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The Hidden Adult in *Ataa*:

Adult Authority, Serial Pedagogy, and the
Implied Child Reader in a Syrian
Children's Magazine

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Abstract

This thesis examines *Ataa*, a contemporary Syrian children's magazine produced by *ATAA Humanitarian Relief Association*, through six consecutive issues published between June 2024 and September 2025. It asks how the magazine stages adult authority, constructs an implied child reader, normalises an ideal child, justifies norms, and offers frames of belonging around the politically significant period of 8 December 2024. Rather than treating *Ataa* as a set of isolated stories or as a direct before/after case, the thesis reads it as a serial cultural form. The analysis focuses on recurring rubrics: the *Editor's Letter*, *Nu'san Adventures*, *Ataa Diary*, *Du'aa Adventures*, and the *Activities pages*.

Using a qualitative, text-first, rubric-based design with bounded visual support, the thesis draws mainly on Nodelman and Rose to analyse adult mediation and constructed readership. Anderson, Hall, and van Leeuwen are used more narrowly to support the analysis of belonging, naturalisation, and legitimation. The thesis argues that *Ataa* works through a distributed serial pedagogy. Adult guidance is divided across recurring rubrics: editorial framing, comic correction, peer-world modelling, relational care, and participatory self-governance. The implied child is therefore layered rather than uniform: educable, relational, morally improvable, and gradually attached to wider civic and national responsibility. The later issues widen the magazine's horizon toward freedom, responsibility, homeland, and rebuilding, while retaining the durable rubric structure. The thesis therefore proposes a rubric-based serial approach for analysing how children's magazines organise guidance, value formation, and belonging over time.

Keywords: Children's magazines; adult authority; implied child reader; serial pedagogy; *Ataa*; Syrian children's publishing

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background and Topic Entry

Since 2011, war, displacement, and institutional breakdown in Syria have reshaped children's everyday lives, including schooling, family life, and access to cultural and educational resources. In that setting, children's magazines may appear small and ordinary. They offer stories, comics, puzzles, facts, and activities, and they often speak in a friendly and encouraging tone. Yet they are also adult-made cultural forms. They are written, edited, and circulated under adult control, and they help shape what children are invited to know, value, practise, and avoid. For that reason, they are not only entertainment. They are also part of how childhood is imagined and how guidance becomes routine.

This thesis examines *Ataa*, a children's magazine produced by *ATAA Humanitarian Relief Association*. The association presents *Ataa* as an educational, cultural, and informative periodical for children, published quarterly since 2015 (Ataa Relief, 2024, pp. 90–91). This makes the magazine useful for studying how adult authority is carried not only through direct instruction, but also through the language of education, development, conduct, and future preparation. It also places the magazine at the intersection of care, pedagogy, and cultural formation.

Children's magazines are important to study as magazines, not only as collections of separate messages or themes. Their meaning develops through repetition and return. The same kinds of address, correction, praise, explanation, and invitation can appear again across recurring rubrics until they begin to feel normal and self-evident. Periodical scholarship therefore treats children's magazines as serial forms in which "content and form coalesce to define an ideal child reader" (Moruzi et al., 2024, p. 4). In this thesis, that point is central. The question is not only what *Ataa* says, but how its recurring rubrics organise guidance over time.

1.2. Case Selection and Analytical Value

Ataa is selected not simply because it is a Syrian children's magazine, but because it offers a strong case for analysing how a children's magazine can work as a serial pedagogic form. It has a stable recurring structure, with rubrics and routine genres that return from issue to issue. This makes it possible to trace how guidance is distributed across the publication rather than carried by one single adult voice, one isolated story, or one explicit lesson. In this sense, *Ataa* can be understood as a form of distributed serial pedagogy: its recurring rubrics organise different but connected forms of guidance across time. This does not mean that every rubric does the same work, or that the magazine simply repeats one message. Rather, the value of the case lies in how this repeated structure allows adult authority, child-reader construction, value formation, and belonging to be coordinated across the issue run. Read in this way, the magazine becomes more than a Syrian case study or a container of child-related themes. It becomes a serial arrangement through which guidance is made familiar and ordinary through repetition.

The choice of *Ataa* is also shaped by the wider Syrian children's magazine field after 2011. Children's print initiatives continued to appear during the conflict, but the field has been unstable and many titles struggled to survive. Enab Baladi notes both the emergence of children's magazines after 2011 and the difficulty many of them faced in continuing over time (Enab Baladi, 2019). In that context, *Ataa* offers unusual analytical value. It is accessible through a stable archive, presents itself clearly as a recurring children's periodical, and provides a consecutive issue run that can be analysed closely.

The selected corpus consists of *issues 35–40*, published between June 2024 and September 2025. This run matters because it spans the fall of the *Assad* regime on 8 December 2024, when rebel forces seized Damascus and toppled *Bashar al-Assad's* regime (Wedeen, 2025, p. 50). This gives the corpus a clear historical setting. At the same time, this thesis does not treat that date as the basis for a rigid before/after design. Instead of assuming rupture in advance, it asks how a stable magazine form remains continuous, adapts, or broadens in limited ways across a politically significant period. The case is therefore useful not because it offers a

clean break, but because it allows the thesis to examine how a recurring magazine structure can register changing collective emphases while remaining recognisably the same serial form.

1.3. Research Problem and Gap

Adult authority in children's magazines is not carried only through direct instruction. It can also work through explanation, encouragement, correction, modelling, repetition, and the routine organisation of rubrics within and across issues. This matters because magazines do not guide through one genre alone. Editorials, stories, comics, and activities can each make certain forms of conduct appear legitimate, desirable, or worth following, and they can do so repeatedly across time. A children's magazine is therefore not only a source of themes. It is also a form through which guidance can become ordinary.

Existing scholarship offers strong ways of thinking about adult-child asymmetry, implied readership, and the ideological work of children's culture. However, two gaps are especially important here. First, adult authority is often discussed in broad terms, while fewer studies trace how it is performed in one serial corpus through observable practices such as forms of address, evaluation, justification, and repeated closure. Second, research on children's periodicals has often focused on institutions, titles, or historical development rather than on how recurring rubrics work together to normalise an ideal child over time (Latham and Scholes, 2006, pp. 517–518; Beetham, 1989, pp. 96–97).

These gaps become sharper in Arabic and Syrian contexts. Research on Arabic children's publishing highlights the importance of didactic purpose, translation, and publishing conditions in shaping what children's texts are expected to do (Dünges, 2011, pp. 172–177; Mdallel, 2003, pp. 298–305). Work on Syrian children's magazines after 2011 also points to a field shaped by new initiatives, unstable continuity, and difficulties of survival (Enab Baladi, 2019). Yet the relevant gap is not only that Syrian children's magazines remain under-studied. It is also that there is still limited work connecting these contextual insights to a close serial analysis of how recurring rubrics coordinate adult authority, child

construction, legitimation, and belonging within one contemporary Syrian children's magazine. The gap is therefore also methodological: existing work offers useful concepts for analysing children's magazines, but gives fewer models for following how recurring rubrics coordinate adult authority, child construction, legitimation, and belonging across a consecutive issue run.

The research problem of this thesis is therefore how to understand adult authority as an everyday practice inside a children's magazine that presents itself through education and care, and how that practice helps construct an implied child reader and normalise an ideal child. In this study, authority, guidance, child construction, legitimation, and belonging are treated as linked dimensions of the same broader problem: how a serial children's magazine organises guidance through recurring rubrics and makes particular values and collective attachments appear legitimate, desirable, and familiar.

1.4. Aim and Research Questions

This thesis aims to analyse how *Ataa*, as a serial children's magazine, organises adult guidance across recurring rubrics and how this process constructs an implied child reader, normalises an ideal child, and attaches the child to particular values and forms of belonging across *issues 35–40* around December 2024. The ideal child is treated here as a textual position constructed through address, evaluation, instruction, and justification, rather than as a claim about what real children think or learn (Rose, 1994, p. 10; Nodelman, 2008, p. 154).

This thesis is guided by the following research questions:

Main research question: How does *Ataa* stage adult authority, construct an implied child reader, and normalise an ideal child across issues 35–40 around December 2024?

Sub-question 1: How is adult authority carried, and through what recurring guidance practices does it guide the child reader?

Sub-question 2: What kind of child is imagined, and what traits or qualities are presented as admired, proper, or expected?

Sub-question 3: How are guidance and norms justified as right, valuable, or necessary?

Sub-question 4: What collective frames of belonging are offered to the child reader?

1.5. Relevance and Contribution

This thesis matters because it examines how guidance, values, and belonging are organised through a familiar cultural form directed at children. Rather than treating a children's magazine as a simple reflection of society, the study approaches it as one of the everyday cultural forms through which ideas about proper conduct, responsibility, and attachment are presented, repeated, and made to feel ordinary. In this way, the thesis shows that norms are shaped not only through formal institutions, state discourse, or explicitly political programmes, but also through routine cultural forms aimed at children.

The study also matters for Middle East studies. Childhood is one of the arenas through which societies reproduce moral order, gendered expectations, responsibility, and collective attachment. For that reason, children's magazines offer a useful site for examining how shared social expectations are carried in familiar, child-directed language. A children's magazine does not need to function as explicit political doctrine in order to make certain forms of conduct, values, and belonging appear ordinary, desirable, and appropriate.

The contribution of the thesis is both empirical and analytical. Empirically, it offers a close reading of a contemporary Syrian children's magazine across a politically significant period. Analytically, it proposes a rubric-based serial approach for analysing how children's magazines organise guidance, value formation, and belonging over time. It brings together work on adult authority in children's literature, periodical studies of serial form, and scholarship on Arabic children's publishing. Its broader contribution is therefore not only to add another Syrian case, but to show how recurring rubrics can distribute guidance, shape child positions unevenly, and connect values to justificatory language and belonging. The Syrian case gives the argument historical force, but the approach

also reaches beyond Syria. Without this serial and rubric-based reading, these patterns would appear mainly as separate values or themes; the thesis instead shows how the magazine form organises them and makes them familiar over time.

1.6. Case, Delimitations, and Analytical Scope

The empirical material consists of six consecutive issues of *Ataa*, issues 35–40. The thesis treats the magazine as a serial periodical rather than as a set of isolated texts. The analysis is organised horizontally across recurring rubrics, since these rubrics are the main means through which the magazine distributes guidance over time. The core analytical focus therefore falls on the *Editor's Letter*, *Nu'san Adventures*, *Ataa Diary*, *Du'aa Adventures*, and the *Activities* pages, while other pages are used more selectively for context, pattern checking, and limited visual support.

The analytical scope of the study is deliberately limited. This thesis examines textual constructions of an implied reader in the magazine; it does not measure reception or effects. It also avoids claiming that the fall of the *Assad* regime directly caused specific changes in the magazine. Instead, the politically significant period around 8 December 2024 is treated as a contextual test of how a durable serial form can remain continuous, absorb pressure, or broaden in limited ways, not as a pre-decided break. The study therefore remains open to continuity, limited broadening, uneven adjustment, or minimal change, and does not seek to reconstruct editorial intention or production causality except where the corpus itself provides clear support.

Because the corpus is in Arabic while the thesis is written in English, translation is treated as part of the research process. Coding is conducted on the Arabic text, and excerpts are translated for the analysis and write-up. Where evaluative, directive, or justificatory phrasing matters to the argument, interpretation remains closely anchored in the Arabic wording. The study is also text-first: visuals are included only where they clearly reinforce, soften, or slightly shift the same guidance carried in the text.

1.7. Disposition

Chapter 2 reviews previous research on children's magazines, adult authority, implied readership, belonging, value formation, and Arabic and Syrian children's publishing. Chapter 3 presents the theoretical framework used in the thesis. Chapter 4 explains the methodological design, including corpus selection, coding, translation, and the bounded use of visuals.

Chapter 5 presents the findings on authority and guidance, the construction of the child reader and the ideal child, legitimation, and collective belonging across the corpus. Chapter 6 discusses these findings in relation to the theoretical framework and develops the thesis's broader argument about *Ataa's* recurring rubric structure. Chapter 7 answers the research questions directly, summarises the main contribution of the study, and reflects briefly on its limitations and directions for future research.

2. Previous Research

This chapter reviews the scholarship most relevant to the thesis and uses it to clarify both the foundations and the limits of the existing field. It first considers work on children's magazines as serial cultural forms, then turns to scholarship on adult authority and implied readership, belonging and collective identity, and value formation in child-directed texts. It then narrows the discussion to Arabic and Syrian children's publishing before identifying the gap to which this thesis responds. Taken together, these bodies of work make clear that seriality, guidance, reader construction, and belonging are all important to the study of children's magazines. At the same time, they have often been handled separately, which leaves room for a closer account of how they operate together in one contemporary Syrian magazine across a consecutive issue run.

2.1. Children's Magazines as Serial Cultural Forms

Children's magazines are best understood as structured cultural forms rather than as containers of separate stories, puzzles, letters, and pictures. Latham and Scholes argue that scholars have too often approached magazines as containers of discrete information instead of as autonomous objects of study, and they call for methods that attend to the periodical as a coherent print object in its own right (Latham and Scholes, 2006, pp. 517–518). Beetham similarly stresses that the periodical is defined by its relationship to time: each issue is linked to past and future numbers, making the form characteristically self-referring, open-ended, and resistant to closure (Beetham, 1989, pp. 96–98). For children's magazines, this matters because meaning and reader positioning are built cumulatively across recurring sections, mixed formats, and repeated forms of address, not only within single items.

Work on children's periodicals develops this point further by showing how seriality operates through repetition, variation, and the construction of an implied

child reader. In their introduction to *The Edinburgh History of Children's Periodicals*, Moruzi, Rodgers and Smith argue that in children's periodicals "content and form coalesce to define an ideal child reader" (Moruzi et al., 2024, p. 4). They also show that these magazines are shaped by a continuing tension between instruction and entertainment, while their serial form depends on recurring features and recognisable departments across issues (Moruzi et al., 2024, pp. 2–4, 10–11). Rea's study of the Argentine weekly *Billiken* similarly shows how one magazine could combine educational content, visual appeal, and popular literature while constructing children both as future citizens and as modern consumers (Rea, 2018, pp. 282, 285–286). A serial perspective therefore draws attention to repetition, variation, and continuity, since the child reader is constructed across recurring forms rather than within one item alone.

Studies of children's magazines also stress their mixed character. Peterson's discussion of Arabic children's magazines shows that titles such as *Majid* and *Alaa Eldin* combine comics, letters, games, puzzles, reader artwork or photographs, competitions, and technology- or information-oriented features within a single recurring magazine format (Peterson, 2005, pp. 178–179, 185–188). Buckingham and Scanlon make a related point in their study of British "edutainment" magazines for young children. These magazines bring together stories, colouring, games, make-and-do activities, competitions, and advertisements, while also surrounding these playful formats with parent-directed pedagogic guidance that redefines them as opportunities for skill development (Buckingham and Scanlon, 2001, pp. 289–291). Atakan's analysis of Ottoman wartime children's magazines likewise shows that political and pedagogic work is carried across games, illustrations, literary texts, and advertisements rather than confined to one textual mode (Atakan, 2015, pp. 352–355). Together, these studies suggest that children's magazines organise guidance through routine, mixed genres, and patterned coexistence, not only through explicit instruction.

Taken together, this scholarship makes a strong case for treating children's magazines as serial and pedagogic forms. It clarifies why recurring departments, patterned coexistence, and issue-to-issue continuity matter analytically. What it

shows less clearly, however, is how one magazine organises these features across a consecutive run in ways that connect guidance, belonging, and reader position.

2.2. Adult Authority and Implied Readership in Children's Texts

A major strand of scholarship on children's literature argues that writing for children is shaped by adult mediation and assumptions about childhood. Within this strand, Nodelman and Rose are especially influential. Nodelman argues that children's literature depends on adult ideas about childhood and is often organised around the assumption that children should be taught what they ought to know (Nodelman, 2008, pp. 157–158), while Rose questions the idea that the child is simply “there” as a stable addressee outside the text (Rose, 1994, pp. 1–2). Their importance for later scholarship lies largely in making adult mediation and the textual construction of childhood unavoidable questions for the field.

Related scholarship on voice, address, and readership develops these concerns in more text-specific ways. Wall argues that writing for children is shaped by a problem of audience: adult writers address child narratees while also negotiating the presence of adult readers, and this tension becomes visible in narrative voice, explanation, and forms of address (Wall, 1991, pp. 19–20). Iser's notion of the implied reader similarly treats readership as a textual position structured by the work itself rather than as a directly knowable audience outside the text (Iser, 1990, p. xii). Taken together, this scholarship shifts attention beyond overt message towards narrative framing, voice, and imagined readership as central issues in the study of child-directed texts.

Other scholarship shows that adult mediation is often built into ordinary and apparently friendly formats rather than presented as direct command. Tinkler's study of magazines for girls in interwar and wartime England shows that editorial framing, repetition, correspondence features, and other routine magazine forms helped construct and manage adolescent girlhood while also offering guidance on how to grow up (Tinkler, 1995, pp. 8–10). Buckingham and Scanlon similarly show how playful magazine routines can be organised through adult pedagogic

expectations, so that games, colouring pages, and make-and-do activities become opportunities for skill development (Buckingham and Scanlon, 2001, pp. 289–291). Although their case concerns adult-facing parenting magazines rather than child-directed magazines, Porter and Tanabe’s analysis of expert advice in Japanese parenting magazines is still suggestive here: they describe *mimamoru* as an approach centred on watching over children, waiting, and intervening at the appropriate moment, so that child autonomy is encouraged while adult supervision remains in place (Porter and Tanabe, 2023, pp. 1241–1243). Together, these studies show that guidance can be exercised through routines of supervision, calibration, and apparently supportive oversight rather than only through overt instruction.

A more direct line of research focuses on the construction of proper childhood itself. Kahya’s discourse analysis of a late Ottoman children’s magazine asks explicitly what kind of ideal child the periodical produces and shows that the magazine constructs an ideal child as devout, virtuous, well-educated, and explicitly tied to Christian, Western, and white identity (Kahya, 2024, pp. 13–14). Faraji’s study of post-revolutionary Iran similarly shows how a children’s magazine sought to produce what he calls “docile revolutionary children”: young readers who were expected to be politically conscious and revolutionary in spirit, yet also ideologically compliant and obedient in practice (Faraji, 2025, pp. 332–334). These studies are especially useful because they move beyond the general claim that children’s texts guide readers and show more directly how magazines can produce normative child models through repeated conduct scripts and evaluative expectations. What remains less clear, however, is how such child models are sustained across recurring departments and consecutive issues, rather than traced through one theme or one ideological setting alone.

2.3. Belonging and Collective Identity in Children’s Magazines

A growing body of scholarship shows that children’s magazines position readers within wider collective formations rather than simply reflecting identities that

already exist. These collectives may be national, regional, religious, ideological, or civic, and magazines help produce them through recurring features, shared symbols, reader participation, and repeated forms of address. Suzuki shows how *Shōnen sekai* linked children's reading and writing practices to national participation and the making of "little citizens", while also differentiating boys' and girls' roles within that national body (Suzuki, 2022, pp. 121–123, 132–133). Yadlin-Segal and Meyers similarly show that early Israeli children's magazines mythologised immigration as return to the homeland and framed belonging through absorption into a hegemonic Jewish-Israeli collectivity (Yadlin-Segal and Meyers, 2014, pp. 160, 164–165). Rea's study of *Billiken* also shows how future citizenship could be built into a magazine form that combined educational, entertaining, and civic functions (Rea, 2018, pp. 281–282). Peterson adds an especially useful Arabic-language comparison, showing how children's magazines could construct a wider Arab regional imagined community through recurring features, shared symbols, correspondence, reader photographs, and forms of participation (Peterson, 2005, pp. 181–182). Across these studies, collective identification emerges as something magazines help produce through familiar recurring forms rather than something they merely mirror.

Other research shows that collective identity can also be organised through geography, danger, and the construction of enemies. Han's comparison of Japanese and colonial Korean children's magazines shows that adventure stories worked through geographical imagination: Korean stories oriented readers towards a Korean centre, while Japanese stories promoted a wider imperial outlook (Han, 2016, pp. 104–106, 116–117). Atakan's study of Ottoman wartime magazines similarly shows how games, illustrations, literary texts, and consumption guidance helped construct a common enemy and mobilise children around patriotism, revenge, and national duty (Atakan, 2015, pp. 352–355). Belonging in children's magazines, however, is not always confined to the nation-state. Peterson shows that Arabic children's magazines could build an Arab regional imagined community through reader photographs, correspondence, pen-pal clubs, and news about readers' lives (Peterson, 2005, pp. 181–182, 187–188). Dalljo's study of *GDR* children's magazines reaches a related conclusion by showing how donation campaigns and solidarity appeals sought to

cultivate anti-imperialist belonging through compassion, emotional education, and repeated participation in practices of solidarity (Dalljo, 2024, pp. 166–171).

At the same time, the literature makes clear that the collectives offered to children are often exclusionary and hierarchical. Noorunnida's analysis of Malayalam children's magazines in India shows how belonging can be constructed through religion and cultural hierarchy. She argues that these publications construct an ideal Hindu nation and citizen by foregrounding hegemonic Hindu masculinity, a glorified Hindu cultural past, and dominant Hindu norms, while representing Muslims as less modern and in need of reform or mediation (Noorunnida, 2024, pp. 70–76). This is an important reminder that belonging in children's magazines is not simply a language of warmth or unity, but can also work through ranking, exclusion, and the production of internal others. What remains less clear, however, is how such collective identities are assembled through ordinary serial routines, recurring sections, and repeated forms of address rather than only through overtly national or ideological themes.

2.4. Value Formation and Everyday Pedagogy

A fourth body of scholarship examines how children's magazines and related child-directed texts present values, roles, and social norms in ways that appear ordinary rather than overtly doctrinal. Across these studies, values are carried not only through explicit moral lessons but also through recurring representation, narrative organisation, and routine pedagogic formats that make certain behaviours appear desirable, natural, or child-appropriate. Stephens's work on children's fiction is especially important because it shows that ideology is often carried not only through explicit themes or morals, but also through assumptions embedded more implicitly in discourse, narrative structure, and representations of social reality (Stephens, 1992, pp. 1–4). This helps explain why values in children's texts are carried not only by overt message but also by routine guidance practices and familiar magazine forms.

One place this is especially visible is in magazines that combine learning with play. Buckingham and Scanlon show how British “edutainment” magazines frame

stories, colouring tasks, puzzles, and make-and-do activities through the language of skill development and educational opportunity, while also positioning parents as responsible for helping children use these materials in the right way (Buckingham and Scanlon, 2001, pp. 289–291). Notes to parents encourage adults to work through the magazine with the child, so that playful activities are reframed as opportunities for developing skills and preparing for later learning; in some cases, magazines are even presented as supporting literacy and numeracy directly (Buckingham and Scanlon, 2001, pp. 295–296). Pedagogy, then, works not only through explicit lessons but through routine formats that present adult priorities as ordinary and benevolent.

A second cluster of studies examines values more directly through content analysis. Yeter and Kurtde Fidan find material related to helpfulness in every issue of the Turkish children's magazines they analyse, showing that this value is presented consistently through both visual and textual examples rather than appearing only occasionally (Yeter and Fidan, 2021, pp. 61–68). Al-Dulaimi and Abu Dayyeh likewise show that the Jordanian magazine *Hatem* cultivates a range of values for child readers and presents them through different editorial and literary forms rather than through a single isolated genre (Al-Dulaimi and Abu Dayyeh, 2017, pp. 97–103). Ebaed's analysis of the Egyptian magazines *Nour* and *Al-Firdous* reaches a similar conclusion by showing that children's periodicals seek to build the child's personality through diverse social, religious, cultural, and moral content distributed across the magazine (Ebaed, 2021, pp. 319–320). Together, these studies suggest that value transmission in magazines is cumulative and infrastructural as much as thematic.

Other work demonstrates that even apparently ordinary child-directed print can naturalise unequal assumptions through routine representation. Analysing *TIME for Kids*, Lay et al. show that women political leaders are visible in the magazine, but that the coverage still carries gendered messages: feminine and communal traits are more likely to be applied to women leaders, while politics continues to appear as a stereotypically masculine field (Lay et al., 2021, pp. 12–18). Noorunnida similarly shows that children's magazines can embed exclusionary values in recurring ideals of citizenship, masculinity, and modernity, presenting

dominant Hindu norms as desirable and ordinary while positioning Muslims as less modern and in need of reform (Noorunnida, 2024, pp. 73–78). Taken together, these studies are useful because they show that value work is carried not only by explicit moral instruction but also by recurring representational habits that make some positions appear normal and desirable. Less developed, however, is how different value registers are coordinated across recurring rubrics within one magazine and stabilised through serial repetition from issue to issue.

2.5. Arabic and Syrian Children's Publishing

A fifth strand of scholarship narrows the discussion from children's magazines in general to Arabic and, more specifically, Syrian children's publishing. This work places child-oriented print culture within a broader field shaped by relatively late emergence, language politics, pedagogical expectations, uneven infrastructure, and debates over what children's reading should do. Ayalon's historical study of leisure reading in the Arab *nahḍah* shows that Arabic reading material produced specifically for children emerged relatively late and remained limited in comparison with better-studied Western contexts (Ayalon, 2021, pp. 372–373, 383–384). Dünge similarly shows that contemporary Arabic children's literature is shaped not only by didactic and moral expectations, but also by illiteracy, censorship, trade barriers, and weak distribution structures (Dünge, 2011, pp. 170–172). Bizri, by contrast, focuses on language and shows that Standard Arabic provides children's publishing with a shared cross-regional medium, even though it is not the language in which most children freely speak and is often kept at a distance from dialect and everyday usage (Bizri, 2015, pp. 74–77). Mdallel likewise shows that Arabic children's publishing has long been marked by morality, didacticism, ideological pressure, and protective translation practices, all of which shape what is written and translated for young readers (Mdallel, 2003, pp. 298–305). Thomure, Kreidieh, and Baroudi add that contemporary Arabic children's literature often combines visually attractive production with strongly disciplinary content, a tension that is especially relevant for magazines, which must attract readers while also guiding them (Thomure et al., 2020, pp. 323–325, 339–340).

Within this broader field, children's magazines and children's journalism emerge as a more specific but still strongly pedagogical branch of publishing. In his study of children's journalism in the Emirati magazine *Majid* and the Saudi magazine *Basem*, Abdulrahman shows that children's journalism in the Arab world constitutes a distinct field with an informational role that also carries educational and developmental functions. At the same time, he argues that this field is constrained by limited market support, weak continuity, and competition from other media (Abdulrahman, 2017, pp. 100–101). Similarly, Ebaed shows that the Egyptian children's magazines *Nour* and *Al-Firdous* function mainly as tools for shaping children's personality, awareness, and identity through simplified and accessible content (Ebaed, 2021, pp. 284–285). Peterson's study of several regional children's magazines, including *Bolbol*, *Majid*, *Alaa Eldin*, and *Al Arabi Alsaghir*, shows more concretely how Arabic children's magazines combine entertainment, regional belonging, modern consumer culture, and moral-political framing within recurring magazine formats (Peterson, 2005, pp. 177–179, 187–191). Taken together, these studies suggest that children's magazines belong to a wider Arabic pedagogical print culture in which information, values, and child formation remain closely connected.

Scholarship that speaks directly to Syrian children's magazines remains much thinner and, in its current form, is still more descriptive than analytically developed. The work that can be traced is valuable because it shows the educational, ethical, social, and national priorities carried by magazines such as *Osama*, but it says much less about how these priorities are organised textually and serially. In a comparative study of *Osama* and *Al-Tali'i*, Muhammad argues that Syrian children's magazines published between 2014 and 2016 concentrated heavily on educational, ethical, social, and national content, with educational material occupying the largest share of the analysed sample (Muhammad, 2017, pp. 88–89). Khaddour, Jurji, and Ismail similarly find that stories in the Syrian magazine *Osama* emphasise intellectual values such as knowledge, reading, ambition, and responsible conduct, suggesting a strongly pedagogical editorial orientation (Khaddour et al., 2012, p. 58). Al-Ashqar likewise shows that stories published in *Osama* between 2019 and 2020 foregrounded positive social behaviour, with cooperation and altruism emerging as dominant during this period

(Al-Ashqar, 2020, p. 134). Taken together, this work suggests that scholarship on Syrian children's magazines remains limited in two related ways: it focuses mainly on content categories, and it concentrates largely on state-linked titles. As a result, Syrian material remains only partially connected to broader scholarship on seriality, adult guidance, implied readership, and rubric structure, while magazines produced after 2011, including NGO-supported titles, remain under-discussed (Enab Baladi, 2019).

2.6. Positioning the Study

Taken together, the scholarship reviewed in this chapter shows that children's magazines are best understood as serial cultural forms in which repetition, mixed genres, recurring departments, and patterned forms of address matter analytically. It also shows that adult mediation, value formation, legitimation, and collective belonging are not secondary background features of child-directed print, but central to how magazines position young readers and make norms appear ordinary, desirable, or appropriate.

What remains underdeveloped, however, is not simply another Syrian case, but a close account of how these dimensions are organised together inside one contemporary magazine. Existing studies often treat seriality, adult mediation, child construction, legitimation, and belonging as separate questions, while Syrian material is more often approached through descriptive content analysis than through close serial reading. As a result, there is still limited understanding of how recurring rubrics divide pedagogic work, how editorial voice, story worlds, and participatory tasks coordinate guidance across time, and how values become attached to reasons and shared worlds of belonging within one serial publication.

This thesis responds to that gap by treating *Ataa* not only as a contemporary Syrian children's magazine, but as a serial pedagogic arrangement. It reads six consecutive quarterly *issues* (35–40), published between June 2024 and September 2025, while remaining historically sensitive to the fall of the *Assad* regime on 8 December 2024 as part of the corpus context rather than as a fixed before/after break. The analysis follows how recurring rubrics coordinate adult

guidance, child-reader construction, legitimation, and belonging across the issue run. Rather than treating these dimensions as separate topics, it examines how editorial voice, story worlds, peer interaction, and participatory tasks divide pedagogic work within one serial form. The positioning is therefore empirical, analytical, and methodological: it studies an under-discussed contemporary Syrian children's magazine, links dimensions that are often separated, and uses a rubric-based serial design to show how children's magazines can organise guidance, value formation, and belonging over time.

3. Theoretical Framework

This chapter sets out the theoretical framework used to analyse how *Ataa* stages adult authority and recurring guidance practices, constructs an implied child reader, normalises an ideal child through admired or proper qualities, justifies guidance as right, valuable, or necessary, and places the child within wider frames of belonging across issues published around December 2024. The framework centres on Nodelman and Rose. Anderson's imagined community and Hall's cultural hegemony are used where the material opens onto wider collective belonging or the naturalisation of values.

This hierarchy is important for the thesis because it keeps the framework close to the text while still allowing wider social meanings to be interpreted when they appear in the material. Nodelman and Rose are used to analyse adult-child textual relations, while Anderson and Hall help interpret broader social meanings when they become important in the material. The result is a framework that stays close to the corpus while still allowing the thesis to connect recurring guidance patterns to questions of norm formation, legitimation, and belonging.

3.1. Nodelman and the Hidden Adult

Nodelman's starting point is not simply that adults sometimes write instructive texts for children, but that children's literature depends on adult ideas about childhood. It exists because adults assume that children need a special body of texts, and because adults decide which texts are suitable, intelligible, and valuable for them, often treating children as less knowledgeable than themselves (Nodelman, 2008, pp. 139–141). Children's literature is also largely produced, selected, circulated, and evaluated by adults, which gives it a built-in asymmetry between adult knowledge and child address (Nodelman, 2008, pp. 207–208). This asymmetry is central to Nodelman's argument because it makes children's literature an adult-shaped field even when it appears to centre the child.

This becomes clearer in Nodelman's notion of the hidden adult. His point is that adult values remain embedded in texts that seem child-centred or benevolent. In his discussion of literature written "for the good of children," he argues that children's literature is shaped by a double assumption: children should be taught what they ought to know and protected from what they ought not to know (Nodelman, 2008, pp. 157–158). He also notes that dislike of didacticism usually means dislike of the obviously didactic, not rejection of guidance itself. Ideally, the text teaches without appearing to do so (Nodelman, 2008, p. 158). Nodelman is therefore useful not because he reduces children's texts to open instruction, but because he helps make less visible forms of guidance easier to see.

His earlier essay "The Other" sharpens this argument by moving from pedagogy to representation. Drawing on Said, Nodelman suggests that child-centred knowledge can function as an adult institution for dealing with childhood by making statements about it, authorising views of it, describing it, teaching it, and ruling over it (Nodelman, 1992, p. 29). His point is not that childhood and colonial relations are identical. Rather, adults repeatedly position childhood as something to be known, interpreted, and spoken for from the outside. The more fully adulthood claims to know childhood, the more childhood is reproduced as a partly silent and partly unknowable other that invites further adult definition and correction (Nodelman, 1992, pp. 31–32).

In this thesis, Nodelman is used to make adult mediation visible in *Ataa* without reducing it to direct command. His work helps show how authority may be carried not only through overt instruction, but also through explanation, role modelling, praise, warning, reassurance, and care. For that reason, Nodelman provides the main starting point for analysing how a child-directed magazine can speak from a position of greater knowledge and guidance even when its tone appears warm, playful, or encouraging.

3.2. Rose and the Constructed Child Reader

If Nodelman makes adult mediation visible, Rose gives the clearest reason not to treat the child reader as a transparent presence outside the text. She begins from

the assumption built into children's fiction that there is a child simply there to be addressed, and that speaking to that child is straightforward (Rose, 1994, pp. 1–2). For Rose, however, the child presented by children's fiction is not recovered from outside the book. The text builds an image of the child in order to secure the child outside the book, the child who does not come so easily within adult grasp (Rose, 1994, p. 2). Rose is central here because she keeps the thesis at the level of textual construction rather than empirical reception.

Applied to *Ataa*, this means that the magazine is not read here as evidence of what Syrian children in general thought or felt. Rather, the analysis asks what kind of child the text imagines, addresses, reassures, instructs, and guides. Once the child reader is approached in this way, the focus shifts to forms of address, assumed needs, explanatory framing, invitations to identify, and the movement between warmth and instruction. Rose is valuable here because she keeps the analysis at the level of the child constructed in the text rather than the child outside it.

3.3. Imagined Community as a Supportive Lens

Anderson's concept of imagined community is used here in a narrower way. His central argument is that a nation is imagined because members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, yet still imagine themselves as part of the same wider communion (Anderson, 2006a, pp. 6–7). For this thesis, the most useful part of his argument is that print and shared language help make wider collectivities imaginable beyond immediate face-to-face settings (Anderson, 2006b, pp. 24–26). This helps show how *Ataa* can address the child not only as an individual reader but also as part of a wider religious, national, or homeland-centred “we”.

Peterson provides a closer bridge to Arabic children's magazines. Writing about magazines circulated in Egypt, he describes an Arab regional imagined community shaped in part by the circulation of magazines across the Arabic-reading world (Peterson, 2005, p. 181). He also notes that magazines are especially useful here because they bring different genres and texts together into a single hybrid form through which wider identities can be imagined (Peterson,

2005, p. 182). In this thesis, Anderson is most useful when the material widens from the individual child to a larger collective frame and addresses the reader as part of a broader “we”.

3.4. Cultural Hegemony as a Supportive Lens

Cultural hegemony is used here to explain how values and responsibilities can come to appear ordinary, sensible, and taken for granted rather than openly imposed. In Hall’s Gramscian account, hegemony does not rest on coercion alone but works through the winning of consent and across cultural, moral, ethical, and intellectual life (Hall, 1986, pp. 16–17). He also stresses that common sense forms the taken-for-granted ground on which conceptions of the world become historically effective in practical life (Hall, 1986, p. 21). For this thesis, the point is that a value becomes powerful not only when it is argued directly, but also when it starts to look like the obvious way to think, feel, or act.

Read together with Nodelman, Hall helps explain how guidance presented as care, benefit, or duty can come to seem natural and reasonable rather than imposed. Van Leeuwen helps at a more specific level by clarifying the question of legitimation. He describes legitimation as the discursive answer to why a practice should be followed, and distinguishes recurring forms such as authorization, moral evaluation, rationalization, and mythopoesis (Van Leeuwen, 2007, pp. 91–93). In this thesis, that insight helps specify which recurring registers present guidance as right, valuable, or necessary, for example religious, protective, educational, or collective ones. Hall is therefore more useful for understanding how norms come to feel ordinary, while Van Leeuwen helps identify the more specific justificatory work performed in the text.

3.5. Using the Framework in this Thesis

This thesis uses Nodelman and Rose selectively and instrumentally. It does not aim to reconstruct the full theoretical debate on children’s literature, childhood, or adult power. Nodelman and Rose also sit within a wider debate about what constitutes children’s literature and how adult power shapes that category, but this

thesis uses them mainly for their analytical value in reading adult mediation and constructed readership. More specifically, their work makes two analytical problems visible in *Ataa*: first, how adult mediation remains present even when guidance appears friendly, playful, or indirect; and second, how the child reader is constructed as a textual position rather than accessed as an empirical child. This selective use fits the thesis's text-first design, because the analysis follows how authority and child readership are organised through recurring rubrics rather than through claims about real children's reception.

Taken together, the framework directs the analysis through four linked questions. First, how is adult authority carried, and through what recurring guidance practices does it guide the child reader? Second, what kind of child is imagined in the text, and what traits or qualities are presented as admired, proper, or expected? Third, how are guidance and norms justified as right, valuable, or necessary? Fourth, what collective frames of belonging are offered to the child reader? These questions connect the framework to the analysis of the selected issues and keep the study attentive to continuity as well as to possible change across the corpus.

Within this framework, Nodelman provides the main language for tracing adult authority and recurring guidance moves across the magazine's recurring rubric structure: who explains, evaluates, reassures, warns, corrects, models, or defines what the child should know and value. Rose keeps the analysis focused on the child constructed in the text, but here that child is approached not only within isolated passages. It is traced across a recurring serial structure in which different rubrics stabilise adult mediation while also differentiating child address inside the same publication.

Anderson becomes relevant when the magazine widens from the individual child to a broader collective "we". Hall, and more narrowly van Leeuwen, help identify how particular values come to appear ordinary and how guidance is justified. Used together, these concepts make it possible to analyse how *Ataa* stages authority, constructs an implied child reader, normalises an ideal child, and places those positions within broader collective frames through recurring rubrics rather than through isolated texts alone.

3.6. Strengths and Limits of the Framework

The main strength of this framework is that it keeps the analysis close to what the magazine actually does in the text. Nodelman and Rose provide the main language for adult authority, guidance, and constructed readership, while Anderson, Hall, and van Leeuwen help interpret wider belonging and justificatory work when the material opens onto them. This makes the framework coherent and manageable for a serial, text-centred study.

Its limits follow from the same choices. The framework cannot establish authorial intention, institutional strategy, or reception among real readers. It also draws mainly on Anglophone children's literature scholarship, often developed in relation to books, so not every concept transfers perfectly to a contemporary Syrian children's magazine. The thesis therefore keeps its claims closely tied to repeated textual evidence and does not claim more than the selected issues make visible. Chapter 4 explains how this framework is applied in the analysis.

4. Methods

This chapter explains how the study was designed and how the analysis was carried out. It first presents the research design and methodological approach, then defines the corpus and the sampling logic, and finally explains the coding process, translation choices, bounded use of visual material, positionality, and the study's main limitations. The aim is to show clearly how the material was analysed and what kinds of claims the study can support.

4.1. Research Design and Methodological Approach

This thesis uses a document-based qualitative content analysis of *Ataa*, treated as a serial children's magazine rather than as a loose collection of isolated texts. The study follows an interpretive, text-centred qualitative approach. It is concerned with how meaning is organised in the published material rather than with measuring reception or reconstructing authorial intention. The design is text-first. Visual material is considered only in a bounded way and only when image and text clearly work together within the sampled rubrics. This makes the method suitable for examining how the magazine constructs an implied child reader through recurring forms of address, guidance, evaluation, and justification.

The study combines document analysis with qualitative content analysis. Bowen defines document analysis as a systematic procedure for reviewing and interpreting documents in order to generate meaning and understanding, and he stresses that documents should be approached as socially produced records rather than neutral containers of information (Bowen, 2009, pp. 29–30). That fits this thesis because the material consists of published magazine issues and the purpose is to analyse what these documents do on the page. Qualitative content analysis is suitable here because the study asks what kinds of recurring textual practices appear in the corpus and how they are organised across issues and rubrics. Schreier notes that qualitative content analysis is useful when the researcher needs

a systematic way of working through rich material and classifying it with the help of a coding frame (Schreier, 2012a, pp. 1–7). That is especially important in this thesis because the corpus is repetitive, multi-genre, and serial.

This combination of document analysis and qualitative content analysis fits *Ataa* well because the magazine works through recurring rubrics, mixed genres, and repeated routines of guidance across a serial run. The method therefore needs to capture both recurrence and variation, since the thesis treats *Ataa* as a serial pedagogic form in which recurring rubrics organise adult guidance, child construction, legitimisation, and belonging across the issue run.

4.2. Corpus Selection and Analytical Scope

Ataa was selected as the case because it is a contemporary Syrian children's magazine with a stable serial form rather than a one-off publication. In *Ataa*'s own institutional description, the magazine is presented as a quarterly publication that combines educational, cultural, and entertaining content for children (Ataa Relief, 2024, pp. 90–91). That combination makes it a useful case for studying how adult guidance is organised through recurring magazine formats. It also matters that *Ataa* is not approached here as an exceptional text but as a periodical whose meaning develops through repetition across issues.

The corpus consists of six PDF issues of *Ataa* (issues 35–40), accessed through *Ataa*'s official website (Ataa Magazine, n.d.). These published issues are treated as the primary documents of analysis. Together, they form a consecutive quarterly run published between June 2024 and September 2025. The six issues were selected because they cluster around the politically significant period surrounding the fall of the *Assad* regime on 8 December 2024, while still allowing the corpus to be read as a consecutive serial run rather than as a fixed before/after design. This preserves serial continuity and avoids selecting only unusually dramatic or unusually representative numbers. It also makes it possible to follow how recurring editorial and pedagogical routines continue, are adjusted, or are reworked across the run. This matters in periodical analysis because a single issue is not fully self-contained; each number belongs to a wider sequence and gains

meaning through repetition, continuation, and return across time (Beetham, 1989, pp. 97–98; Moruzi et al., 2024, pp. 10–11).

The thesis remains historically sensitive to this political turning point, but the corpus is read as one continuous, time-sensitive run rather than as a hard before/after comparison. This keeps the analysis open to continuity, selective shifts, uneven change, or limited change across the issues, while keeping the claims tied to what the published material makes visible.

4.3. Rubric Sampling and Unit of Analysis

Because each issue of *Ataa* is long and multi-genre, analysing every page in equal depth would have produced a broad but less comparable dataset. The study therefore uses rubric sampling, taking the magazine's repeated rubric structure as the basis for selection. This is especially appropriate here because the thesis treats *Ataa* as a serial pedagogic magazine form whose guidance is distributed across recurring rubrics rather than concentrated in one voice or one page type. Rather than sampling isolated passages by topic, it follows recurring rubrics that return across the issue run and stage guidance in recognisably different formats. Other pages were still read for contextual orientation, pattern checking, and possible negative cases, but systematic coding focused only on the final sampled rubrics. Rubric sampling is therefore not only a practical delimitation, but also an analytical choice: it allows the thesis to follow how guidance is distributed across recurring rubrics over time.

The sampling process had three steps. First, the rubrics were mapped across the six issues to identify which ones were repeated most consistently. Second, those recurring rubrics were assessed for their relevance to the research questions. Third, the full content of the selected rubrics was included for systematic coding across the corpus. Some recurring elements, such as puzzles, were not included in the final sample because they offered limited comparable material for tracing adult authority, guidance, legitimation, and implied-reader construction across issues.

The core dataset therefore consists of five recurring rubrics: the *Editor's Letter*, *Nu'san Adventures*, *Ataa Diary*, *Du'aa Adventures*, and the *Activities* pages. These rubric titles are translated or transliterated in the thesis for readability, while coding remained anchored in the Arabic source pages. These rubrics were selected because they recur across the six issues and, taken together, capture different recurrent routes through which adult guidance is staged and distributed. The *Editor's Letter* provides direct address and overt guidance. The narrative and comic rubrics model conduct through plot, dialogue, and character. The *Activities* pages are especially important because they often turn guidance into participation, self-monitoring, reflection, or commitment. Appendix B summarises this final sample across issues 35–40.

This sampling strategy follows the serial logic of the periodical form. Children's magazines work through repetition, variation, and routine across recurring departments and across the issue run (Moruzi et al., 2024, pp. 10–11). Reading the same kind of page across several issues therefore provides a firmer basis for comparison than selecting one-off pages that may reflect only a temporary topic. Beetham similarly argues that the periodical cannot be reduced to a single self-contained number because each issue remains open to continuation within a wider serial sequence (Beetham, 1989, pp. 97–98).

Within this design, the unit of analysis is the full sampled rubric item in a given issue, such as one *Editor's Letter*, one instalment of a comic, or one set of *Activities* pages. The unit of coding, however, is the meaning unit within that rubric item. Meaning units were delimited by shifts in topic, evaluative stance, or guidance function rather than by a fixed sentence count. This made it possible to preserve the serial and generic integrity of each rubric while still coding closely enough to trace authority, implied-reader positioning, legitimation, and belonging within it.

4.4. Coding Process and Analytical Procedure

The coding process combined a deductive starting structure with inductive development from the data. Before full coding began, six broad family codes were

established from the research questions and the theoretical framework developed in Chapter 3: Adult Authority, Guidance Practice, Constructed Child Reader, Ideal Child Trait / Value Position, Legitimation Register, and Collective Belonging. In Hsieh and Shannon's terms, this resembles a directed approach because the initial coding scheme was informed by theory and prior research rather than generated from the data alone, while further codes were developed and the scheme was revised as analysis proceeded (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005, pp. 1281–1282).

After the rubric map had been completed and the final sample identified, a pilot phase was carried out on issues 36 and 39. These two issues were chosen to test the initial family-level frame on material from different points in the corpus. During this pilot phase, coding proceeded inductively within the six family codes. More specific subcodes first emerged through close reading of the material, especially where the broad family codes were too general to capture the distinctions needed for analysis.

As the pilot coding developed, related subcodes were brought together into broader analytical codes. These broader codes made the framework more manageable and became the main level used later to trace patterns and organise the findings. The coding process therefore did not begin with a fully fixed code list, but neither did it start from the data alone. Instead, the family codes were established deductively at the outset, while the broader analytical codes and more specific subcodes were developed and stabilised through pilot coding and later refinement.

After the pilot phase, the revised coding framework was applied across the five sampled rubrics in all six issues. In practice, coding was carried out at the level of meaning units, and these units were assigned specific subcodes which were organised under broader analytical codes and family codes. The broader analytical codes later became the main level used in the analysis and findings chapters, while the more specific subcodes remained useful when finer distinctions were analytically important.

Because the magazine includes different genres and different lengths of text, the aim was not to impose equal textual size on every coded segment, but to code the

smallest meaningful unit that could still support interpretation. This is consistent with Schreier's view of segmentation as a practical analytic decision tied to the research purpose rather than as a fixed formal rule (Schreier, 2012b, pp. 126–127). Appendix A summarises the final coding framework used in the thesis. It presents the family codes, the broader analytical codes used in the findings, and the more specific subcodes that sat beneath them.

4.5. Translation, Excel Workbook, and Memoing

The corpus is in Arabic, while the thesis is written in English. For that reason, coding was anchored first in the Arabic source material, and English entered mainly in the workbook and later in the writing stage. Translation is therefore treated as part of the analytical process, not as a neutral technical step. Temple and Young argue that translation in qualitative research raises questions of meaning and representation rather than simple word replacement (Temple and Young, 2004, pp. 166–167). Van Nes et al. make a similar point when they show that movement from a non-English research process into English publication can reshape meaning if the researcher is not careful (van Nes et al., 2010, pp. 313–315).

In practice, the magazine was read and coded directly from the Arabic PDF pages, and the workbook was used to log the coded segments. Each coded entry included the Arabic excerpt, an English translation, issue and page location, rubric, coding fields, and brief notes where needed. All coded excerpts in the workbook were translated into English. This helped later retrieval and writing, but the Arabic pages remained the reference point whenever wording, tone, or emphasis mattered for interpretation. Appendix A presents the final coding framework used in the thesis, and Appendix B summarises the corpus overview and sampled rubric map across *issues 35–40*.

Excel was the only coding environment used in this thesis. It was chosen because it provided a workable way to build a structured row-level coding log and a comparison map across a bounded corpus. The workbook made it possible to sort excerpts by issue, rubric, code family, and other fields, and it also supported

cross-issue comparison across the sampled rubrics. Excel therefore functioned as the practical environment for organising the analysis, while the coding logic itself came from the research design and the codebook rather than from the software.

Memoing accompanied the coding process, but in a light and practical form rather than as a large separate memo archive. Short analytic notes were kept mainly in the workbook and comparison sheets while reading and coding the sampled pages. These notes recorded things such as borderline cases, translation-sensitive wording, small visual observations, and brief reasons for coding decisions. This use of memoing is close to Saldaña's view of analytic notes as a way to capture thinking during coding without turning every note into a long theoretical commentary (Saldaña, 2016, pp. 44–45).

4.6. Bounded Visual Layer

Ataa is an illustrated magazine, so a purely verbal reading would miss some of the way guidance is packaged on the page. At the same time, the research questions focus mainly on adult authority, guidance practices, implied reader positioning, legitimation, and belonging as they are organised in the text. For that reason, the study adopts a text-first design. Visual material is included only in a bounded way, when it clearly reinforces, extends, or slightly shifts the guidance already visible in the sampled rubrics. The thesis therefore does not treat *Ataa* as a fully multimodal dataset or develop a separate image-analysis project. Serafini and Reid argue that content analysis can be adapted to multimodal material if the researcher clearly defines a manageable corpus and makes explicit how verbal and visual meaning are being related (Serafini and Reid, 2023, p. 625). That is the logic used here.

In practice, visual observations were not coded as a separate independent stream. They were recorded as short notes in relation to the sampled rubrics and used only where they helped clarify how image, layout, and surrounding text worked together. These notes usually addressed the visual role of the page and the form of the visual material. Kress and van Leeuwen's work is useful here mainly as a reminder that composition, salience, and framing can support meaning on the

page (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2008, pp. 177–178). In this thesis, however, such observations remain secondary and text-supporting rather than a separate visual analysis.

4.7. Positionality

My position in this thesis offers both proximity and distance. I am Syrian and Arabic-speaking and previously worked with Syrian children’s magazines between 2013 and 2018 in roles that included illustration work, distribution, and NGO support. This background provides practical familiarity with language register, child-directed print culture, and the wider media environment in which such magazines circulate. At the same time, the thesis does not analyse a magazine I worked on directly, and *Ataa* remains an external case.

This mixed position brings both advantages and risks. Berger notes that familiarity with the field can deepen interpretation, but she also warns that shared experience may blur boundaries or lead the researcher to take too much for granted (Berger, 2015, pp. 223–224). Finlay similarly argues that reflexivity matters because researchers need to consider how their own position shapes the research process rather than imagine themselves outside it (Finlay, 2002, pp. 212–213). In this thesis, that means using contextual familiarity carefully without treating it as authority on what the text must mean.

Several practical steps were taken in response to this. The thesis codes directly from the corpus rather than from memory, keeps the implied-reader boundary explicit, uses pilot coding before full application, and records short notes when wording, category fit, or interpretation felt uncertain. These steps help keep the analysis disciplined and visible.

4.8. Ethical Considerations, Trustworthiness, and Limitations

This study is document-based and uses published magazine issues, so it did not involve interviews, fieldwork, direct contact with children, or the collection of

personal data from human participants. Ethical responsibility nevertheless remains part of the design. Israel argues that ethical conduct should not be reduced to formal review procedures alone, because responsibility continues throughout the research process itself (Israel, 2015, pp. 17–18). In this thesis, that responsibility mainly concerns careful representation of Arabic material, proportional interpretation, and restraint in making claims beyond the documents.

Trustworthiness in this study rests mainly on transparency and procedural clarity. Shenton's framework is useful here because it shifts the discussion toward credibility, dependability, and confirmability in qualitative work (Shenton, 2004, pp. 63–64). In practice, this means showing how the sample was chosen, how the coding frame was built and revised, what role the pilot phase played, and how the final claims were grounded in repeated patterns across issues and rubrics rather than in isolated examples.

Several limits also need to remain explicit. First, the thesis analyses the implied child reader constructed by the magazine, not the reception of real children, parents, or teachers. Second, it cannot establish authorial intention or institutional strategy beyond what is visible in the published material. Third, the corpus is historically sensitive to the fall of the *Assad* regime on 8 December 2024, but this date is treated as context, not as automatic proof of discursive change or as evidence of the editorial process behind the issues. Fourth, rubric sampling allows disciplined comparison across recurring formats, but it does not give equal depth to every page in the magazine. Finally, the bounded visual layer supports the argument only where visual cues clearly reinforce or slightly shift what is already visible in the text.

The study is also a single-coder study. Trustworthiness therefore depends heavily on the clarity of the coding frame, the transparency of the procedure, and repeated checking against the documents. Schreier notes that qualitative content analysis depends on a clear coding frame and careful application if the analysis is to remain consistent and credible (Schreier, 2012c, pp. 166–167). For that reason, the procedure has been described as clearly as possible.

5. Findings

This chapter presents the main empirical findings across the five sampled rubrics in *issues 35–40*. It is organised around the four sub-questions rather than around a fixed before/after comparison. The analysis traces recurring patterns across rubrics and shows where they remain stable, widen, or shift. The strongest continuity lies in the repeated rubric architecture, while the clearest later expansion appears in the more explicit civic and reconstruction-oriented pressure of *issues 38–39*. *Issue 40* tests this broadened horizon through honesty, care, health, and everyday moral repair.

5.1. Staging Authority and Performing Guidance

Across the five sampled rubrics, *Ataa* does not guide the child through one blunt adult voice. Authority is distributed across different speakers, settings, and page designs, and guidance is performed through recurring actions tied to the rubric form. The *Editor's Letter* frames the value through direct address and explanation. *Nu'san Adventures* places authority inside ordinary story scenes and usually seals the lesson with correction and a short closure. *Ataa Diary* and *Du'aa Adventures* move the norm further into the child world, though each does so differently. The *Activities* pages turn authority into guided participation, reflection, and self-monitoring. In *issues 35–37*, this structure mainly organises patience, acceptance, consultation, and everyday self-regulation; in *issues 38–39*, it is more clearly tied to responsibility, public usefulness, and organised participation. *Issue 40* keeps this later pressure in view, but places more emphasis on honesty, repair, health, and self-accountability.

5.1.1. Where Authority Sits

The clearest site of overt authority is the *Editor's Letter*. Here the magazine speaks directly to the child, names the central value of the issue, and explains why

it matters. The voice is warm, but it still comes from a position of greater knowledge. In *issue 35*, patience is introduced as a quality that should shape conduct, emotion, and effort. In *issue 36*, humanity and acceptance are presented as necessary for coexistence. In *issue 37*, *shura* is introduced as a practical way of listening, discussing, and deciding together. In *issues 38* and *39*, the same editorial authority remains, but its horizon widens. Freedom, responsibility, and homeland renewal are named more openly, and the child is addressed not only as a moral learner, but also as someone who should help build a wider collective future. The editorial therefore remains the place where the magazine's adult voice is most visible.

Nu'san Adventures carries authority differently but with strong continuity. Authority usually sits inside ordinary family scenes, most often through a parent or another adult figure, and the lesson is sealed by a short closing statement. In *issue 35*, patience is taught through the parents and the dentist. In *issue 37*, the mother redirects the boys toward time organisation. In *issue 38*, *Nu'san* mistakes freedom for unrestricted behaviour and is corrected within the family scene. In *issue 40*, responsibility is staged through confession, apology, and repair after he breaks the vase. What changes across the run is less the site of authority than the conduct being corrected. Earlier issues focus more on endurance, acceptance, and everyday balance, while later ones place more pressure on limits, responsibility, and accountability. This pattern is also supported by the visual layout, which repeatedly separates the moral closure from the comic panels, as in *issue 38* (Figure 1).



Figure 1. *Ataa*, issue 38, *Nu'san Adventures* (p. 2).

Ataa Diary and *Du'aa Adventures* both move authority further into the child world, but not in the same way. In *Ataa Diary*, the approved line is often carried by boys inside organised peer settings such as camp, sport, school, or collective initiatives. Child voices often repeat an adult norm, but from inside shared action. In *Du'aa Adventures*, guidance is more often carried through friendship, support, encouragement, and emotional repair. This difference is already visible in the earlier issues. *Ataa Diary* in issue 35 places boys inside camp rules, queues, and shared tasks, while *Du'aa Adventures* in issue 35 turns patience into loyal care for an injured friend. The contrast grows sharper later. In issues 38–39, *Ataa Diary* becomes more clearly outward-looking, with peer authority tied to organised initiatives, awareness work, and public order. *Du'aa Adventures* widens too, but usually keeps the guiding line closer to relation, care, and mutual encouragement than to openly public organisation. This broader rubric-level contrast is also visible in the paired visuals, where *Ataa Diary* tends to stage peer-carried authority through group planning, shared movement, and divided tasks, while *Du'aa Adventures* more often stages it through bedside care, closer face-to-face interaction, and supportive gestures (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Ataa, issue 39, Ataa Diary (left, pp. 6–7) and Du'aa Adventures (right, pp. 36–37).

The *Activities* pages place authority differently again. Here authority is least attached to a visible speaker and most strongly built into the exercise itself. These pages ask the child to write, choose, match, monitor, promise, imagine, or evaluate. Authority therefore appears less as something spoken by an adult and more as a structured invitation to self-government. In *issue 35*, patience is turned into observation and future intention. In *issue 37*, consultation is organised through exercises in choosing advisers and discussing with others. In *issues 38* and *39*, the same format becomes more clearly tied to initiative, responsibility, and homeland-oriented participation. In *issue 40*, responsibility is organised through small duties, a weekly tracking table, a choice scenario, and a promise to

the self. More broadly, the *Activities* pages repeatedly use prompts, blanks, and boxes to organise the child's role before any answer is written (Figure 3).



Figure 3. *Ataa*, issue 40, *Activities* pages (pp. 32–33).

5.1.2. How Guidance Acts

If authority sits in different places, guidance also works through different recurring actions. Here too, the strongest continuity is rubric-based. Each rubric tends to guide through an action-pattern even when the issue theme changes. The *Editor's Letter* relies most on direct naming and explanation. *Nu'san Adventures* usually stages a mistake, then corrects it and seals the lesson in a short closure. *Ataa Diary* more often models approved conduct through child-carried action and then confirms it through praise or visible success. *Du'aa Adventures* more often guides through encouragement, reassurance, and repair. The *Activities* pages rely most heavily on reflection prompts, self-monitoring tasks, and small commitments. Across the run, what changes is less the action-pattern itself than the conduct those actions are used to train.

Nu'san Adventures repeatedly combines correction, evaluation, and explanation. A mistake or unsuitable response appears first, then it is judged, corrected, and clarified, usually with a final closing line. This remains highly stable across the run. In *issue 35*, the child is corrected toward patience. In *issue 37*, the lesson is

balance and time organisation. In *issue 38*, freedom is misunderstood as unrestricted behaviour, then corrected into a bounded and responsible meaning. In *issue 40*, responsibility is tied to admitting error, proposing repair, and not repeating the mistake. Guidance here is firm, but it comes through familiar mistakes rather than abstract instruction alone. Adult judgement is therefore softened through everyday scenes and manageable problems.

Ataa Diary and *Du'aa Adventures* both guide through peer interaction, but the action looks different in each rubric. *Ataa Diary* often combines modelling, praise, and explanation in a more organised and outward-looking way. In *issue 35*, camp routines teach queueing, endurance, and perseverance. In *issue 37*, consultation becomes teamwork and shared planning. In *issues 38–39*, peer guidance becomes more clearly public, tied to volunteering, awareness work, reform, and respect for rules. What is right is not only stated. It is acted out, approved, and shown to produce a better collective result. *Du'aa Adventures*, by contrast, more often guides through support, encouragement, attentiveness, and repair. In *issue 37*, the girls help their sick friend complete the writing competition, and cooperation is presented not only as effective, but as caring and admirable. In *issue 40*, guidance moves toward reconciliation, but still stays inside relation rather than public action. The difference is therefore not absolute, but one of emphasis: *Ataa Diary* more often guides through organised peer action, while *Du'aa Adventures* more often guides through support and relational care.

The *Activities* pages show the clearest participatory form of guidance. Here the child is asked not only to understand a value, but to rehearse it through writing, imagining, matching, choosing, monitoring, or promising. In *issue 35*, patience becomes self-observation and future intention. In *issue 37*, consultation becomes practice in discussion and selecting trusted people. In *issues 38 and 39*, guidance is more strongly tied to initiative, leadership, role-taking, and imagining one's place in improving school, city, or homeland. In *issue 40*, responsibility becomes self-monitoring, weekly tracking, and a promise to the self. These pages are especially important because they turn guidance from message into practice. The value is not only explained or admired; it is organised as something the child should do.

5.1.3. What This Means Across the Corpus

Read together, these patterns show that *Ataa* organises authority and guidance through recurring routes rather than through isolated lessons. The strongest continuity across *issues 35–40* is that the same rubrics tend to carry guidance through the same main pedagogic functions. The *Editor's Letter* frames the value through overt adult address and explanation. *Nu'san Adventures* places authority inside ordinary scenes of mistake, correction, and closure. *Ataa Diary* and *Du'aa Adventures* relocate the norm into child-centred interaction, but not in the same way: *Ataa Diary* more often makes it organised, peer-based, and outward-looking, while *Du'aa Adventures* more often softens it through relational care and emotional support. The *Activities* pages push guidance furthest toward self-practice by asking the child to reflect, choose, monitor the self, and commit. Authority and guidance in *Ataa* therefore work less as separate lessons than as a repeated serial arrangement that distributes different pedagogic tasks across recurring rubric worlds.

What changes across the run is not this underlying arrangement, but the pressure placed inside it. In *issues 35–37*, authority and guidance mainly train patience, acceptance, consultation, and everyday self-regulation. In *issues 38–39*, the same recurring routes are used more clearly for responsibility, public usefulness, organised participation, and broader collective improvement. *Issue 40* keeps part of that later pressure in view, but turns it back toward honesty, repair, health, and self-monitoring. The main finding is therefore not that the magazine moves from one pedagogy to another, but that a recurring structure of guidance carries different emphases across the run.

5.2. Constructing the Child Reader and the Ideal Child

Ataa does more than praise values. It also imagines particular kinds of children who should carry those values in recognisable ways. The most stable pattern across *issues 35–40* is therefore not simply that the magazine promotes patience, cooperation, responsibility, or hope, but that it constructs a child who can be trained, improved, and gradually trusted with wider forms of moral and social

responsibility. In the earlier issues, especially 35–37, this child is mainly presented as someone who should learn, regulate the self, and behave properly with others. In the later issues, especially 38–39, the same model becomes wider and more public, as the child is more clearly imagined as someone who should participate, take responsibility, and help build a better collective future. *Issue 40* keeps some of this widening in place, but channels it more strongly through honesty, repair, health, and everyday responsibility. What changes across the corpus is the layering of the model, not its replacement.

5.2.1. The Child as Learner and Morally Improvable Subject

One of the clearest continuities across the corpus is that *Ataa* repeatedly imagines the child as someone who still needs to be formed. This is especially visible in *issue 35*. There, patience is defined not merely as waiting, but as self-control, endurance, and sustained effort. The *Activities* pages then turn patience into observation, self-description, and future intention. The child is not only told that patience is admirable. The child is positioned as someone who must practise it, monitor it, and improve through it. The early corpus therefore already establishes an important part of the ideal child: a child who can bear difficulty, manage impulses, and work on the self.

Nu'san Adventures gives this same child model a smaller and more ordinary form. Here the child is repeatedly shown through minor errors, misunderstandings, and correction. In *issue 35*, patience is learned through pain and treatment. In *issue 37*, the lesson on time organisation imagines the child as someone who must learn balance and self-organisation. In *issue 38*, freedom is first misunderstood as doing whatever one wants, then corrected into a more bounded conduct. In *issue 40*, responsibility and honesty are staged through confession, repair, and behavioural redirection after the broken vase. The ideal child is therefore not someone who never makes mistakes, but someone who can recognise them, accept guidance, and become better.

The same developmental pattern appears in the child-centred rubrics, though in different ways. In *Du'aa Adventures*, learning is often tied to effort, reading, and

improvement, especially in *issue 37*, where the writing competition turns the child into someone who should read more, improve her style, and keep trying even when she becomes ill. In *Ataa Diary*, learning is more often social and practical. The child is trained through camp routines, teamwork, planning, and public tasks rather than through solitary self-work. The *Activities* pages push this developmental child furthest by inviting the child to write, choose, promise, review, and track the self. In *issue 40*, responsibility becomes especially clear through weekly monitoring, choice scenarios, and a promise to oneself. This sharpens the difference between child-position and value-position. Responsibility is the value, but the child being constructed is more specific: a reflective child who can examine conduct and hold the self accountable. The visual layout reinforces this point by organising responsibility into prompts, boxes, and self-monitoring tasks that already structure the child's role before any answer is written (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Ataa, issue 40, Activities pages (pp. 32–35).

5.2.2. The Child as Relational Subject

If the first layer of the child model concerns self-training, the second concerns living properly with others. This relational child is especially visible in *issue 36*, where several rubrics work together clearly. The *Editor's Letter* names humanity and acceptance as the issue value. *Nu'san Adventures* presents acceptance of the new peer. *Ataa Diary* reframes difference as complementarity inside the team. The *Activities* pages organise anti-racist and humane conduct through practical tasks. The child being imagined here is not simply a good individual. It is a child

who should make room for others, reject humiliation, and help produce a livable social space.

Du'aa Adventures gives this relational child its softest and most intimate form. In *issue 35*, the girls help an injured friend bear a long recovery by visiting her, sharing activities, and refusing to let isolation break the friendship group. In *issue 36*, the same rubric ties belonging to support rather than appearance, as the girls stand by a friend who feels ashamed after an accident. In *issue 37*, the girls help their sick friend continue her writing competition through care, discussion, and shared work. In *issue 40*, the rubric turns more clearly toward reconciliation, showing the child as someone who should repair strained relations rather than deepen conflict. Across these stories, the admired child is not praised for isolated success, but for helping another child continue, recover, or return.

Ataa Diary carries the relational child somewhat differently. In *issue 36*, Sami's difference is not simply tolerated. It is gradually revalued as part of what completes the team. In *issue 37*, teamwork, consultation, and cheering create a child world where shared purpose matters more than individual distinction. Even here, however, relation in *Ataa Diary* is more often tied to organised cooperation than to emotional softness. The child is imagined as someone who should work with others, support others, and remain inside the group, but usually in a more active and collective way than in *Du'aa Adventures*. This contrast is also visible in the paired visuals, where *Du'aa Adventures* relies more often on close face-to-face scenes and supportive gestures, while *Ataa Diary* uses group movement, cheering, and shared action to make relation appear more organised and outward-looking (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Ataa, issue 37, Ataa Diary (left, pp. 6–7) and Du'aa Adventures (right, pp. 36–37).

5.2.3. The Child as Civic and Future-Oriented Subject

A third layer becomes clearer across the later part of the run, especially in *issues 38 and 39*: the child as civic and future-oriented subject. Consultation in *issue 37* already gives this direction a controlled form, but it remains close to the earlier pedagogic rhythm. In the *Editor's Letter*, *shura* is presented as a practical moral value. In *Ataa Diary* and the *Activities* pages, the child is imagined as someone who can discuss, choose, plan, and share responsibility with others. The child is still a learner, but now a learner being trained into participation rather than only self-restraint.

This widening becomes more explicit in *issue 38*. The *Editor's Letter* ties freedom to dignity, responsibility, and rebuilding. *Nu'san Adventures* makes clear that freedom must remain bounded by the rights of others and by proper judgement. *Ataa Diary* turns youth initiative into practical reconstruction through cleaning, organising, and volunteering. The *Activities* pages ask the child how to improve city or school and how to act as a leader for a day. *Du'aa Adventures* adds an important variation by making girls' contribution to change especially visible. The child being imagined is therefore not free in an unrestricted sense, but someone who can use freedom responsibly and direct it toward a collective future.

Issue 39 brings this future-oriented child into especially clear focus. The *Editor's Letter* addresses children as builders of tomorrow and frames them as participants in homeland renewal. *Ataa Diary* turns the reform of one problematic peer into a small civic campaign about rules, awareness, and public good. The *Activities* pages ask the child to imagine rebuilding the country, identify a role, and write from the perspective of a free future. The child-position and value-position reinforce one another strongly here. Future-building, responsibility, and cooperation are the admired values, but the implied child is more than simply virtuous. It is a child who already belongs to the work of making tomorrow. This is also reinforced visually in *Ataa Diary*, where coordinated group scenes, divided tasks, and campaign-like organisation make the child appear as part of collective effort rather than as an isolated helper. *Issue 40* keeps this wider civic child in view, but tests it through honesty, health, and everyday responsibility.

5.2.4. What Holds These Positions Together

Seen across these rubrics, *Ataa* constructs the implied child through layering, but not through one uniform model. The child first appears as someone who can be trained, corrected, and taught to regulate the self. That child is then widened into a relational subject who should care, cooperate, and sustain others. Later, the same child is asked to imagine a place in wider civic and future-oriented work. What holds these positions together is a repeated assumption that the child is educable, morally responsive, and capable of carrying more responsibility over time. What varies is how that child is distributed across the magazine's recurring rubric worlds.

Across the issue run, the strongest continuity is therefore the magazine's preference for a formative child model, while the clearest variation is the widening of that model toward civic usefulness and future-building in the later issues. The rubrics divide this work among themselves in a stable but not identical way. The *Editor's Letter* names the broad child model most openly. *Nu'san Adventures* more often imagines a younger child of manageable error, correction, and ordinary moral learning. *Ataa Diary* places the child more clearly in organised peer worlds and, later, in more openly public ones. *Du'aa Adventures* softens the child model through care, attentiveness, and repair, while also keeping girls' experience as one of the differentiated settings through which proper conduct is imagined. The *Activities* pages turn the child most directly into a participant who is asked to monitor, decide, imagine, and commit. The implied child in *Ataa* is therefore not singular. It is distributed across age-coded, gendered, relational, and civic positions that together produce a layered ideal child who learns, improves, helps, participates, and gradually becomes worthy of trust within a wider collective horizon.

5.3. Legitimizing the Norms

Across the sampled rubrics, *Ataa* rarely presents proper conduct as something that simply needs to be commanded. More often, values are made persuasive by being tied to reasons the child can recognise. A norm matters because it helps the child grow, improves life with others, rests on an accepted moral frame, protects body or trust from harm, or contributes to a wider collective future. In *issues 35–37*, these reasons are most often linked to learning, coexistence, and practical usefulness, with selective religious support. In *issues 38–39*, the same justificatory logic broadens more clearly toward responsibility, order, hope, and rebuilding. *Issue 40* keeps part of that wider horizon in view, but draws the reasoning back toward honesty, repair, health, and everyday accountability. *Ataa* therefore does more than state what is good. It repeatedly explains why the child should find it sensible, beneficial, and worth wanting.

5.3.1. Learning, Growth, and Self-Improvement

One of the clearest ways *Ataa* legitimates values is by presenting them as beneficial to the child's own development. The value is not only described as morally right. It is also shown as something that helps the child become calmer, stronger, wiser, or more capable. The *Editor's Letter* often carries this logic most openly. In *issue 35*, patience is justified not only through religious reward, but also through its practical effects: it helps the child endure difficulty, control the self, and continue toward goals without collapse. In *issue 37*, *shura* is legitimated in a similar way because it teaches children to listen, respect different views, and reach better decisions together.

The same developmental logic reappears in smaller and more practical forms across the other rubrics. In *Nu'san Adventures* in *issue 37*, time organisation is justified because it allows study and play to coexist without one undermining the other. In *issue 40*, responsibility becomes persuasive because truthful admission and repair help the child correct behaviour and become more trustworthy. The *Activities* pages sharpen this logic further by turning values into repeated exercises. In *issue 35*, patience becomes observation, waiting, and self-description. In *issue 40*, responsibility becomes weekly tracking, a decision scenario, and a promise to the self. The child is therefore asked to improve, not only to comply.

5.3.2. Harmony, Helping, and Relational Repair as Social Reasons

A second major pattern makes norms persuasive by linking them to the quality of shared life. Here values matter because they reduce isolation, protect relationships, and make everyday coexistence more workable. *Issue 36* is especially clear. Acceptance of others is not presented as a noble abstraction, but as something that makes social life more livable. In *Nu'san Adventures*, welcoming the new child matters because exclusion leaves him alone and uneasy. In *Ataa Diary*, complementarity is valued because the team becomes stronger when difference is accepted rather than mocked. The *Activities* pages push the same logic further through anti-racist and anti-bullying tasks.

Du'aa Adventures gives this social legitimation its softest form. In *issues 35* and *37*, helping an injured or sick friend matters because it relieves isolation and allows another child to continue rather than withdraw. In *issue 40*, reconciliation is made persuasive because unresolved tension harms the friendship, while apology and repair restore trust and emotional ease. *Ataa Diary* carries a firmer version of the same logic. There, cooperation and shared effort are often justified because they help the group function better and produce a more stable collective result. Norms are therefore repeatedly legitimated by showing that they strengthen relationships, reduce friction, and make shared life possible.

5.3.3. Moral Grounding, Protection, and Accountability

At some points, developmental and social reasons are reinforced by a wider moral frame. In the earlier issues especially, the magazine does not only describe a value as useful; it also places it inside an authorised ethical order. In *issue 35*, patience is tied to divine approval and reward in both the *Editor's Letter* and *Nu'san Adventures*, so endurance appears not only beneficial but spiritually affirmed. In *issue 36*, the *Activities* pages support acceptance through Qur'anic verses and hadith that reject mockery, racism, and tribalism. In *issue 37*, *shura* is introduced first as a value taught by religion and only then translated into classroom, play, and teamwork. Here the norm gains force because it is presented as morally grounded before it is shown to be practically useful.

Protection works in a related but more practical way. Some norms matter because they prevent bodily harm, preserve trust, or keep everyday life from deteriorating. This logic becomes especially clear in *issue 40*. In *Ataa Diary*, advice against smoking is justified through damage to health, fitness, and future athletic possibility. In the *Activities* pages, truthful admission is made persuasive because excuses may avoid immediate blame but damage trust, while honesty preserves it. Even *Nu'san Adventures* follows this logic when responsibility is tied to acknowledging the repeated mistake, proposing compensation, and preventing the same damage from happening again. In this register, proper conduct matters because it protects the body, relationships, or trust from further harm, and because it allows the child to remain accountable for what has been done.

5.3.4. Homeland, Order, Reconstruction, and Affective Appeal

The clearest widening in the corpus appears when values are justified in relation to homeland, order, and rebuilding. In these later issues, proper conduct is no longer presented only as something good for the self or the immediate group. It is increasingly made persuasive as something necessary for a wider collective future. This pattern becomes especially clear in *issues 38 and 39*, where responsibility, cooperation, and rule-bound conduct are repeatedly linked to rebuilding Syria rather than merely improving individual behaviour.

The *Editor's Letter* carries this justification most openly. In *issue 38*, freedom is not framed as unrestricted personal choice, but as a condition that demands responsibility, dignity, and contribution to a free Syria. In *issue 39*, the same logic becomes even more explicit: the homeland is described as something that grows through the efforts of its children, and the child is addressed as one of the builders of tomorrow. Good conduct matters because it helps restore, improve, and sustain the wider national collectivity. *Ataa Diary* gives this civic-national legitimization its clearest narrative form. In *issue 38*, the boys' street-cleaning initiative is shown as useful because it improves public space, organises others, and turns celebration into reconstruction. In *issue 39*, disregard for rules and order is corrected through awareness, teamwork, and organised reform, so that respect for order appears beneficial not only for daily life but also for the homeland. The *Activities* pages extend the same reasoning by turning rebuilding into a child-sized task. In *issue 38*, the child is asked to imagine decisions that would improve city or school. In *issue 39*, the child is asked to identify a role in the homeland and imagine a future Syria realised through effort, patience, and responsibility.

Ataa also legitimates guidance affectively by making proper conduct feel emotionally worthwhile. In this register, the norm is not persuasive only because it is useful, correct, or socially necessary, but because it is tied to desirable feelings and states such as hope, trust, warmth, delight, confidence, and continuity. In *issue 38*, freedom is framed through light, love, and possibility, so that responsibility appears joined to optimism rather than restriction alone. In

issue 39, homeland renewal is expressed through intimacy, emotional uplift, and the promise of a better tomorrow. Elsewhere, especially in friendship- and care-centred scenes, reassurance and companionship make guidance feel safer and more inviting. These affective elements do not replace other reasons, but they strengthen them by making proper conduct feel attractive, meaningful, and emotionally inhabitable for the child reader.

5.3.5. What This Means Across the Corpus

What emerges most clearly from these patterns is that *Ataa* usually makes values persuasive through benefit, meaning, and shared worlds that the child can emotionally inhabit, rather than through bare command. A norm is rarely left standing as a rule by itself. Instead, the magazine repeatedly shows what the value does: it helps the child grow and improve, supports coexistence and relational repair, protects the body or trust from harm, contributes to order and rebuilding, or makes a shared future feel hopeful and worth joining. Legitimation in *Ataa* therefore works as part of the magazine's wider rubric-based form of guidance. The recurring rubrics do not only state values; they keep returning to reasons that make those values feel sensible, desirable, and livable.

The earlier issues rely most heavily on developmental, social-relational, and practical reasons, sometimes reinforced by religious grounding. In the later issues, these same justificatory routes broaden more clearly toward civic-national and affective appeals linked to responsibility, order, homeland, and rebuilding. The rubrics do not perform this work identically. The *Editor's Letter* gives the fullest reasoning, *Nu'san Adventures* translates the norm into manageable everyday sense, *Ataa Diary* most clearly shows its organised social and civic usefulness, *Du'aa Adventures* makes it emotionally and relationally meaningful, and the *Activities* pages turn it into reflection, choice, and commitment. Across the corpus, then, *Ataa* does not mainly persuade by command. It persuades by repeatedly attaching proper conduct to benefit, shared life, and a future the child is invited to inhabit.

5.4. Collective Belonging

Across the sampled rubrics, *Ataa* does not place the child inside a single collective identity. It builds belonging through layered forms of “we” that move across immediate social worlds, wider shared settings, selective religious or heritage frames, and more explicit national-reconstructive collectivity. In *issues* 35–37, belonging is shaped most clearly through family, friendship, class, and team, with lighter moral-religious and place-based layers alongside them. From *issue* 38 onward, these smaller worlds are more clearly widened toward homeland, public responsibility, and rebuilding. *Issue* 39 gives that wider pattern its clearest form, while *issue* 40 shifts attention back toward smaller moral and relational worlds. Belonging is therefore one of the main ways the magazine places the child inside the values and duties it normalises.

5.4.1. Belonging Through Close Everyday Worlds

In the earlier issues, belonging is built first through small and familiar worlds. The child is not usually addressed first as part of an abstract nation. More often, the magazine begins with family, friendship, class, or team. Belonging therefore appears first as nearness, care, cooperation, and shared life. This matters because the wider collective frames that become more explicit later are built on these nearer social forms rather than replacing them.

Du‘aa Adventures carries this pattern in the most intimate way. In *issue* 35, the girls respond to *Salma*’s long absence after breaking her leg by organising visits, bringing gifts, and sharing time and skills with her, so that belonging is sustained through continued presence rather than simple sympathy. In *issue* 36, the same rubric again places belonging inside loyal friendship, as the girls refuse to let injury and altered appearance define their relationship. In *issue* 37, the girls help a friend continue toward the writing competition when illness interrupts her work. Across these stories, the child is placed inside a close circle that remains together across pain, shame, or interruption.

Ataa Diary also builds belonging through close settings, but usually in a more organised and collective form. In *issue* 35, camp life places the boys inside

queues, tents, routines, and shared tasks. In *issue 36*, the sports team first appears as a site of exclusion, but gradually becomes a place where difference is revalued and the group strengthened through complementarity rather than sameness. *Sami* is not accepted because difference is ignored, but because the group learns to see his contribution as part of the team's success. In *issue 37*, consultation, cooperation, and shared purpose are again staged inside school and sport settings, so that belonging appears through doing things together, deciding together, and pursuing a shared aim. The visual layer reinforces this point, as group movement, cheering, and repeated team scenes make belonging appear collective, organised, and publicly shared rather than intimate or private (Figure 6).



Figure 6. *Ataa*, issue 37, *Ataa Diary* (pp. 6–7).

The *Editor's Letter* and the *Activities* pages briefly support the same small-scale social pattern. In *issue 36*, the editorial frames humanity through coexistence, acceptance, and making shared life better for all, while the *Activities* pages turn respect for others into practical anti-racist and anti-bullying tasks. In *issue 37*, *shura* is explained through classroom and play examples children can easily imagine, and the *Activities* pages ask the child to identify trusted people, consult family or friends, and think through teamwork in everyday settings.

Alongside these small-scale worlds, the earlier corpus also contains a lighter moral-religious layer of belonging. In *issue 35*, patience is linked to remembrance

of God and divine reward, placing the child inside a shared moral horizon rather than only a private struggle. In *issue 36*, the *Activities* pages use Qur’anic verses and hadith against mockery, racism, and tribalism, so that acceptance is tied to an ethical community that stands above narrow difference. In *issue 37*, *shura* is introduced as a value taught by religion and then translated into family, friendship, and classroom practice.

5.4.2. Widening the “We” Toward Homeland and Reconstruction

From *issue 38* onward, these smaller worlds remain important, but belonging is widened more clearly toward homeland, freedom, responsibility, and rebuilding. The magazine does not abandon the near in favour of the national. Instead, it links them. Friendship groups, school settings, and familiar social worlds increasingly point beyond themselves toward a wider collective horizon.

The *Editor’s Letter* carries this widening most openly. In *issue 38*, freedom is tied directly to Syria, dignity, cooperation, and the duty to help build the country. In *issue 39*, the wider “we” becomes even more explicit: the homeland is described as warmth, family, and a future shaped by its children. *Ataa Diary* gives this movement its clearest narrative form. In *issue 38*, the boys begin as a friendship group celebrating liberation, but quickly become a volunteer formation that cleans streets, divides tasks, and draws others into organised public action. In *issue 39*, the boys’ efforts to reform *Jamil’s* conduct connect rules, public order, and behavioural change to the good of the wider community and, more broadly, to the homeland itself.

Du’aa Adventures also broadens belonging later, but in a different way from *Ataa Diary*. It does so less through organised public action than through memory, attachment, and symbolic intimacy. In *issue 38*, the girls’ initiative links school, family, and homeland by presenting girls as active contributors to a wider collective future, yet the rubric still keeps belonging closer and more relational than *Ataa Diary*. In *issue 39*, homeland feeling is carried through emotionally charged objects and remembered attachments: the “I love Syria” shirt, the new Syrian flag keychain, and references to mother, school, and earlier life. The visual

arrangement supports the same point, as homeland attachment is repeatedly made visible through familiar objects and school-based display, so that belonging appears both shared and personal (Figure 7). The *Activities* pages push this widened belonging furthest by turning it into participation and self-placement. In *issues 38 and 39*, the child is asked what to improve, build, protect, or become in a free homeland. Here belonging becomes future role and practical responsibility.



Figure 7. *Ataa*, issue 39, *Du'aa Adventures* (pp. 36–37).

5.4.3. What This Means Across the Corpus

What emerges most clearly from these patterns is that belonging in *Ataa* is one of the main ways the magazine guides the child from familiar social worlds toward wider collective attachment. The child is not placed first inside one fixed national “we.” More often, belonging begins in family, friendship, class, team, and other close worlds that make proper conduct feel near, ordinary, and shared. From *issue 38* onward, these nearer worlds are connected more explicitly to homeland, public responsibility, and rebuilding, with *issue 39* giving this widened horizon its clearest form. *Issue 40* keeps part of that wider horizon in view, but draws the child back toward smaller relational and moral worlds through family responsibility, peer reconciliation, and shared recovery. The wider collective therefore does not replace the nearer one. It is built through it.

The rubrics carry this belonging in different ways and, together, make it part of the magazine's wider guidance system. The *Editor's Letter* states the broader "we" most openly and gives it its clearest emotional language. *Nu'san Adventures* keeps belonging closer to everyday adjustment, welcome, and proper conduct in ordinary social settings. *Ataa Diary* most clearly turns peer belonging toward organised civic and homeland-oriented action. *Du'aa Adventures* more often keeps belonging intimate, relational, and symbolically held, even when homeland feeling grows stronger. The *Activities* pages move furthest toward participation by asking the child to imagine a role, make a commitment, and place the self inside a shared future. Belonging in *Ataa* is therefore not separate from guidance. It is one of the main ways the magazine makes conduct, attachment, and collective life feel connected across the serial run.

5.5. Cross-Issue Synthesis: Continuity, Selective Shifts, and Bounded Visual Support

Across *issues 35–40*, the clearest continuity in *Ataa* lies in the recurring rubric structure itself. The magazine does not guide the child through one undifferentiated voice or one flat child world. Instead, the same rubrics return with recognisable pedagogic tasks from issue to issue. The *Editor's Letter* names and frames the value through overt adult address. *Nu'san Adventures* translates it into ordinary scenes of mistake, correction, and closure. *Ataa Diary* moves it into organised peer action and, at points, wider public usefulness. *Du'aa Adventures* carries it through softer relational care, support, and symbolically held attachment. The *Activities* pages turn it into reflection, self-monitoring, and structured participation. What remains most stable across the corpus, then, is not one single theme but a repeated serial arrangement that distributes guidance across different rubric worlds and different child positions.

Within that stable structure, the pressure placed on the child reader broadens in limited ways across the run. *Issues 35–37* focus mainly on self-regulation, coexistence, consultation, and manageable social life, although consultation in *issue 37* already gives participation a clearer place. The more explicit expansion appears in *issues 38 and 39*, where freedom, responsibility, order, homeland, and

rebuilding become stronger and the child is addressed more openly as part of a wider collective future. *Issue 40* keeps part of that wider horizon in view, but turns it back toward honesty, repair, health, and everyday accountability. The main pattern is therefore not replacement, but broadening within continuity.

The bounded visual layer supports this interpretation rather than changing it. In *Nu'san Adventures*, the separated final lesson sharpens moral closure. In *Ataa Diary*, repeated group scenes, shared movement, and organised tasks strengthen the sense of coordinated collective action. In *Du'aa Adventures*, close face-to-face scenes, school settings, and familiar objects support a softer mode of belonging in which homeland feeling remains intimate as well as shared. In the *Activities* pages, boxes, tables, and blank spaces already organise the child's role as participation and commitment. Taken together, these findings show a magazine whose strongest continuity lies in its recurring rubric structure, while the later issues give that same structure a clearer civic-national and symbolic weight.

6. Analysis

Chapter 5 established the main empirical patterns across the sampled rubrics and issues. This chapter builds on those findings by developing the thesis's broader argument that *Ataa* works as a distributed serial pedagogy. It examines how the magazine's recurring rubrics carry adult authority, construct different child-reader positions, make values appear familiar and expected through repeated justification and belonging, and show limited broadening within a durable serial form around December 2024.

6.1. Adult Authority, Guidance, and Serial Mediation

Read through Nodelman, *Ataa* shows that adult authority in a children's magazine does not need to appear as one blunt command voice in order to remain powerful. The hidden adult is active precisely because authority is dispersed across warm, familiar, and repeated forms that make guidance feel ordinary rather than exceptional. Editorial framing, short narratives, peer interaction, and participatory tasks do not soften adult mediation by removing it. They are among the main ways it becomes stable, acceptable, and durable across the magazine.

This matters because the recurring rubrics divide that authority into different pedagogic tasks. The *Editor's Letter* frames values most openly through overt address and explanation. *Nu'san Adventures* compresses them into everyday scenes of mistake, correction, and closure. *Ataa Diary* relocates them into organised peer action, cooperation, and public usefulness, while *Du'aa Adventures* more often carries them through relational intimacy, care, and symbolically held attachment. The *Activities* pages turn adult guidance into designed participation by asking the child to reflect, monitor the self, imagine a role, or make a commitment. Authority is therefore not concentrated in one adult speaker. It is distributed across recurring rubric worlds that allow the same pedagogic project to return in different child-readable forms. This is one reason

the case matters beyond Syria: children's magazines can organise softened adult authority through serial routine itself rather than through one continuous adult voice.

Guidance in *Ataa* also works less through isolated instruction than through rehearsal. The child is not only told what is right, but is repeatedly placed in scenes, routines, and tasks where the norm can be practised and made familiar. Explanatory, evaluative, and participatory guidance matter here not simply because they diversify tone, but because they allow adult expectations to be lived as part of ordinary reading rather than as interruption from outside it. In this sense, pedagogy in *Ataa* is not hidden because it is weak. It is hidden because serial mediation makes it easier to absorb.

The serial structure strengthens this process further. Because the same rubrics return across issues, adult mediation becomes durable through repetition without needing to sound identical each time. Even when later issues widen the collective horizon, they still do so through the same recurring routes of framing, modelling, peer rehearsal, and participation. What remains most stable across the corpus is therefore not one tone or one message, but a serial arrangement that makes adult authority routine, repeatable, and lasting.

6.2. The Implied Child Reader and the Layered Ideal Child

Read through *Rose*, the implied child in *Ataa* is not one ready-made reader repeated across the whole magazine. It is a textual position assembled inside the publication through recurring forms of address, guidance, and expectation. What the magazine constructs, then, is not one uniform child but a layered model of proper childhood that is distributed across its recurring rubric worlds. This matters because the ideal child in *Ataa* is produced less by one stable description than by serial routine: the same rubrics keep returning and, each time, invite the child into a slightly different but related role.

The recurring rubrics therefore do more than display different child types for variety. They divide the work of child construction. The *Editor's Letter* and the

Activities pages address a broader child who is openly instructed, invited, and asked to govern the self. *Nu'san Adventures* more often constructs a younger child of manageable error, correction, and ordinary moral learning. *Ataa Diary* places the child most clearly in organised peer life and, later, in more explicit civic and future-oriented roles. *Du'aa Adventures* positions the child through relational care, attachment, and softer forms of collective feeling, while also preserving one of the magazine's selectively gendered child worlds. These positions do not remain separate or self-contained. Together they show that *Ataa* distributes developmental, relational, participatory, civic, and selectively gendered child positions across its serial form rather than merging them into one flat child reader.

This is one of the clearest ways the case matters beyond Syria. A children's magazine does not need to imagine one universal child in order to remain coherent. It can build a durable implied reader by distributing different child-readable positions across recurring rubrics while keeping them inside one broader moral horizon. In *Ataa*, the later widening toward public responsibility, homeland, and future-building adds to this layered model rather than replacing its earlier developmental and relational positions. The implied child reader is therefore best understood not as a fixed identity but as a serially assembled figure whose unity lies in distribution and repetition.

6.3. Belonging, Legitimation, and the Naturalisation of Values

Across the findings, norms in *Ataa* become persuasive less through direct command than through repeated justification attached to shared worlds of belonging. Values are linked to familiar benefits, clear emotions, and desirable ways of living with others, so that patience, care, honesty, cooperation, and responsibility begin to feel ordinary rather than debatable. Read through Hall, this matters because the magazine does more than state what the child should do. It helps make those positions appear familiar and reasonable. Legitimation therefore matters not only at the level of reasons, but also at the level of placement: the norm is repeated inside worlds where it already feels socially and emotionally right.

This also explains why direct command remains relatively limited in the corpus. *Ataa* usually justifies norms through reasons the child can carry into daily life: growth and self-improvement, coexistence and relational repair, protection from harm, responsibility to others, and, later, civic usefulness, hope, order, and rebuilding. Van Leeuwen is useful here in a bounded way because the magazine repeatedly answers the question of why a norm should be followed. The larger point, however, is not simply to classify these reasons. What matters is that they return through familiar and recognisable forms, so that proper conduct starts to feel less like one moral option among others and more like the expected way of moving through the child's world.

Belonging is one of the main mechanisms through which this naturalisation happens. A value becomes harder to resist when it is linked not only to usefulness, but also to membership in a familiar "we". The recurring rubrics organise this process differently: the *Editor's Letter* states the wider moral and collective horizon most openly; *Nu'san Adventures* keeps belonging closer to family life and everyday child worlds; *Ataa Diary* most clearly connects peer and group belonging to organised civic and homeland-oriented action; *Du'aa Adventures* more often ties belonging to care, attachment, school, and symbolic intimacy; and the *Activities* pages turn belonging into imagined role, participation, and chosen commitment. Approved conduct in *Ataa* is therefore not presented only as correct behaviour. It is also presented as part of being a good member of shared worlds. Anderson is helpful here in a limited way because the wider collective is built gradually from smaller and more familiar forms of shared life. The child first belongs in close everyday settings, and only later, more openly, in a wider homeland-centred "we". Homeland, order, rebuilding, and future-oriented attachment therefore do not appear only as abstract demands. They are connected to care, shared effort, attachment, and hope. This is one of the broader contributions of the case beyond Syria: children's magazines can naturalise values not only by stating them repeatedly, but by attaching them to worlds of belonging in which those values begin to feel legitimate, familiar, and worth inhabiting.

6.4. Serial Continuity and Limited Broadening Around December 2024

Across *issues 35–40*, the politically significant period around 8 December 2024 matters less as proof of rupture than as a test of how flexible *Ataa*'s serial form can be. The strongest continuity lies in the recurring rubric structure itself. The magazine does not need a new pedagogic architecture in order to respond to a changed historical moment. The same channels of editorial framing, comic narrative, and participatory activity remain in place, but they begin to carry different collective and justificatory pressures. This is why the later civic-national themes are better understood as limited broadening within an existing serial form than as replacement of an earlier one.

Issue 37 should therefore be kept controlled within the continuous issue run. It does not function as a clean dividing line, but it shows how participation and shared decision-making can be developed within the earlier pedagogic rhythm of explanation, manageable example, and guided practice. The later issues make certain pressures more explicit, especially freedom, responsibility, homeland, order, and rebuilding, but they do so through the same durable routes already established across the serial run. The *Editor's Letter* states this broadening most openly, *Ataa Diary* gives it its clearest public and action-oriented form, *Du'aa Adventures* softens it through attachment, memory, and relational feeling, and the *Activities* pages turn it into imagined future role and self-placement within a shared horizon.

What this shows more broadly is that historical sensitivity in a children's magazine does not have to appear as formal rupture. A durable serial arrangement can absorb a changed political moment by adjusting emphasis within recurring rubric worlds rather than abandoning its deeper structure. *Issue 40* is important here because it resists any simple linear story: it keeps the broadened horizon in view, but also returns more strongly to honesty, care, health, and everyday repair. The corpus is therefore best understood as a time-sensitive serial run in which the strongest continuity lies in the recurring structure itself, while limited broadening

shows how that structure can respond to political change without ceasing to be the same pedagogic form.

6.5. What the Case Contributes

The case makes visible a serial form of pedagogy that would be missed if *Ataa* were read only as separate stories, values, or themes. Conceptually, it shows that adult mediation can be organised through the magazine form itself. *Ataa* does not guide the child through one stable adult voice or one fixed child model. Its recurring rubrics divide pedagogic labour across editorial framing, comic correction, peer-world modelling, relational care, and participatory self-governance. The hidden adult is therefore not located in one speaker only; it is distributed through a repeated rubric structure that coordinates different modes of guidance over time.

Empirically, the Syrian case gives this argument historical force. Across *issues 35–40*, *Ataa* remains structurally recognisable while the later issues broaden the collective and justificatory horizon toward freedom, responsibility, order, homeland, and rebuilding. This limited broadening does not replace earlier patterns of self-regulation, care, cooperation, and everyday moral life. It shows how a durable children's magazine form can register political change through limited broadening without replacing its existing editorial form.

The wider contribution is therefore methodological as well as empirical: the thesis proposes a rubric-based way of reading children's magazines that follows how recurring rubrics divide authority, distribute child positions, naturalise values, and absorb historical pressure without assuming that change must take the form of rupture. This approach can be used beyond *Ataa* to ask how other children's magazines coordinate guidance, value formation, and belonging through recurring rubrics over time. It keeps the analysis close to the published material while still showing how the magazine form itself organises pedagogy.

7. Conclusion

7.1. Main Conclusion

Ataa is best understood as a stable serial form that distributes pedagogic work across recurring rubrics. Instead of guiding the child through one blunt adult voice or one fixed child model, the magazine spreads guidance across editorial framing, comic correction, peer-world modelling, relational care, and participatory self-governance. Through this arrangement, adult authority remains present throughout the magazine, but it usually appears through explanation, correction, modelling, care, and designed participation rather than through command alone. The implied child is therefore repeatedly positioned as educable, relational, morally improvable, and increasingly capable of wider responsibility.

The main conclusion is therefore not that *Ataa* promotes a list of values. It is that the magazine builds an implied child through a repeated serial structure. This child is not singular or fully formed in one place. It is assembled across recurring rubric worlds, which together normalise an ideal child who learns, improves, cooperates, accepts guidance, and takes a place within a wider collective horizon.

The politically significant period around 8 December 2024 matters because it tests how this serial form responds to historical pressure. Later issues widen the magazine's horizon toward freedom, responsibility, homeland, order, and rebuilding, but they do so without abandoning the deeper pedagogic arrangement. *Ataa* is therefore not best read as shifting from one pedagogy to another. It is better read as a durable serial form that carries limited broadening within an established structure.

7.2. What the Thesis Shows

Seen across the research questions, the thesis shows how *Ataa*'s serial organisation connects authority, child construction, legitimation, and belonging. Adult authority is not absent simply because it often appears friendly or indirect. It is softened and spread across the magazine: the editor frames values overtly, stories and comics model and correct conduct, peer worlds make norms social, and activities turn guidance into self-monitoring and participation. The child reader produced through these rubrics is layered rather than uniform: sometimes a learner, sometimes a relational friend or family member, sometimes a future-oriented civic subject, and sometimes a self-governing participant.

Values become persuasive because they are repeatedly attached to reasons and shared worlds. Learning, honesty, cooperation, responsibility, care, freedom, and homeland attachment are not presented only as abstract virtues; they are made to appear sensible because they protect the self, repair relationships, support the group, or contribute to the nation. The later issues make the national and reconstructive horizon more explicit, especially around freedom, responsibility, homeland, and rebuilding. Yet this broadening is carried through the same rubric structure. The thesis therefore shows a magazine whose strongest continuity lies in its serial organisation, while its historical responsiveness appears through limited broadening rather than a complete break.

7.3. Contributions and Wider Significance

The thesis proposes a way of reading children's magazines as serial pedagogic arrangements. In this approach, the question is not only what values a magazine contains, but how recurring rubrics divide pedagogic labour, differentiate child positions, justify norms, and connect values to belonging over time. This is the main analytical contribution of the study. It shows that adult authority, child construction, legitimation, and belonging do not need to be treated as separate themes; in *Ataa*, they are coordinated through the repeated architecture of the magazine.

This contribution is also transportable beyond the Syrian case. Another scholar could use the same rubric-based approach to ask how a different children's magazine distributes authority across recurring rubrics, whether it addresses one implied child or several differentiated child positions, how it makes values appear familiar or necessary, and how it responds to political or social change. The approach is therefore useful for studying children's magazines in other contexts where care, education, morality, and collective belonging overlap.

The Syrian contribution remains important because the thesis offers a close reading of *Ataa* across issues 35–40, a period in which the collective horizon becomes more explicit after December 2024. The case shows how freedom, responsibility, homeland, and rebuilding enter the magazine more visibly without replacing its established rubric structure. Methodologically, the study demonstrates the value of a text-first, rubric-based design for tracing both durable serial form and historically responsive broadening while remaining close to the published material.

7.4. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This thesis remains limited in three main ways. First, it analyses the implied child reader constructed by the magazine rather than how real children, parents, or educators received it. Second, it follows one magazine across a bounded consecutive issue run, which allows close serial analysis but does not support wider claims about Syrian children's print culture as a whole. Third, it uses a text-first design with a bounded visual layer, so it shows how images support guidance but does not attempt a full multimodal account of the magazine.

These limits also point to useful directions for future research. The same serial, rubric-based approach could be applied to other children's magazines in Syria, elsewhere in the Arab world, or in different political settings, in order to examine whether recurring rubrics also divide pedagogic labour, distribute child positions unevenly, and attach values to shared worlds of belonging. A controlled comparison between *Ataa* and a magazine with a different institutional setting, such as *Osama*, would be especially useful. Future studies could also extend the

present thesis through reception work with children, parents, teachers, or editors, or through fuller multimodal analysis across a longer issue run. Such work would not change the limits of this thesis, but it would place *Ataa* more clearly within a wider comparative field of children's serial print culture.

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Appendices

Appendix A presents the final coding framework used in the thesis. Appendix B provides a brief corpus overview and maps the sampled rubrics across issues 35–40. Together, the appendices clarify the coding structure, corpus selection, and sampling logic behind the analysis.

Appendix A. Final Coding Framework

This appendix summarises the final coding framework used in the thesis. The framework was developed from the research questions, the theoretical framework, pilot coding, and later refinement of the sampled rubrics. It is not a full coding log. Instead, it presents the six code families, the broader analytical codes used in the findings, the more specific subcodes that sat beneath them, and one representative example for each broader analytical code.

A.1 Overview of Code Families

Code family	Core analytical question
Adult Authority	Who carries authority, where it comes from, and how it is staged.
Guidance Practice	What the guidance does in the segment.
Constructed Child Reader	What kind of child the text imagines, addresses, or positions.
Ideal Child Trait / Value Position	Which trait, disposition, or value is presented as proper, admired, expected, or normal.

Legitimation Register	Why a value, behaviour, or norm is presented as right, valuable, or necessary.
Collective Belonging	What wider “we” the child is placed into.

A.2 Adult Authority

Family definition: how authority is sourced, carried, and staged in the text. This family was used when a segment showed who or what carried authority, such as an editor, narrator, parent, teacher, doctor, institution, public rule, religious discourse, or a task design that delegated self-government. Segments that mainly performed a guidance action, such as explaining, correcting, praising, or warning, were coded under Guidance Practice instead.

Broader analytical code	Definition and specific subcodes	Representative example
Overt adult voice	Adult authority is openly voiced by an adult or adult-coded speaker. Specific subcodes: Direct adult address; Narratorial moral closure.	Arabic: أحبتي، أنتم جيل المستقبل، وأيديكم الصغيرة ستحمل راية البناء والعمل. English: My loved ones, you are the generation of the future, and your small hands will carry the banner of building and work. Source: Issue 38, p. 3, Editor’s Letter.
Mediated authority	Authority is carried through story figures or child proxies inside the narrative frame. Specific subcodes: Adult figure inside the story; Child as carrier of adult norm; Guide / host figure.	Arabic: أم نعلان: حرية، كما تقول أنت... English: Nu’san’s mother: Freedom, as you say... Source: Issue 38, p. 2, Nu’san Adventures.

Institutional authority	Authority comes from a wider organised source beyond one speaker. Specific subcodes: Religious authority; Pedagogical / editorial authority; Organisational / civic-order authority.	Arabic: مكتوب على اللافتة “ممنوع الوقوف”. أليس علينا أن نحترم النظام؟ English: The sign says “No parking”. Should we not respect the rules? Source: Issue 39, p. 2, Nu’san Adventures.
Participatory / self-governing authority	Authority is softened into a task that asks the child to govern the self inside a preset moral frame. Specific subcodes: Activity-based self-governance.	Arabic: تخيل أنك قائد فريق تطوعي أو مجموعة صفية. English: Imagine that you are the leader of a volunteer team or a class group. Source: Issue 40, p. 38, Activities.

A.3 Guidance Practice

Family definition: the recurring action through which guidance is performed. This family was used when a segment told, explained, corrected, evaluated, reassured, invited, or asked the child to reflect, monitor, or commit.

Broader analytical code	Definition and specific subcodes	Representative example
Directive practice	Guidance tells the child what to do, what not to do, or what to change. Specific subcodes: Instructing; Correcting; Warning.	Arabic: ثابر يا قدوتنا، وستكون مدربي وأصدقائي بعد شفاء رئتيك. English: Persevere, our role model, and you will be my coach and my friends’ coach after your lungs recover. Source: Issue 40, p. 11, Ataa Diary.

Explanatory practice	Guidance makes the norm understandable by giving a reason or clarifying a lesson. Specific subcodes: Explaining; Modelling.	Arabic: يساعدنا تنظيم الوقت على فعل أشياء كثيرة دون أن يكون أحدها على حساب الآخر. English: Organising time helps us do many things without one being at the expense of another. Source: Issue 37, p. 2, Nu'san Adventures.
Evaluative practice	Guidance judges conduct, names an action as good or bad, or frames a consequence. Specific subcodes: Praising; Framing consequences.	Arabic: أحسنت الاعتذار والحل، سامحتك. English: You did well in apologising and proposing a solution; I forgive you. Source: Issue 40, p. 2, Nu'san Adventures.
Supportive practice	Guidance steadies the child affectively while still directing them toward the approved response. Specific subcodes: Reassuring.	Arabic: ستعود كما كنت، اتفقنا مع أحد الأطباء لتستعيد لياقتك التنفسية. English: You will return to how you were; we agreed with a doctor so that you may regain your respiratory fitness. Source: Issue 40, p. 11, Ataa Diary.
Participatory / reflective practice	Guidance asks the child to think, write, monitor, choose, imagine, promise, or commit. Specific subcodes: Inviting participation; Prompting reflection; Prompting self-monitoring; Asking for commitment.	Arabic: أكتب وعداً صغيراً ألتزم به هذا الأسبوع. English: I write a small promise that I will keep this week. Source: Issue 40, Activities.

A.4 Constructed Child Reader

Family definition: how the text imagines, addresses, or positions the implied child reader. This family was used when a passage assumed a child capacity, need, role,

or future position. It was applied only where the child was being positioned in a recognisable way, not simply where a value appeared.

Broader analytical code	Definition and specific subcodes	Representative example
Developmental child	The child is imagined as growing, learning, improving, or needing developmental guidance. Specific subcodes: Child as learner; Child as morally improvable; Child as emotionally self-regulating.	Arabic: سأزيد ساعات المطالعة، لأثري مفرداتي، وأطور أسلوبِي. English: I will increase my reading hours to enrich my vocabulary and develop my style. Source: Issue 37, p. 40, Du‘aa Adventures.
Moral-social child	The child is imagined as relationally responsible to others. Specific subcodes: Child as socially responsible; Child as helper/caregiver.	Arabic: نتعاون بعضنا مع بعض، ونعمل معاً لتجاوز صعاب الحياة. English: We cooperate with one another and work together to overcome the hardships of life. Source: Issue 36, p. 3, Editor’s Letter.
Civic-national child	The child is imagined in relation to public order, responsibility, or future nation-building. Specific subcodes: Child as civic subject; Child as future builder.	Arabic: احترامنا للنظام، والتزامنا بالقوانين، يعودان بالخير علينا وعلى وطننا الذي نحبه. English: Our respect for order and commitment to rules bring good to us and to our homeland, which we love. Source: Issue 39, p. 2, Nu‘san Adventures.
Religious child	The child is imagined through belief or pious moral orientation. Specific subcodes: Child as believer.	Arabic: اصبر يا نعان، واذكر الله. English: Be patient, Nu‘san, and remember God. Source: Issue 35, p. 2, Nu‘san Adventures.

Gendered child	The child is imagined through an explicitly gendered role or future position. Specific subcodes: Gendered child role.	Arabic: لكننا فتيات، فماذا عسانا نفعل؟ / نحن عنصر فاعل بالتغيير. English: But we are girls, so what can we do? / We are an active element in change. Source: Issue 38, p. 42, Du'aa Adventures.
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A.5 Ideal Child Trait / Value Position

Family definition: the trait, disposition, or value presented as proper, admirable, expected, or normal for the child reader. This family was used when the text explicitly named or strongly performed a value that helped build the final model of the ideal child.

Broader analytical code	Definition and specific subcodes	Representative example
Self-discipline / self-regulation	Values linked to restraint, endurance, self-management, and disciplined self-development. Specific subcodes: Patience; Self-control; Perseverance; Effortful self-improvement; Time organisation / balance; Health-conscious self-care.	Arabic: يساعدنا تنظيم الوقت على فعل أشياء كثيرة دون أن يكون أحدها على حساب الآخر. English: Organising time helps us do many things without one being at the expense of another. Source: Issue 37, p. 2, Nu'san Adventures.

Social-relational morality	Values linked to living well with others in everyday relations. Specific subcodes: Cooperation; Humanity / acceptance; Care for others; Complementarity; Honesty / truthfulness; Loyal friendship / steadfast support; Compassion; Fairness; Integrity / uprightness; Reconciliation / peacemaking.	Arabic: الشكل واللون ليسا سبب صحبتنا، تجمعنا أخوة صادقة. English: Shape and colour are not the reason for our companionship; what unites us is sincere sisterhood. Source: Issue 36, p. 41, Du'aa Adventures.
Civic morality / citizenship	Values linked to rules, public responsibility, and socially ordered conduct. Specific subcodes: Responsibility; Consultation / shura; Respect for rules; Initiative / proactiveness; Freedom.	Arabic: أليس علينا أن نحترم النظام؟ English: Should we not respect the rules? Source: Issue 39, p. 2, Nu'san Adventures.
National-reconstructive orientation	Values linked to homeland, recovery, rebuilding, and future national life. Specific subcodes: Future-building; Belonging; Hope; Freedom / liberation.	Arabic: يحيا الوعي، يحيا التغيير، يحيا بناء الوطن بدءاً منا. English: Long live awareness, long live change, long live building the homeland beginning from us. Source: Issue 39, p. 9, Ataa Diary.
Religious-moral virtue	Values explicitly carried as religiously good, pious, or God-oriented. Specific subcodes: Religiously grounded virtue.	Arabic: إنما يوفى الصابرون أجرهم بغير حساب. English: The patient will be given their reward without measure. Source: Issue 35, p. 3, Editor's Letter.

A.6 Legitimation Register

Family definition: the reason the text gives for why a behaviour, value, or norm is right, valuable, or necessary. This family separated the value itself from the reason attached to it. For example, responsibility was coded as a value, while “because it benefits the homeland” was treated as a legitimation register.

Broader analytical code	Definition and specific subcodes	Representative example
Religious legitimation	The norm is justified through religious authority or reasoning. Specific subcodes: Scriptural / prophetic grounding; Divine reward / approval.	Arabic: يا أيها الناس... وجعلناكم شعوباً وقبائل لتعارفوا English: O humankind... We made you peoples and tribes so that you may come to know one another. Source: Issue 36, p. 38, Activities.
Moral / common-sense legitimation	The norm is justified as plainly proper, sensible, or clearly right. Specific subcodes: Practical common sense; Right-wrong framing.	Arabic: يساعدنا تنظيم الوقت على فعل أشياء كثيرة دون أن يكون أحدها على حساب الآخر English: Organising time helps us do many things without one being at the expense of another. Source: Issue 37, p. 2, Nu'san Adventures.
Protective legitimation	The norm is justified by preventing harm or protecting health, safety, trust, or relationships. Specific subcodes: Health / safety protection.	Arabic: حدثه عن أخطارها... فهو عداء ورياضي وأخشى عليه. English: Tell him about its dangers... he is a runner and an athlete, and I fear for him. Source: Issue 40, p. 10, Ataa Diary.
Developmental / educational legitimation	The norm is justified as helping the child grow, learn, improve, or gain competence. Specific subcodes: Learning / growth benefit.	Arabic: لأثري مفرداتي، وأطور أسلوبِي. English: To enrich my vocabulary and develop my style. Source: Issue 37, p. 40, Du'aa Adventures.

Social-relational legitimation	The norm is justified through benefit to relations with others or to shared everyday life. Specific subcodes: Harmony / respect for others; Helping / caring effect.	Arabic: التعايش مع الآخرين وقبولهم كما هم هو أساس بناء مجتمع قوي مترابط. English: Living with others and accepting them as they are is the basis for building a strong, cohesive society. Source: Issue 36, p. 3, Editor's Letter.
Civic-national legitimation	The norm is justified through order, public good, homeland, or reconstruction. Specific subcodes: Homeland / reconstruction benefit; Order / public good.	Arabic: احترامنا للنظام، والتزامنا بالقوانين، يعودان بالخير علينا وعلى وطننا الذي نحبه. English: Our respect for order and commitment to rules bring good to us and to our homeland, which we love. Source: Issue 39, p. 2, Nu'san Adventures.
Emotional / affective legitimation	The norm is justified through desirable feelings or emotional states. Specific subcodes: Comfort / trust / confidence; Hope / pride / uplift; Enjoyment / delight; Memory / continuity.	Arabic: الحرية ليست مجرد كلمة، بل هي شعور جميل يمنحنا القوة لنحلم. English: Freedom is not just a word; it is a beautiful feeling that gives us the strength to dream. Source: Issue 38, p. 3, Editor's Letter.

A.7 Collective Belonging

Family definition: how the child is placed into a wider “we”. This family was used when a passage linked the child to family, peers, school, team, community, faith, homeland, heritage, or reconstruction. Segments focused only on individual conduct, without a clear collective frame, were not coded under this family.

Broader analytical code	Definition and specific subcodes	Representative example
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Immediate collectivity	Belonging through close everyday groups. Specific subcodes: School / class / team belonging; Peer friendship / sisterhood; Family belonging.	Arabic: مبارك رجوعك إلى فريقك، وتركك للشلة التي تقود للهلاك. English: Congratulations on your return to your team, and on leaving the clique that leads to destruction. Source: Issue 40, p. 11, Ataa Diary.
Wider social collectivity	Belonging through shared local or social life beyond the closest group. Specific subcodes: Heritage / place belonging; Community belonging.	Arabic: التقينا بكم في فعاليات داخل سوريا وتركيا، وزين حضوركم ومشاركاتكم المجلة دائماً. English: We met you at events inside Syria and Turkey, and your presence and contributions always adorned the magazine. Source: Issue 40, p. 3, Editor's Letter.
Religious collectivity	Belonging through faith or sacred historical frames. Specific subcodes: Muslim / believer collectivity; Sacred-land / sacred-history collectivity.	Arabic: النشاط الرابع: الصفات التي يتميز بها المسلم. English: Activity four: The traits that distinguish the Muslim. Source: Issue 35, p. 37, Activities.
National collectivity	Belonging through Syria as national or reconstructive "we". Specific subcodes: National belonging; Reconstruction collectivity.	Arabic: يحيا الوعي، يحيا التغيير، يحيا بناء الوطن بدءاً منا. English: Long live awareness, long live change, long live building the homeland beginning from us. Source: Issue 39, p. 9, Ataa Diary.

A.8 Cross-Family Coding Clarifications

- Adult Authority and Guidance Practice answered different analytical questions. Adult Authority identified who or what carried authority, while Guidance Practice identified what the guidance did in the segment.
- Constructed Child Reader was applied more selectively than Ideal Child Trait / Value Position. A passage could normalise a value without clearly constructing a specific child role.
- Ideal Child Trait / Value Position and Legitimation Register often appeared together, but they were treated as separate coding dimensions. The value was what the text admired or normalised; the legitimation register was why it was justified as right, valuable, or necessary.
- Collective Belonging identified the collective frame itself, rather than every value attached to that frame.
- Visual observations remained secondary and were used to support the textual interpretation rather than override it.

Appendix B. Corpus Overview and Sampled Rubric Map

This appendix summarises the six-issue corpus and the final systematic sample used in the thesis. Table B.1 gives basic corpus information for each issue. Table B.2 maps the five recurring rubrics coded across the six consecutive issues. The appendix is not organised as a before/after comparison; it records the corpus as one continuous, time-sensitive issue run around 8 December 2024.

Table B.1. Corpus Overview

Issue	Publication date	Main editorial focus / issue value
35	30 June 2024	Patience as a broad life virtue.

36	30 September 2024	Humanity, acceptance, and respectful coexistence.
37	31 December 2024	Shura / consultation as a practical and moral value.
38	31 March 2025	Freedom linked to responsibility, dignity, and rebuilding.
39	30 June 2025	Homeland attachment, order, and renewal.
40	30 September 2025	Ten-year anniversary of Ataa and renewed self-presentation as educator and companion.

Table B.2. Sampled Rubric Map Across Issues 35–40

Issue	Sampled rubric	Page(s)	Analytical focus
35	Editor's Letter	p. 3	Editorial framing of patience as a broad life virtue.
35	Nu'san Adventures	p. 2	Patience under pain, fear, and dental treatment.
35	Ataa Diary	pp. 6–7	Camp discipline and behavioural improvement through hardship.
35	Du'aa Adventures	pp. 38–39	Peer care, recovery, and patient, sustained companionship.
35	Activities	pp. 34–37	Worksheet-based self-monitoring and patience-based self-formation.

36	Editor's Letter	p. 3	Humanity and acceptance as the named issue value.
36	Nu'san Adventures	p. 2	Humanity and acceptance of a new peer.
36	Ataa Diary	pp. 6–7	Difference, complementarity, and supportive teamwork.
36	Du'aa Adventures	pp. 40–41	Appearance, injury, and loyal peer support.
36	Activities	pp. 36–39	Worksheet-based anti-racism and humane conduct.
37	Editor's Letter	p. 3	Shura as a practical and moral value.
37	Nu'san Adventures	p. 2	Time organisation and polite everyday conduct.
37	Ataa Diary	pp. 8–9	Consultation, teamwork, and inclusive cheering.
37	Du'aa Adventures	pp. 40–41	Merit, effort, and collective achievement.
37	Activities	pp. 36–39	Worksheet-based consultation and participatory decision-making.
38	Editor's Letter	p. 3	Freedom tied to dignity, duty, and rebuilding.
38	Nu'san Adventures	p. 2	Freedom as bounded conduct that avoids harm to others.

38	Ataa Diary	pp. 8–9	Civic initiative as practical reconstruction.
38	Du‘aa Adventures	pp. 42–43	Girls’ agency and contribution to reconstruction.
38	Activities	pp. 36–41	Worksheet training for initiative, leadership, and rebuilding.
39	Editor’s Letter	p. 3	Children as partners in homeland renewal.
39	Nu‘san Adventures	p. 2	Civic order through family instruction and public signage.
39	Ataa Diary	pp. 8–9	Reforming the problem child into a civic helper.
39	Du‘aa Adventures	pp. 40–41	Homeland memory through cherished family objects.
39	Activities	pp. 36–39	Future-building through scenario-based worksheet governance.
40	Editor’s Letter	p. 3	The magazine’s self-presentation as educator and companion.
40	Nu‘san Adventures	p. 2	Responsibility, honesty, and repair after minor harm.
40	Ataa Diary	pp. 10–11	Health responsibility, friendship, and recovery.

40	Du'aa Adventures	pp. 42–43	Peer mediation and reconciliation among girls.
40	Activities	pp. 36–39	Integrity and self-monitoring through exercises.