

**The socio demographic and some personal characteristics of those who value imagination as a quality that children can be encouraged to learn at home, in Egypt. A descriptive study**

**By**

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Introduction

By definition imagination is the ability to remember, dream, create, improvise and in the process entertain oneself anywhere and anytime.

At three years of age, make-believe and other imaginative activities begin to occupy an important place in the child's mental world. Imagination will do what curiosity cannot. It will carry a child beyond the boundaries of time and space. It can take him to places he has never been. He can move mountains with his imagination and test his own feelings without fear of reprisal. Through the imaginative process, a child gives life to inanimate objects while assuming a controlling role as chief operator of his own play.

There are many benefits from encouraging child's imagination, where learning to think symbolically expands the child's mind helps in developing intelligence. Imagination can help children to develop social skills, can build their self-confidence as imagination is empowering to a child, and it helps them develop confidence in their abilities and their potential. It helps in problem solving and helps children to handle their problems and to deal with stress. It can boost intellectual growth through the using of abstract thought. Another benefit of imagination it can help children to practice language skills as it helps boost their vocabulary, improve sentence structure and enhance communication skills.

Also imagination can help children to Work out fears as playing pretend can help children work out their fears and worries. Imaginative play also helps kids vent confusing feelings they might have, such as anger toward a parent or rivalry with a new sibling.

To encourage youngster's imagination, playing and reading to them every day is essential. Books offer children the opportunity to visit other worlds and create new ones of their own. Making up stories is part of a normal fantasy life for young children. It is a positive sign of developing intelligence and of an active and healthy imagination. Preschool children who are beginning to express themselves through language are not yet able to make a clear distinction between reality and make-believe. Storytelling at this age is seldom an intentional effort to deceive.

Various forms of play are strongest indicators of healthy emotional growth and are significant component of a child's orderly development. Imaginative play is important and a natural thing for children. Play is not simply a time when a child amuses himself. With all the pressure these days to educate young children early (even starting in utero), parents can take heart. Through play and imagination, a child learns and imaginative play leads to other forms of learning

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Now the question is do we nurture child's capacity for living deeply within their imagination by giving them the space for imaginative play? Some parents may feel threatened by their child's imagination because they themselves are disconnected from their own imaginations. They may not respect imaginative activity. But if we undervalue imagination, we risk alienating our kids.

In today's achievement-oriented world, parents sometimes give imagination short shrift. We forget that it is a gift to be encouraged. It is valuable in its own right, allowing a child the space to be his authentic self. Today's parents deny their children the opportunity to use their imaginations is by over-scheduling enrichment activities, lessons and tutors. They worry when they see their children staring off into space

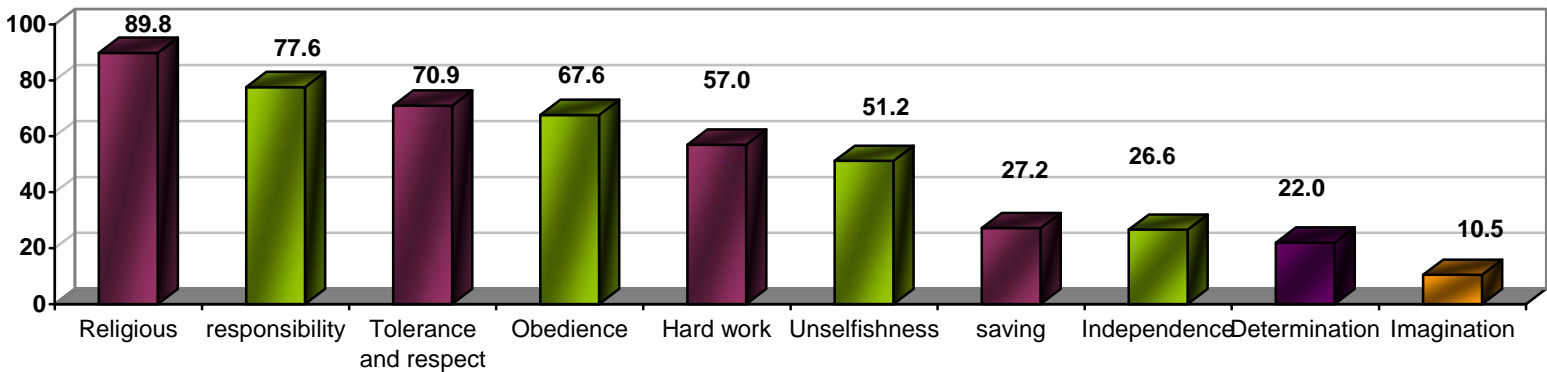
Aim of the study:

Based on the findings of a survey conducted by the IDSC (WVS,2008) where one of its objectives was to understand people's perception on the qualities that children can be encouraged at home. This objective was studied by introducing a list of 10 qualities (i.e.: independence, hard work, feeling of responsibility, imagination , tolerance and respect for other people , thrift, saving money and things, determination, perseverance , religious faith , unselfishness and obedience ) where the most important 5 qualities were asked to be selected . A detailed description of this finding in descending order of importance was: Religious faith (89.8%), Feeling of responsibility (77.6%), Tolerance and respect for other people (70.9%), Obedience (67.6%), Hard work (57%), Unselfishness (51.2%), Thrift saving money and things (27.2%), Independence (26.6%), Determination and perseverance (22%), and lastly (and the least) Imagination (10.6%) table (1), Fig (1).

**Table (1) : Qualities that children can be encouraged at home, in order of importance .**

Qualities	Percentage %
Religious faith	89.8
Feeling of responsibility	77.6
Tolerance and respect for other people	70.9
Obedience	67.6
Hard work	57.0
Unselfishness	51.2
Thrift saving money and things	27.2
Independence	26.6
Determination and perseverance	22.0
Imagination	10.5

**Fig (1) Qualities that children can be encouraged at home, in order of importance**



From the above finding it is noted that imagination, is the least quality valued by the examined sample, while religious faith was the most important valued quality.

Accordingly it was of importance to shed the light and to draw a profile describing the characteristics of those who valued imagination as a quality from those who did not.

#### Study objectives:

**Based on the previous survey findings this current study aims at describing the following characteristics of those who valued imagination as a quality ( extracted from the questionnaire used in the WVS- Egypt , 2008 ) :**

1. The socio-demographic characteristics such as: age, gender, marital status, type of family, education, occupation, and social class.
2. Some personal respondent's characteristics such as:
  - a. Using different sources to learn local and international news such as the use of internet, TV, and books. And the ability of using computers.
  - b. The importance of Family, Friends, Leisure time, Politics, work, and Religion in ones life.
  - c. The perception of science and technology effect on life.
  - d. The value of freedom and Personality traits such as : Taking risk, trusting others , having free choice in life , appreciating the worth of creating new ideas and doing things on their own , and the worth of the freedom of speech .
  - e. Being a member in voluntary organizations.
  - f. Interest in politics and the involvement in political action: such as signing a petition, joining in boycotts, and attending peaceful demonstrations.

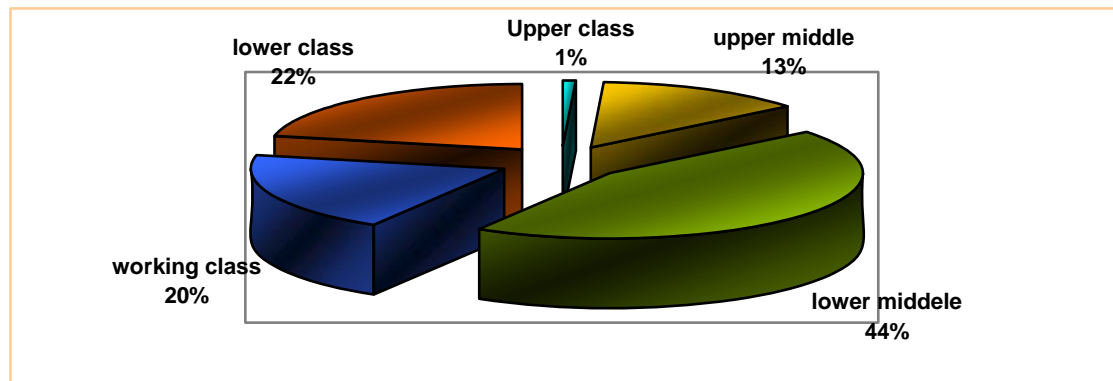
Results ( study findings ).**1- Sample characteristics:**

The study sample size , ( as extracted from the WVS- EGYPT 2008 ), consisted of 3030 informants, among which were 1543 male (50.9%) and 1487 female (49.1 %). Age consisted of 708 (23.4%) respondents in the age group from 18-30 years old and 2323 (76.6%) above 30 years old . As for the Marital status: 2343 (77.3%) were married, 353 bachelors (11.7%), 295 widowed, 15 (0.5%) separated, and 24 (0.8%) divorced .

Education ranged from the non formal educational level up to the highest educational level attained where 27.1% of the sample were illiterate , 25.6% at the lower educational level and 47.3% at the highest level . Nearly 2/3 rd of the studied sample were from Lower Egypt 1992 (65.8%), while 1039 (34.2%) were from Upper Egypt. The sample consisted of 2836 (93.6%) Muslims and 149 (6.4%) Christians. Most respondents were living in extended family and only few were in nuclear family 2115 (90.3%),and 228 (9.7%) respectively).

Respondents classified themselves according to their Perceived social class level, into Upper class: 28 (0.9%), Upper middle class: 407 (13.4%), Lower middle class: 1345 (44.4%), Working class: 597 (19.7%), and Lower class: 653 (21.6%), which indicates that most respondents were mainly from the lower middle class downwards, fig (2).

**Fig (2) : the distribution of the Perceived Social Class Level among the studied sample**



**2- The socio-demographic characteristics of those who valued imagination and those who did not. : (table 2)**

As shown in table ( 2 ), there is no statistical significance difference in the group who valued imagination (and those who did not) among different gender (11.3% male and 9.9% female,  $p=0.2$ ), religion (10.6% Muslims and 10.8% Christians,  $p=0.9$ ), either living in an extended or nuclear family (10.1%, 9.9%,  $p=0.9$ ), among different family size, and within different age groups.

While there is a statistical significance difference detected in relation to those who valued imagination, in their marital status ( mainly in the bachelors group ), educational level ( for the higher educational level ) and in the engagement at work in creative tasks, table (2) .

**Table (2) the socio-demographic characteristics of those who valued imagination and those who did not**

Characteristics		Mentioned (%)	Not Mentioned (%)	P value
Gender	Male	11.3	88.7	0.2
	Female	9.9	90.1	
Age Group	18 – under 30	12.4	87.6	0.08
	Over 30	10.1	89.9	
Religion	Muslims	10.6	89.4	0.9
	Christians	10.8	89.2	
Family	extended	10.1	89.9	0.9
	nuclear	9.9	90.1	
Family Members	5 or less	11.1	88.9	0.2
	6-10	9.2	90.8	
	11 and more	14.3	85.7	
marital status	Married	10.0	90.0	0.001
	bachelors	15.6	84.4	
level of education	illiterate	9.1	90.9	0.001
	lower	8.3	91.7	
	Higher	12.8	87.2	
the engagement at work	cognitive	8.5	91.5	0.002
	creative	14.4	85.6	

### **3- Some personal characteristics ( and personality traits ) of those who valued imagination:**

#### **3-a - Source of information :**

People use different sources to learn what is going on in their country and the world. The group who valued imagination significantly differed from those who did not in using more: daily news papers (31.7%, 26.0%), Printed magazines (9.5%, 6.2%), books (14.5%, 10.2%), internet and emails (14.7%, 9.0%), (the differences are statistically significant  $p < 0.05$ ). Those who value imagination uses computers more frequently than those who do not value imagination (12.1%, 5.5%,  $p = 0.000$ ) the difference is statistically significant ( table 3-a -1).

**Table (3-a-1) different sources of information among the studied sample by imagination value**

Source of information		Mentioned (%)	Not Mentioned (%)	P value
daily news papers	yes	31.7	26	0.02
	no	68.3	74	
Printed magazines	yes	9.5	6.2	0.03
	no	90.5	93.8	
Books	yes	14.5	10.2	0.02
	no	85.5	89.8	
internet and emails	yes	14.7	9.0	0.001
	no	85.3	91.0	
Using Computers	yes	12.1	5.5	0.001



**Table (3-b) : The importance of Family, Friends, Leisure time, Politics, work, Religion in ones life , among the studied sample by the value of imagination**

Importance of (.....) as Extremely important		Mentioned (%)	Not Mentioned (%)	P value
<b>Family</b>	Important	99.4	99.8	0.2
	Not important	0.6	0.2	
<b>Friends</b>	Important	89.8	89.8	0.5
	Not important	10.2	10.2	
<b>Leisure time</b>	Important	58.7	53.3	0.04
	Not important	41.3	46.7	
<b>Politics</b>	Important	46.3	36.3	0.04
	Not important	53.7	63.7	
<b>Work</b>	Important	84.4	84.9	0.4
	Not important	15.6	15.1	
<b>Religion</b>	Important	98.8	99.7	0.04
	Not important	1.2	0.3	

Family, friends and work, being important to most, did not differ statistically between the two groups (99.4%, 99.8% - 89.8%, 89.8% - 84.4%, 84.8%) respectively.

While those who do not value imagination religion was the most important and this differs statistically than those who value imagination (99.7%, 98.8% p = 0.04)

### **3- c- Science and technology: Table (3-c )**

Those who valued imagination differed statistically from those who did not in their belief in the negative effect of science and technology as they believe more that in the long run scientific advances will harm mankind (9.4%, 4.4%, p = 0.01), they disagree that science and technology are making their lives healthier , easier and more comfortable (31.2%, 16.6%, p < 0.001), they do not agree that science and technology make their life change too fast (23.4%, 13.7%, p < 0.001), they do not believe that because of science and technology there will be more opportunities for the next generations, (31.8%, 23.8%, p < 0.001).

**Table (3-c) : The belief about the importance of science and technology in the studied sample by the value of imagination**

Science and technology		Mentioned (%)	Not Mentioned (%)	P value
in the long run scientific advances will harm mankind	agree	9.4	4.4	0.02
	disagree	90.6	95.6	
they disagree that science and technology are making their lives healthier , easier and more comfortable	agree	68.8	83.4	.001
	disagree	31.2	16.6	
science and technology make their life change too fast	agree	76.6	86.3	0.00
	disagree	23.4	13.7	
because of science and technology there will be more opportunities for the next generations	agree	68.2	76.2	0.00
	disagree	31.8	23.8	
We depend too much on science and not enough in faith	agree	40.2	48.0	0.00
	disagree	59.8	52.0	

But those who encouraged imagination statistically differed from those who did not in their disagreement about the dependence much on science and not enough on faith so they do separate more between faith/religion and science (59.8%, 52%,  $p < 0.001$ ).

While both groups belief that the world is better off because of science and technology (no statistical differences) (74.2%, 76.8%, %,  $p = 0.3$ ).

**3-d- The value of freedom and Personality traits such as : Taking risk, trusting others , having free choice in life , appreciating the worth of creating new ideas and doing things on their own , and the worth of the freedom of speech .**

The study highlighted that those who value imagination have chosen the following top priority as aims of the country for the next ten years, more than the group who did not value imagination (statistically significant difference): the importance of progressing toward a society in which ideas count more than money (9.0%, 4.5%,  $p = 0.000$ ); in having the freedom of speech and express oneself (5.0%, 2.3%,  $p = 0.000$ ); and in giving people more say in important government say (15.0%, 10.8%,  $p = 0.012$ , table (3-d-1).

**Table (3-d-1 ): The aims of the country for the next ten years , among the studied sample by the value of imagination**

Characteristics		Mentioned (%)	Not Mentioned (%)	P value
the importance of progressing toward a society in which ideas count more than money	First priority	9.0	4.5	0.001
	Second priority	23.7	15.0	
	Not a priority	67.3	80.5	
having the freedom of speech and express oneself	First priority	5.0	2.3	0.001
	Second priority	20.2	11.5	
	Not a priority	74.8	86.2	
giving people more say in important government say	First priority	15.0	10.8	0.01
	Second priority	27.1	34.0	
	Not a priority	57.9	55.2	

Those who value imagination can take risks and cope more with insecurity as they are less perceiving the importance in living in secure surroundings and to avoiding anything which might be dangerous (11.2%, 7.5%,  $p = 0.02$ ), and they believe more that most people can be trusted more than those who do not value imagination (statistically significant difference, 22.1%, 18.1%,  $p = 0.05$ ), table (3-d-2)

Those who value imagination feel that they have a complete choice and control over their lives (62.3%, 57.2%,  $p = 0.05$ ), and they appreciate more the importance of creating new ideas and doing things through own way (69.09%, 62.1%,  $P < 0.000$ ) more than the group who do not value imagination (statistically significant differences).

While both groups decided the goals and not depend on others (96%, 95%,  $p = 0.5$ ), ( table 3-d-2)



**Table (3-d-2) the values of security, trust, free choice , in the studied sample by the value of imagination**

Characteristics		Mentioned (%)	Not Mentioned (%)	P value
the importance in living in secure surroundings and to avoiding anything which might be dangerous	yes	88.8	92.5	0.02
	No	11.2	7.5	
most people can be trusted	Most people can be trusted	22.1	18.1	0.05
	People should be careful	77.9	81.9	
Space of free choice in life and control over it	No choice	37.7	42.8	0.05
	Free choice	62.3	57.2	
Importance of Creating new ideas, and doing things through own way	yes	69.9	62.1	0.003
	No	30.1	37.9	
Goals decided by them than a seek to be oneself rather than following others	yes	96.0	95.6	0.5
	No	4.5	4.4	

**3-e - Membership in voluntary organizations, table ( 3-e):**

Participants were asked about whether they are active or inactive or not members in different types of organization.

Concerning the following organizations: Church or religious organization, as well as Art, music or educational organization, Labor Union, Political party, Environmental organization, Humanitarian or charitable organization, and Consumer organization: most respondents are not members and there is no statically significant difference between those who value imagination and those who do not.

While organizations such as: Sport or recreational organization, and Professional association: Although most are not members but there is a statistical difference between those who value imagination and those who do not either in being members , either active and inactive members (8.4%, 4.8%, p 0.001), and 14.6%, 10.4%, p = 0.02) respectively, table (3-e).

**Table (3-e) membership in different organization among studied sample by the value of imagination**

Membership in		Mentioned (%)	not Mentioned (%)	P value
religious organization	yes	2.2	1.4	0.2
	no	97.8	98.6	
Art, music or educational organization	yes	1.9	1.4	0.3
	no	98.1	98.6	
Labor Union	yes	1.6	1.1	0.3
	no	98.4	98.9	
Political party	yes	5.3	4.1	0.2
	no	94.7	95.9	
Environmental organization	yes	1.2	1.1	0.5
	no	98.8	98.9	

Membership in		Mentioned (%)	not Mentioned (%)	P value
Humanitarian or charitable organization	yes	2.8	2.4	0.4
	no	97.2	97.6	
Consumer organization	yes	1.2	1.0	0.4
	no	98.8	99.0	
Sport or recreational organization	yes	8.4	4.8	0.00
	no	91.6	95.2	
Professional association	yes	14.6	10.4	0.02
	no	85.4	89.6	

### **3-f - Interest in politics And forms of political actions : Table (3-f)**

There is a statistical significance difference between both groups in their interest in politics, Questioning their forms of political action which ranged from actual participation, willingness and never will do, revealed that there is a statistical significance difference in their actual participation and in their willingness to sign a petition (27.7%, 20.6%,  $p < 0.05$ ) and to attend peaceful demonstration (13.1%, 8.2%,  $p = 0.001$ ). Also there is a weak statistical difference in their willingness in joining a boycotts more than those who do not value imagination (11.8%, 8.4%,  $p = 0.03$ ), table (3-f)

**Table (3-f) : the interest in politics and Joining a political action by the value of imagination**

Joining political action		Mentioned (%)	Not Mentioned (%)	P value
Interest in politics	yes	41.4	35.7	0.03
	no	58.6	64.3	
willingness to sign a petition	yes	27.7	20.6	0.003
	no	72.3	79.4	
attend peaceful demonstration	yes	13.1	8.2	0.003
	no	86.9	91.8	
willingness in joining a boycotts	yes	11.8	8.4	0.03
	no	88.2	91.6	

### Discussion

Scientifically speaking there is no doubt about the importance of imagination in child's life, either intellectually or emotionally. Imagination can be encouraged by the quality of time spent by parents with their children for reading and playing, by the time given to children to play specially by using imaginative plays, and the space given to children to day dream. Also it is a value which can be fostered at schools through storytelling, role plays and drama classes.

In a study conducted by the IDSC it is noted that in a sample consisted of 3030 respondents, 2709 (89.4%) did not value imagination as a quality that children can be encouraged to learn at home, and only 321 (10.6%) of people did, and Egypt ranked at

the lowest rank of countries whom they encouraged imagination (ranking the country number 54 out of 57 countries).

A finding which necessitates to explore some characteristics of those who selected imagination such as their socio demographical characteristics as well as some of their personal characteristics such as their personality traits.

This study revealed that there are some differences in the socio-demographic characteristics of those who encouraged imagination namely marital status, education, and the type of the performed task done at work (creative rather than cognitive).

This study also revealed that those who valued imagination have an inquisitive personality as they seek to know the world's as well as the local news through different sources namely books, daily news papers, printed magazine, and the net.

Also they are more in use of the computers more than those who do not value imagination (statistically significant differences).

They value ideas more than money, they value the freedom of speech, and self expression, they can cope with insecurity and, can take risks and they trust people more than the group who didn't value imagination

They possess a more independent personality as they decide their goals in life rather than following others, and they believe that they have a complete choice and control over their lives, they value the importance of creating new ideas and doing things through own way. They are willing to participate in, or even actually did participate in signing a petition, attending a peaceful and in joining boycotts.

They value more the importance of politics and leisure time. And they are members, either active or inactive, in sports and recreational organizations, and in professional organizations.

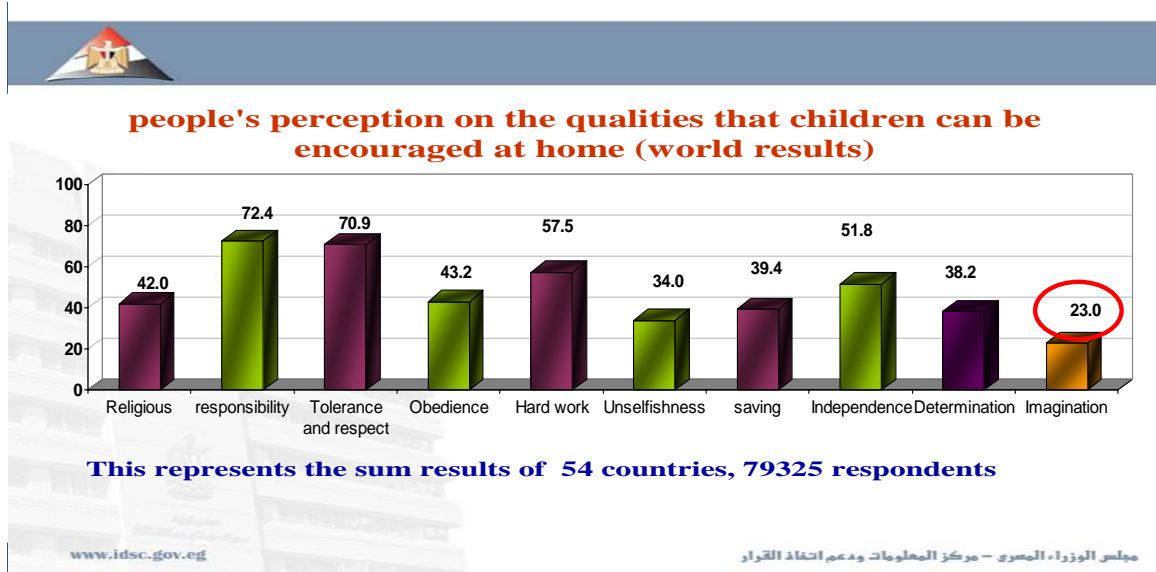
Surprisingly enough they perceived the dark side of science and technology more than those who did not value imagination, but they were more reliant on science than on faith, a finding which is difficult to interpret but can be explored more deeply by in depth interviews.

#### Conclusion and recommendations

A- Special points for discussion were suggested during the presentation , to the colloquium participants , by the authors, such as :

- What is the situation ( of imagination ) in other countries in the world ?
- Are there any relationship between imagination and the scientific mind ?
- Is imagination important or in the contrary reality is more appreciated?
- Are there any other known personality traits for those who appreciated imagination ?
- How imagination can be encouraged ?

For the first inquiry the situation for imagination for other countries is presented in the following fig



**B- Recommendations as suggested by a group of participants based on a brainstorming meeting during the colloquium :**

1. The role of the Family is crucial in the process of developing child imagination.
2. Qualitative research is needed in studying imagination to address family and children perception of imagination.
3. The concept of imagination need to be defined in a scientific way.
4. People need to know the importance of imagination, and how it can be useful for them.
5. Education system need to be developed to stimulate the inside treasure of imagination of every child. Because children curiosity need to be fed.
6. Using T V and computers need to be organized in a way that shouldn't affect imagination.
7. People perception of imagination need to be developed in order not to see imagination as abnormal quality.
8. Restoring of story telling to children by grandparents and parents.