

THE CONCEPT OF “HOME” IN CHILDREN’S DRAWINGS AND ITS DEVELOPMENTAL REPRESENTATION

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Abstract: This paper explores the analysis of children’s drawings in relation to the concept of “home,” focusing on developmental differences between children aged 2–4 and 4–5 years. The study adopts a qualitative and interpretative approach, examining how children perceive, represent, and emotionally experience space through visual expression. The research is based on the observation and analysis of drawings produced by 200 children aged 2–5 years, including 50 children aged 2–4 and 150 children aged 4–5 years. The figurative material was collected in preschool institutions and primary schools in several cities of the Republic of North Macedonia. The analysis considered the general form of the home, the size and placement of elements, the use of lines and symbols, spatial organization, the figure–background relationship, and the representation of interior and exterior space.

Findings indicate that, among children aged 2–4 years, the concept of home is not represented as a structured architectural form but mainly through simple forms, lines, and elements connected with the child’s direct experience. Children organize space according to the significance of elements rather than realistic proportions or perspective. Larger forms may occupy a central position, while free and dynamic lines, circular forms, and simplified shapes reflect the child’s exploration of movement, space, and the drawing surface. At this stage, the home can be understood as an initial form of spatial organization rather than an attempt at realistic architectural representation.

At the age of 4–5 years, spatial organization becomes more intentional and structured. Children begin to understand the home not only as an external form but also as an interior environment containing different objects and spaces. Relationships between figures, objects, and empty areas become clearer, indicating a gradual awareness of figure and background. The use of simplified geometric forms becomes more consistent, and elements such as walls, doors, windows, roofs, yards, trees, and people appear in clearer relationships with one another. The emergence of strategies such as top-view representation also reflects the development of symbolic and spatial thinking.

The study also highlights the emotional dimension of the concept of home. Since the home is closely connected with family life, security, relationships, play, and everyday activities, children’s drawings may contain elements derived from personal experience, memory, fantasy, and imagination. However, individual elements such as the size of the house, the absence of a figure, a particular color, or an unusual form should not automatically be interpreted as indicators of fear, anxiety, or psychological difficulties. Their meaning should be considered in relation to the complete drawing, the child’s age, and the broader context.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the representation of home develops gradually in accordance with children’s figurative, perceptual, symbolic, and spatial development. Children’s drawings should therefore not be evaluated primarily according to realistic accuracy, but understood as forms of visual communication through which children organize experiences, perceive space, and express what is meaningful to them. The role of teachers and educators is important in providing an environment that supports free experimentation with line, form, color, symbols, and space.

Keywords: children’s drawings, concept of home, spatial perception, emotional expression

1. INTRODUCTION

Drawing is one of the first forms through which children express and organize their experiences of the world around them. Through line, form, color, and spatial organization, the child does not merely represent familiar objects but constructs a personal way of representing reality. For this reason, children’s drawings can serve as important material for observing the development of perception, symbolic thinking, and figurative expression. Among the themes that appear in children’s drawings, the home occupies a special place. It is one of the spaces closest to the child’s everyday experience and is connected with family life, security, relationships, play, and daily activities. Therefore, the concept of home should not be viewed only as the representation of an architectural structure, but also as a space that the child experiences, knows, and organizes subjectively. At early ages, the child does not represent the home according to the rules of perspective or the actual proportions of objects. Representation develops gradually, in accordance with the development of motor skills, visual perception, experience, and the individual way of organizing space. With increasing age, drawings show a gradual enrichment of forms, elements, and spatial relationships. This paper aims to analyze how the concept of home is represented in drawings of children aged 2–5 years, focusing on the differences that appear between age groups. Particular attention is paid to the way the home is represented, the organization of space, the relationship

between figure and background, the use of forms, the size of elements, and the inclusion of objects related to the child's everyday life. Another important aspect of this study is the emotional dimension. The home may represent for the child not only an external object but also a space connected with personal experiences and relationships. However, the interpretation of these representations should be carried out carefully and always in relation to the overall context of the drawing and the child's age. A single figurative element cannot be taken as direct evidence of an emotional or psychological state.

2. RESEARCH AIM

The aim of this research is to analyze the way in which the concept of home is represented in the drawings of children aged 2–5 years and to identify the developmental characteristics of figurative and spatial perception across different age groups.

In particular, the research aims to observe:

- the way the home is represented at the age of 2–4 years;
- the development of spatial representation among children aged 4–5 years;
- changes in figurative and spatial organization among children aged 4–5 years;
- the use of forms, lines, and symbols;
- the relationship between figure and background;
- the ways in which children's everyday experiences are reflected in the representation of the home.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted through the method of observation and analysis of children's drawings. 200 children aged 2–5 years were included in the study. Of this number, 50 children belonged to age 2–4 and group, while the remaining 150 participants were children aged 4–5 years.

The figurative material was collected in preschool institutions and primary schools in several cities of the Republic of North Macedonia. The drawings were treated as material for analyzing the way children perceive and represent the home, as well as the relationships they establish between forms and the space of the drawing. The analysis focused on several figurative and spatial indicators: the general form of the home, the size of the elements, the use of lines, spatial organization, the figure–background relationship, the representation of interior and exterior space, the placement of objects, and the use of symbols. The developmental characteristics of the children were also taken into consideration. For this reason, the drawings of younger children were not directly compared with those of older children on the basis of figurative realism, but were interpreted in relation to their developmental level. Representative drawings were selected from the overall material for each age group. These drawings serve to illustrate certain characteristics of the representation of the concept of home and the development of figurative organization. The interpretation was descriptive and analytical, focusing on the visible elements in the drawings. In this context, the drawing is not treated as a psychological test and is not used for establishing emotional or psychological diagnoses.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

THE CONCEPT OF HOME IN CHILDREN AGED 2–4 YEARS

According to the analysis of drawings by children aged 2–4 years, the concept of home is not yet represented as a clear architectural structure organized according to the rules of reality. During this period, the home appears mainly through simple forms, lines, and elements connected with the child's direct experience. Children do not structure space according to the rules of perspective or the actual proportions of objects, but according to the significance that the elements have for them. Larger forms may be associated with objects or experiences that have greater importance for the child, while smaller forms are placed around them without a defined spatial order. At this age, free and dynamic lines can be observed, indicating the child's active involvement in the drawing process. The movement of the hand and the trace created on paper are part of the process through which the child explores space. Drawings often contain circular or simplified forms to represent objects. This is related to the gradual development of the child's ability to distinguish forms, sizes, and relationships between them. At this stage, the concept of home may appear as an initial form of spatial organization, constructed around a central element. This representation should not be evaluated according to its architectural accuracy, but should be understood as part of the development of the child's figurative expression. (Fig. 1)

Fig.1. The concept of home in children aged 2–4 years



Source: Drawings from Struga preschool (Sonce) students, aged 3

5. THE CONCEPT OF HOME IN CHILDREN AGED 4–5 YEARS

At the age of 4–5 years, a gradual change can be observed in the perception and organization of space. The child begins to understand the home not only as an external form but also as an interior space that can be organized and contain different objects. In the drawings, the relationship between objects and free spaces becomes more visible. The white areas of the sheet may be used to indicate emptiness, while other areas are filled with different forms and objects. This indicates a gradual awareness of the relationship between figure and background. Children begin to create a more internal organization of the home, placing objects in a simplified manner and leaving free spaces in certain parts of the composition. These spaces may be related to activities such as play and movement. An interesting way of representation is also the “top-view” perspective, through which the child attempts to show relationships between objects and their organization in space. This way of representation should not be interpreted as an inability to achieve realistic representation, but as part of the development of symbolic and spatial thinking. When drawing specific objects, children often select their most characteristic aspects and use simple symbols, such as lines, circles, and squares, to indicate particular elements. Research by Zupančič and Duh (2021), conducted with children aged 4–6 years, shows that children use different strategies for representing space, while the above–below relationship is among the most frequent ways of spatial organization.

Fig. 2. Analysis of the perception of space and form in children aged 4–5 years



Source: Drawings from Dibra preschool (Brescia) students, aged 4

6. REPRESENTATION OF THE HOME IN CHILDREN AGED 4-5 YEARS

In children aged 4-5 years, the representation of the home gradually becomes more organized. Figurative elements begin to be placed in clearer relationships with one another, and the space of the drawing is used more consciously. During this period, children begin to represent more elements of the home, such as walls, doors, windows, the roof, the yard, and other elements of the surrounding environment. The organization of these elements indicates an expansion of figurative experience and the ability to establish relationships between objects. A more consistent use of geometric forms and straight lines can also be observed. The home may be represented through a combination of a square or rectangle with a triangular roof, while other elements are placed around it. At this age, the space of the drawing begins to be organized more consistently. The child creates clearer relationships between the home, the ground, the sky, trees, people, and other objects. However, even at this stage, representation should not be evaluated solely according to realism, because the child continues to use symbolic ways of representing what is important to them. (Fig. 3) Recent studies also treat

drawing as a research tool for examining children's representation of the preschool environment and the meanings they attach to it (Berti & Cigala, 2022).

Fig. 3. Representation of the home in children aged 4-5 years



Source: Drawings from Tetovo preschool (Perparimi) students, aged 5

7. EMOTIONAL INFLUENCE AND THE CONCEPT OF HOME

The home may have particular emotional significance in the child's experience, as it is connected with family space, security, relationships, and everyday activities. For this reason, the way in which a child represents the home may reflect parts of their personal experience.

However, the emotional interpretation of drawings requires caution. It is not appropriate for a single element, such as the size of the house, the absence of a figure, the use of a particular color, or an unusual form, to be automatically interpreted as an indicator of anxiety, fear, or a psychological problem.

A drawing may contain elements of fantasy, memory, everyday experience, and the child's imagination. Therefore, the meaning of a representation should be examined in the context of the entire drawing, the child's age, and, when necessary, through conversation with the child. Studies show that, with increasing age, drawings contain more parts and characteristic elements of the represented object (Long et al., 2024).

The role of the teacher and educator is to create an environment in which the child can express themselves freely and experiment with forms, lines, colors, and space. Drawing should primarily be used as a form of expression and figurative communication, while professional psychological interpretations should be left to the relevant specialists.

8. CONCLUSION

The analysis of drawings by children aged 2–5 years shows that the concept of home develops gradually in accordance with the child's figurative, perceptual, and spatial development. In younger children, the home is represented through simple forms and lines, while with increasing age the representation becomes more organized and includes a greater number of elements and spatial relationships.

In the 2–4 age group, representation is characterized by simple forms, intuitive spatial organization, and spontaneous use of line. At the age of 4–5 years, awareness of interior space and the relationship between objects and background becomes more visible. Among children aged 4-5 years, the organization of the home and the elements surrounding it becomes more structured and consistent.

At all these stages, the drawing of the home should not be evaluated solely from the perspective of figurative realism. It represents a way through which the child organizes their experience, perceives space, and expresses what is important to them.

Therefore, the analysis of children's drawings should be based on their developmental characteristics and on the individuality of figurative expression. The concept of home, as one of the themes closest to the child's experience, provides important opportunities for observing the development of form, space, symbol, and personal expression during childhood.

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