?
2. How do tertiary level migrant Syrian students in Turkey reflect their country's violent past and conflicts upon their drawings of 'war'?

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Research Design

The number of art-based researches have noticeably increased in the last two decades (Finley, 2011). Art-based researches could be defined as the systematic use of the artistic process, the actual creation of artistic expressions in all art forms as a primary method of understanding and investigating experiences by both researchers and their subjects (McNiff, 2008). The present study was conducted with an art-based research approach, which employed art as a method, a form of analysis and as an object. The research design was selected based on the research questions to reveal students' viewpoints about war and peace.

The adopted model is a qualitative research method and emphasizes the social perspective that expands from personal to universal, contains novel ideas and participatory and active inquiry approaches (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Paul, 2005). In fact, most art-based research theorists suggested that art practice deepens researches (Cole & Knowles, 2008; Gray & Malins, 2004; Leavy, 2009; McNiff, 2008).

## **2.2. Participants**

In qualitative research, sample assignment is generally conducted with purposive sampling. Although there are several strategies that could be employed in this technique, the common goal is to assign the most adequate individuals or manuscripts to solve the research problem (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014). In the present study, density sampling, a purposive sampling technique, was used to determine the views of Syrian students on the concepts of war and peace. Density sampling includes information-laden cases that describe the investigated events and phenomena strongly, but without going to extremes (Silverman, 2013). The density sampling employed in a qualitative research should include examples of the best or richest information on the case of research rather than extreme cases or outliers (Morgan & Morgan, 2008). Thus, the study sample included 25 17-20 years old Syrian students who immigrated to Malatya province in Turkey from the war zone and attending Inonu University. The sample size was determined based on the study aim and research questions, and volunteering students who could master the concepts of war and peace, draw associated drawings, and accepted to participate in 6 hours of training in the study. Two of the participant students were from the School of Medicine, 2 were from the Faculty of Dentistry, 3 were from the Faculty of Law, 7 were from the Faculty of Science and Letters, and 11 were from the Faculty of Education. For ethical purposes, the names of the students were not used, and they were named using codes, such as M1, M2, .... M25.

## **2.3. Procedure**

For the study, in the Spring Semester of 2018-2019 academic year, examples of peace in idealism tradition, peace in liberalism and neoliberalism, democratic peace theory, realist peace, peace approach of critical theory, social justice, capitalism, racism and war concepts in different ideologies, past examples of war, changes in the social structure after peace treaties were presented to facilitate the historical comparisons of the students to allow them to master the concepts of war and peace. This training was planned for 6 hours and at the end of each training hour, a discussion session was conducted on the information learned in the previous hour and the students were allowed to make individual analyses. Thus, an attempt was made to allow the students to think about the concepts in detail. Because if the aim is to teach students the concepts of war and peace, these concepts should be instructed pedagogically and discussed rationally in the classroom setting (Oppenheimer, 2010).

In the research, the data were collected via students' artistic drawings which were considered the first step to challenge the limiting factors in their country. Thus, the participant students were asked to draw to demonstrate their approach to war and peace. Each participant was given an A4 size paper sheet that contained two prompts (war and peace): "What does war mean to you? Draw the first image that comes to your mind," and "What does peace mean to you? Draw the first image that comes to your mind," and the participants were given 60 minutes to complete their drawings. Also, they were allowed to use the provided crayons. Furthermore, each student who finished drawing was asked to "explain the picture he drew" in writing on the back of the drawing paper. However, certain students preferred not to comment on their drawings. About 5% of the drawings were analyzed without a verbal explanation. It is important for students to state verbal explanations about their drawings to understand what they mean and how (Richardson, 1982). Thus, the aim of

the study was to determine the perspectives of students on various concepts, events or situations using their explanations on their artistic drawings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Hervey (2004) argued that artistic inquiries were necessary for small-scale art-based research to contribute to literature for data collection, data analysis and presentation of findings.

#### **2.4. Data Coding and Analysis**

The analysis focused on the definitions of the concepts of war and peace, drawings of the migrant Syrian students in a state university in Turkey, and their verbal statements on the drawings that helped the researcher develop an analytical framework. The drawings were coded based on the war and peace categories developed by McLernon and Cairns (2001) and adapted from Hakvoort and Oppenheimer (1993). Certain categories were not included in the coding since they were not included in the drawings.

*Five categories employed in war drawings:*

Category 1: Weaponry or soldier drawings, tanks, bombs, rifles.

Category 2: Symbols such as flags.

Category 3: War activities (firing, stabbing, etc.).

Category 4: Negative consequences of war such as death, injury and migration.

Category 5: Negative emotions such as crying individuals.

*Three categories employed in peace drawings:*

Category 1: Natural landscapes (trees, flowers, rivers, etc.).

Category 2: Positive images (shaking hands, hugging, smiling to one another, collaboration, etc.).

Category 3: Images that negate war; sitting people (on a bed or divan), views of tranquility or silence, views of children at home or school.

All drawings were coded and compared separately by a field expert and the author based on the above-mentioned categories before the analysis. Miles and Huberman (1994) formula (Reliability = Agreement / Agreement + Disagreement x 100) was employed to determine the coding reliability. Thus, the reliability of the study was calculated as 90%. Miles and Huberman (1994) argued that the reliability should be over 70% to consider a research reliable. Qualitative data analyses were conducted based on the guidelines proposed by Patton (1990). Thus, the drawings were initially reviewed and the verbal statements that accompanied the drawings were read and the drawings were assigned to the relevant categories. During the qualitative analysis, specific drawing characteristics were also defined (design elements: color, space, contrast; design principles: motion, harmony, emphasis; recognizable content: objects, figures, etc.). During coding, a guide that included the number of shapes and objects and color assignments employed by each student in the war and peace drawings was developed. Based on our first observations during the analysis, a hypothesis was determined that war figures included a higher number of figures and details. Furthermore, it was expected that more colors would be used in peace drawings.

### **3. Findings**



#### **3.1. The Meaning of 'Peace' and Peace Drawings**

Syrian students stated their definition for the concept of peace before starting the "peace-themed" drawings. These definitions are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *The meaning of peace according to Syrian students*


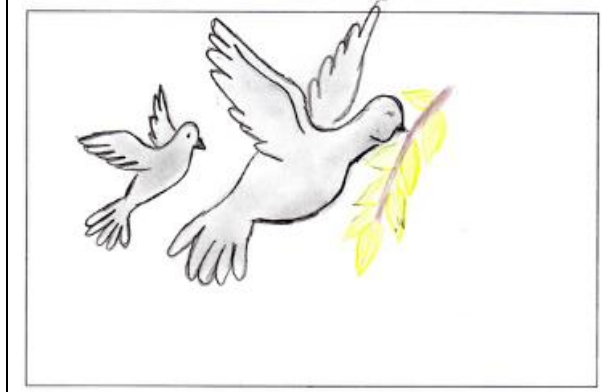
Theme	Participants	Frequency (f)
Tranquility	M1, M2, M5, M7, M8, M9, M10, M11, M12, M13, M14, M15, M16, M17, M18, M20, M24	17
Freedom	M1, M3, M4, M5, M6, M7, M9, M11, M12, M14, M16, M17	12
Trust	M2, M9, M10, M11, M13, M15, M16, M24	8
Love	M7, M8, M9, M17, M18, M20	6
Happiness	M10, M11, M12, M24, M25	5
Hope	M5, M6, M16, M23	4
Respect	M7, M9, M18, M19	4
Solidarity	M1, M2, M5, M17	3
Dream	M21, M22, M23	3
Health	M9, M14	2

The review of Table 1 demonstrated that "peace" meant "tranquility" and "freedom" for most students and it meant "solidarity", "dream" and "health" the least. Furthermore, based on the student definitions, peace also meant trust, love, happiness, hope and respect. Students reflected these expressions on 'peace' drawings as well. The themes described in the students' peace drawings included freedom, tranquility, unity, love, happiness, hope and solidarity. When reflecting these themes, birds, olive branches and the world were employed the most. Furthermore, students employed wings, sky, ocean, clouds, rainbow, stars, humans, hearts, hands, houses, flowers and trees. They frequently selected nature as a space and generally nature images were presented with a positive act such as shaking hands. It was observed that only the student M16 coded included a negative element (weapon) in a peace drawing. However, the element that implies the negation of the war in this drawing was the flowers in the fired gun (Drawing 5). It was determined that the figures in the students' peace drawings were mostly passive (inert). Green, blue, and white colors were generally preferred in the drawings. Furthermore, female students emphasized their emotions more in their peace drawings and verbal expressions. Examples of students' peace drawings are presented below:



	
<i>Drawing 1. Peace in the drawing of female student M17: World, bird, olive branch, hands and heart.</i>	<i>Drawing 2. Peace in the drawing of male student M3: World, wings.</i>

Student M17 who emphasized universal peace in Drawing 1, stated the following on her drawing: "I actually drew this because I wanted all countries in the world to be in peace, not only my country. If all people were full of love and live peacefully, these would not have happened to us. If we all embrace the world with love, peace will be permanent." On the other hand, M3, who emphasized freedom in his drawing stated that "for me, peace is

freedom. When we live in peace, we can act freely. I drew wings because when peace is achieved, I would like to fly like a bird and go where I want.”

	
<p><i>Drawing 3. Peace in the drawing of female student M2: Mother, child, stars</i></p>	<p><i>Drawing 4. Peace in the drawing of male student M6: Bird, olive branch</i></p>

When explaining the drawing that emphasized the provision of a permanent peace in Drawing 3, M2 stated the following: “When I hear peace, I immediately look at the sky. The sky and my mother's love are infinite for me. I drew both the sky and my mom because I wanted peace to last forever.” Including only two of the universal symbols of peace in his painting (bird and olive branch), M6 reflected on peace as follows: “The olive branch symbolizes both peace and victory. I dreamed that drawing an olive branch in the bird's mouth would bring peace to all nations” (Drawing 4).

	
<p><i>Drawing 5. Peace in the drawing of female student M16: Bird, olive branch, weapon, flowers</i></p>	<p><i>Drawing 6. Peace in the drawing of female student M1: Earth, bird, olive branch, hands</i></p>

In Drawing 5 by student M16, unlike other drawings, a negative element, namely “a weapon” was included: “I imagined that the gun shot flowers instead of bullets when I heard this sound in peace instead of fearful days where we had to wake up with gunshots, and this would make everywhere beautiful. Of course, this beauty could only spread to the world on the wings of a bird. That is why I added a bird.” M1, the illustrator of the Drawing 6 that depicted hands with a flying bird carrying an olive branch in its mouth on the world, stated the following: “If the feeling of solidarity and unity is adopted by all people in the world, then peace would be permanent. For this reason, I drew the hands. Bird means freedom to me. We are not free if we cannot do what we want. If you live in peace, there is freedom.”

### 3.2. The Meaning of ‘War’ and War Drawings



The student views on the meaning of the concept of “war” were determined via the interviews and presented in Table 2.



Table 2. *The meaning of war according to Syrian students*

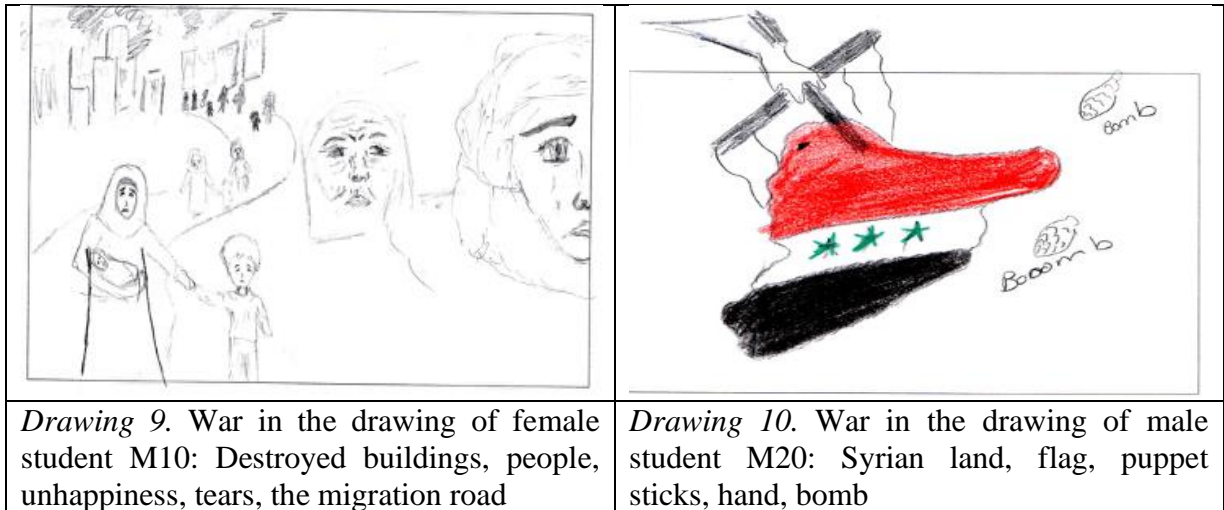
Theme	Participants	Frequency (f)
Death	M1, M2, M3, M4, M5, M6, M8, M11, M15, M16, M17, M20 M21, M23, M25	15
Conflict	M1, M3, M4, M6, M8, M10, M11, M12, M13, M17, M24	11
Migration	M7, M9, M10, M11, M15, M16, M18, M20, M23, M25	10
Unrest	M9, M13, M14, M24	4
Fear	M5, M13, M25	3
Sorrow	M2, M8, M10	3
Hunger	M9, M14, M,20, M22	3
Despair	M5, M13	2
Hate	M20, M23	2
Unhappiness	M10, M11	2
Oppression	M15	1
Hopelessness	M16	1

Based on the data presented in Table 2, war meant 'death', 'conflict' and 'migration' for the students the most and it meant 'oppression' and 'hopelessness' the least. It was stated by the students that it also meant unrest, fear, sorrow, hunger, helplessness, hate and unhappiness. In the war drawings of the students, death, migration, fear, despair and unhappiness were the common themes associated with the consequences of the war. The students who reflected the consequences of war intensively were 90%. Destroyed homes, injured people, blood, cemetery, weapons, fire, bombs, children, tanks, helicopters and Syrian map were used to reflect these themes. The positive elements included in war drawings were the sky, mountain, sea, butterfly, flag and toy. It was determined that the figures in the war drawings of the students were reflected with events (shooting, injury, migration, etc.). The number of colors used in war drawings was limited. In drawings where colors were used, it was observed that black was the most preferred color and red was used to emphasize blood and fire. Similar to the peace drawings, female students emphasized their emotions better in war pictures. Examples of students' war drawings are presented below:

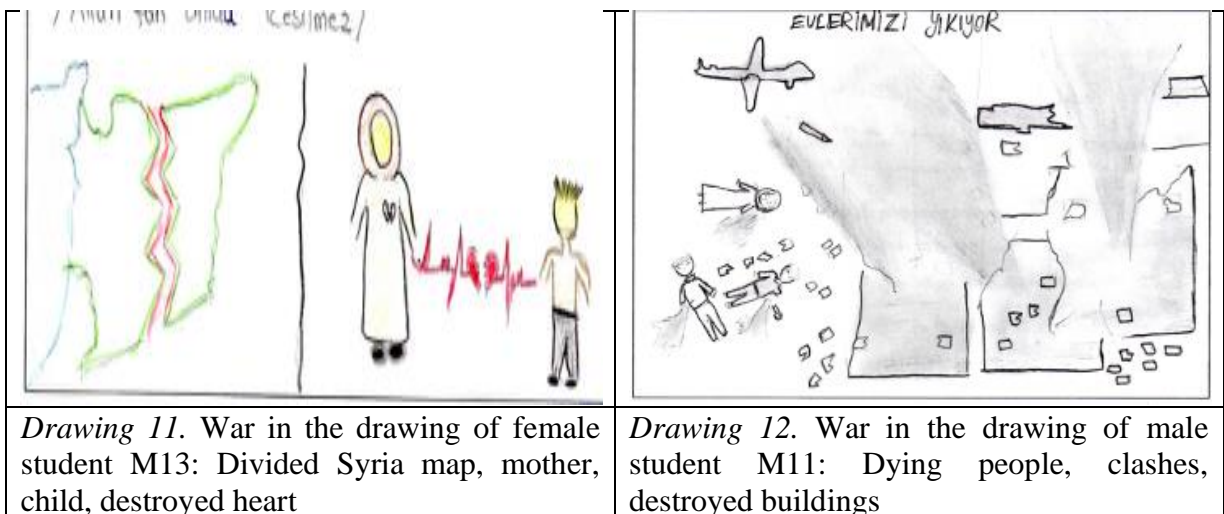
	
<p><i>Drawing 7. War in the drawing of male student M8: Destroyed buildings, father, child, blood, helicopter, bomb, fire</i></p>	<p><i>Drawing 8. War in the drawing of female student M5: Girl, butterfly, toy rabbit, monster</i></p>

On his drawing, M8 stated the following: "*I actually wanted to show a father's desperation to save his injured child and the bombing of our houses by armored vehicles although we did nothing wrong*" (Drawing 7). In this drawing, especially the depiction of blood and fire were significant. Student M5 said the following: "*I imagined the war as a*

monster because war is so bad that it could prevent a child to reach her or his dreams and destroy her or his right to live" (Drawing 8). The dominant element in this drawing was the identification of war as a monster.



In Drawing 9 on immigration, a procession of people that arrive from the collapsed buildings could be observed. M10 stated the following about her drawing: “*We left our home like this. War means separation from home, unhappy mothers, unhappy people for me.*” Associating the war in Syria to with foreign powers, student M20 stated the following: “*If no other nations were involved in the internal affairs in Syria, there would be no war. Other countries play with our land like a puppet. But the land belongs to us. Other countries led to the war, not Syrians. I drew this because it’s their war.*”



Student M13, who associated division of Syrian lands with the separation of the mother and child in Drawing 11, stated the following: “*In fact, the war not only divides the land, but also the bond of love between a mother and her child. It tears the families apart,*” stressing that war leads to emotional destruction. On the other hand, the M11 stated the following on war: “*While I was dreaming that I would leave my family for school, death separated me from my father. War means death for me.*”

### 3.3. Drawings that Emphasized the Contrast Between Peace and War

In the study, although drawing material that students could use to draw different drawings for war and peace, 2 students depicted war and peace in a single drawing, and 2 other students compared the lands without war and Syria, reflecting the contrast between war and

peace in their paintings. War and peace were depicted as the world, a puzzle, sky, bird, earth, and fire. War was presented in red, and peace in blue and green (Drawings 13 and 14). In Drawings 15 and 16, which tried to reflect this contrast in two side-by-side drawings, war and peace were represented with dancing people, conflict, dying people, blood, bombs, soldiers, armored vehicles, cemetery, forest, human, sky, rainbow, butterfly, birds and trees. Furthermore, it was determined that peace was more colorful in these drawings.

<p><i>Drawing 13. War and peace in the drawing of female student M14: World, puzzle</i></p>	<p><i>Drawing 14. War and peace in the drawing of male student M25: Sky, birds, earth, fire</i></p>

M14, who visualized the world as a puzzle, stated the following: "I wrote war on all the puzzle pieces in my drawing, except for a single part of the world, because the number of people that think about war is very high in the world. I thought of this single piece as peace. Unfortunately, that piece of the puzzle is missing." She reflected her critical view on people who defend the war and are somewhat insensitive to war in her drawing (Drawing 13). In Drawing 14, the student M25 separated the sky and the earth using colors and stated the following: "For me, the sky is a space of freedom, but the earth is a piece of fire. Peace is in the infinite sky, the war is in the piece of fire on earth unfortunately." He accepted the harmony of the earth and sky, which are so close to each other, while reflecting the two cases (war and peace) that are far apart from each other from a different perspective.

<p><i>Drawing 15. War and peace in the drawing of female student M4: Dancing people, clashes, dying people, blood, bomb, soldier, war vehicle</i></p>	<p><i>Drawing 16. War and peace in the drawing of male student M23: Cemetery, forest, human, sky, rainbow, butterfly, birds, trees</i></p>

M4 reflected two different frames of the world to her painting: "As Syrian people die due to war, they are forced to leave their loved ones and live unhappy lives in other countries, while other countries continue their fun in peace," expressing her discomfort with insensitive people (Drawing 15). M23 stated the following: "Syrian people lie in graves due to the war.

*But other countries live peacefully in their gardens and watch the sky. I drew this drawing because their eyes are closed to our experiences.”*

### 3. Discussion and Conclusion

Peace is an international movement that includes positive ideals adopted by humanity. Hakvoort and Hagglund (2001) argue that children understand peace at an early age, and it develops with the addition of more abstract elements as they get older. In the study, it was determined that peace meant "tranquility" and "freedom" the most for the students and it meant "solidarity", "dream" and "health" the least. Furthermore, peace also meant trust, love, happiness, hope and respect for the students. Similar emotions were reported by the participants of the study conducted by Çengelci-Köse and Gürdoğan-Bayır (2016), who worked with the younger students. The themes identified in students' drawings of peace included freedom, peace, unity, love, happiness, hope and solidarity. When reflecting these themes, students employed the bird, olive branch and world figures the most. Birds, especially pigeons, represent peace. Olive branch is also among the significant universal symbols of peace (Aktaş, 2015). A need for universal peace is a consensus among all humanity. The inclusion of 'the world' in student drawings was due to a longing for universal peace. Nature was frequently included in the drawings; generally, the images of nature were associated with a positive act such as shaking hands. It was observed that only the student M16 included a negative element (weapon) in a peace drawing. However, in the drawing, the element that implied the negative face of the war was a gun shooting flowers. It was determined that the figures in the peace drawings were mostly passive (inert). Similar to this finding, Âlvik (1968) reported that peace was perceived not as an active but as a passive process by individuals. Emphasis on the concept of peace in the study was expressed more frequently by female students. Similarly, Madzarac et al. (2003), who studied on war and peace with college students during the civil war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Zagreb, also reported that female students placed more emphasis on peace when compared to male students. The colors used in peace drawings were mostly green, blue and white in addition to other colors. The blue and green reflect calmness in a drawing, yellow reflects joy, and light and pale colors indicate that the child is trying to hide real experiences and emotions (Chermet-Carroy, 2008). In the peace drawings, birds were predominantly depicted in white, olive branches were drawn in green, sky and the sea were painted in blue. While this demonstrated that peace was associated with tranquility by the students, it also suggested that students try to hide their emotions. In support of this finding, in a study conducted with college students, Aktaş (2015) revealed that green and blue were used predominantly in the peace drawings by the students.

It was also discovered that the concept of war meant "death", "conflict" and "migration" the most and 'oppression' and 'hopelessness' the least for the students in the study. War also meant unrest, fear, sadness, hunger, helplessness, hate, and unhappiness for the students. When expressing these meanings, students mostly focused on abstract emotions. In war drawings, clashes in war and consequences of war such as death, migration, fear, despair and unhappiness were the common themes. 90% of the students reflected the consequences of war in their drawings. Similarly, Jabbar and Betawi (2019) emphasized that older individuals focus on the results of the war, the reasons of people to start a war, and explaining their negative emotions about the war using abstract ideas. This finding did not differ based on gender. Contrary to this finding, Hakvoort and Oppenheimer (1998) reported differences based on gender. Accordingly, males were more focused on the concrete aspects of war, while the females were more focused on the negative consequences.

Humankind assigned a symbolic form and meaning to everything that existed in history. In the study, destroyed homes, injured and dead, blood, cemetery, weapons, fires, bombs, children, tanks, helicopters and Syrian map were used to reflect the war theme in drawings. Despite developmental differences, these elements were also reflected in the drawings of young children in certain studies (Hakvoort & Hagglund, 2001; McLernon & Cairns, 2001; Walker, Myers-Bowman & Myers-Walls, 2003). In the present study, it was determined that both female and male students had knowledge about combat vehicles. Contrary to this finding, Tolley (1973), Hall (1993) and McLernon & Cairns (2001) reported that males had more knowledge about war, weaponry and war activities when compared to females, which was clearly observed in descriptions of war. However, certain other studies reported insignificant differences between the knowledge on war based on gender (McLernon, Ferguson & Cairns, 1997; McLernon, 1998). In the present study, the lack of difference in knowledge based on gender could be attributed to the participants' age group and the actual war experiences of the participants.

The positive elements included in war drawings in the study were the sky, mountain, sea, butterfly, flag, and toys. By associating these elements with the theme of war, students transformed them into visual symbols as a coping mechanism with trauma. Tanay (1994) reported that children who could not cope with the war trauma could not achieve perceptual integrity and used unassociated objects in their drawings. Tanay (1994) conducted a study with 4-7- and 7-11-years old children. It could be more difficult for children to cope with a significant trauma such as the war when compared to adults. As is known, perception integrity is one of the motor processes such as breathing (Arnwine & McCoy, 2006). In this process, the brain turns the parts into a whole, combining several sensory information that originate from the environment, leading to an integral perception (Ayres & Robin, 2005). In the present study, unassociated objects were not used, and the students stated the associations between the elements when they explained their drawings in detail. It was determined that the figures in war drawings mostly reflected was with an action (shooting, injury, migrating people, etc.). It was significant that all drawings were in detail. According to Lambert (1994), the more detailed the drawings, the greater the student's sensitivity. Thus, it could be suggested that the participating students were more sensitive to war. In their verbal expressions, the students who drew detailed drawings, expressed their negative emotions more frequently. Similarly, Cooper (1964) suggested that as the emphasis on the consequences and activities of the war increases, negative emotional reactions may increase as well.

Colors always played a significant role in influencing individuals' mood, emotions, feelings and perceptions (Singh & Srivastava, 2011). Not many colors were not used in war drawings in the present study. In drawings that included colors, black was the most dominant color, while red was often used to emphasize fire and blood. Black and red are an indication of depression or feeling hopeless or restricted in a drawing, while red reflects anger (Laguna & Lachowska, 2003). The students also developed a secret language in reflecting their moods, emotional anxiety and anger by using these colors in their drawing about war. Also, female students emphasized their emotions more than male students in war and peace drawings and verbal statements in the study. The fact that female students emphasized their emotions in peace and war drawings could be due to gender differences and culturally attributed gender roles.

In the study, it was observed that the experiences of Syrian students were effective on their definitions of the concepts of war and peace, especially when commenting on war. Thus, the general findings of the study demonstrated that most student drawings included real images of war and peace; Syrian students utilized both visual and verbal symbolizations as the main

expression of their suffering during the war and their longing for peace. The drawings provided clues that could help them cope with the past and future traumatic events and protect their identity deconstructed beyond their control. Obviously, students deeply felt the devastating effects of war, even if they were not involved in a direct conflict. As the findings demonstrated, exposure to war and longing for peace affect students' perspectives on the concepts of war and peace. Conflicts and casualties in the war deeply shook certain students, while others were deeply affected by the sense of obscurity during and after migration. The most important reason underlying the desire for peace was the desire to go back to their country. To realize the complexity and multidimensionality of the concepts of peace and war, comparisons should be made in further studies on adolescents and adults, and a living space should be built for these aspirations, especially during the times of peace. Adoption of a contextual approach in future studies would further improve our insight. Also, artistic studies on similar subjects would improve communication, problem solving, creative thinking, cultural understanding and decision making. Thus, it was considered that the present study benefited the students.

#### **4. Conflict of Interest**

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

#### **5. Ethics Committee Approval**

The author confirms that the study does not need ethics committee approval according to the research integrity rules in their country.

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