

YOUNG GIFTED CHILDREN AND MICROENVIRONMENT OF THEIR DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the actual problem of modern psychology - the problem of the development of young gifted children. The article discusses the issues of child giftedness in connection with the specifics of the microenvironment of preschool children development. The focus is on the position of the child in the family and his perception of the family. A study of the family image features and attitudes towards it in 30 children of 5-6 years old with signs of giftedness in comparison with peers is presented. According to the data obtained, 43% of gifted preschoolers and 17% of their peers perceive the family microenvironment as a very comfortable and favorable. Among these children, there are significantly more girls than boys. The signs of emotional discomfort and anxiety are found in another part of preschool children against the background of a general positive attitude when they perceive the family microenvironment.

Keywords: gifted children, microenvironment of development, preschool age, creative potential, family, parents.

Much, if not almost all that is in us today, was laid in our first seven years of life.

Paul Weinzwieg

Giftedness and development of a gifted child should be the subject of care and responsibility of the family, school and university.

Alexey Matyushkin

1. INTRODUCTION

Creating the conditions for the disclosure of children's abilities and talents is an actual and significant social task. Its successful solution requires a scientifically based approach.

In modern psychology, preschool childhood is considered as an important period in the formation of personal qualities, cognitive functions and processes, the development of abilities and giftedness. High abilities can manifest themselves quite early - already at preschool age (Matyushkin 1990). In this regard, it is extremely important to support the talent germs, especially in the family, which has a decisive influence on the development of the preschooler.

The dynamics of the modern family, as studies have showed, is associated with many objective and subjective difficulties, characterized by crisis tendencies (Andreeva 2018, Antonov 2014, Elkind 2009, Ivanova 2017, Polivanova 2018). Difficulties and violations in parent-child relationships can have a significant impact on the well-being of a preschooler in a family, complicate the disclosure of his talents and destabilize development in general.

As noted by A.D. Andreeva (Andreeva 2018), new family goals give priority to those models of parenting that are aimed at the early and intensive intellectual development of the child. Adults tend to include a small child in the educational process long before preschool activities have exhausted their developmental resources. Such training often is reduced to the expansion of knowledge and the development of skills (Smirnova 2015). The development of the emotional and social sphere, creative

abilities is not given sufficient attention, thereby inhibiting the unleashing of the potential of the preschooler.

The problem of the specifics of the family microenvironment and its role in the development of giftedness is mainly investigated by analyzing the opinions, attitudes, and actions of their parents. However, to understand the nature of the impact of the environment on the child, it is necessary to consider the place he occupies in this environment. "Such consideration allows us to understand the effects coming from the environment not as a simple combination of them, but as some specific system" (Bozhovich 2008, p.146). The study of the social situation of development, stressed by L.I.Bozhovich, implies "on the one hand, an analysis of the system of objective circumstances in which the child lives (his objective position), on the other, how he himself, by virtue of the level of development already achieved, relates to these circumstances (his inner position) "(Bozhovich 2008, p. 168).

Gifted children have their own characteristics and needs, which often remain undetected or not understood by adults. The fact that an extraordinary child parents` plan and implementation do not always correspond with his aspirations, age and individual characteristics (Clark 2008, Mönks & Ypenburg, 2011, Morawska & Sanders 2009).

The use of projective drawing techniques allows you to see the image of the family and relationships in it, formed in the child.

The image of the family in a preschooler may reflect changes in the family microenvironment, for example, after the birth of a sibling, signs of anxiety appear in the drawing (Shur, Varga & Chebotareva 2018). Features of family drawings in children of different nationalities can act as indicators of interaction patterns in different cultures (Dimitrova 2016). It should be noted that in recent studies of preschoolers using the "Family Drawing", the issue of giftedness has not been considered.

In connection with the extremely weak study of the features of the perception image of the family microenvironment in modern gifted preschoolers, this was the purpose of the study.

The theoretical basis of the research was the concept "Creative giftedness" of A.M.Matyushkin (Matyushkin 1990).

The objectives of the study included: identifying children with high creative potential - the main component of giftedness, analyzing the characteristics of the image of the family microenvironment in gifted preschoolers in comparison with peers.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Participants and Methods

160 children 5-6 years old participated in the study. Children attended kindergartens of Moscow.

In a comprehensive study of children, the following techniques were used:

- Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking;
- observation of children in the classroom and in free games;
- survey of teachers about the features of the individual development of children with the help of special forms;
- expert evaluation of creative works of children (drawings, crafts, etc.)
- projective technique "Family Drawing";
- conversations with children;
- statistical computer data processing.

2.2. Procedure

In accordance with the objectives of the study included two stages.

At the first stage, all preschoolers were surveyed to determine creative potential and identify gifted children. The Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking were used; expert evaluation of creative works of children; children were observed in the classroom and in spontaneous games; teachers survey about the features of children individual development with the help of special questionnaires.

Determination of the general indicator (T) of the Torrance Tests allowed to assess the level of creative thinking - the main component of creative potential as follows: if the value of T-indicator exceeded or was 60 points - a high level of creative thinking, if the value of T was within 51- 59 points - above average; at T from 40 to 50 points - medium; T less than 40 was considered low. The data of expert assessments, observations, surveys were also taken into account.

Among all the preschoolers surveyed, a group (I) of children with high creative performance (T greater than or equal to 60), which can be attributed to the gifted, was selected, it included 30 preschool children, 15 of them girls and the equal number of boys.

To conduct a comparative analysis of the experimental data of children differing in the level of creative potential, another group (II) was formed, equal to the selected in quantitative and age composition, but different in creative indicators: the creative capabilities of these children were less pronounced, the level of creative thinking was below average or low. In compiling Group II, a random strategy for representativeness was also used as a technique.

At the second stage, children from the two groups were examined to identify the features of their perception of the family microenvironment. Each child was asked to perform a family drawing. After the drawing was finished, a conversation was held with each preschooler. The resulting material was subjected to quantitative and qualitative processing.

The interpretation of the results obtained using the "Family Drawing" technique was carried out.

The main areas of analysis were:

- The structure of the family picture (comparing the real and depicted in the figure).
- Features of emotional attitudes, perceptions and relationships of parents and children.
- Representations of the preschooler about himself in the conditions of the family microenvironment.
- The comfort of the family microenvironment.

A large number of indicators were analyzed. Fisher criterion was used to assess the significance of differences.

3. RESULTS

At the first stage of the research, the diagnostics of the creative possibilities of preschool children was carried out. All children coped with the implementation of the Torrance Tests, but with different success.

After two groups of children with different levels of creative thinking were identified: Group I, consisting of children with a high level of creative thinking ($M = 65.63$; $SD = 4.84$), which can be attributed to the gifted; Group II, consisting of preschoolers with low and below average levels of creative thinking ($M = 43.27$; $SD = 4.43$), was used to statistically assess the significance of differences using Student's t-test. Highly significant differences were found in the mean values by groups of T-values ($p = 0.000$). This confirmed the correctness of our distribution of children in groups, its compliance with the objectives of the study.

At the second stage, preschool children from two selected groups completed drawings of the family.

Family structure

According to the results, 90% of children from group I and the same number from group II live in full families. For most of them (88.9% - Group I, 77.8% - Group II), the structure of the real and drawn family coincided. In children from incomplete families, the drawings reflected the real situation, with the exception of one boy from group I, who united in the picture parents who are divorced and living separately. Thus, the structure of the real and drawn family coincided in 86.7% of children of group I and 80% of children of group II.

70% of the children of group I have siblings, all their siblings are shown in the drawings. In group II, 66.7% of preschool children have siblings that were present in the drawings in 90% of these children. Families of preschoolers surveyed differ in the number of children: 63.4% of children in group I have one sibling and 43.3% of children in group II; two siblings in 6.6% - Group I and 16.7% - Group II; three sibling only in 6.5% - group II.

By order of birth, the most frequently surveyed children were the first in the family: 56.7% - Group I and 66.7% - Group II. The second children in the family were 40% - Group I and 26.7% - Group II, the third - 6.6% - Group II.

Among children with siblings, 33.3% of children of group I and 40% of group II are in the position of the eldest (by birth) child. The position of the youngest child is occupied by 57.1% - Group I and 40% - Group II. The position of the average child - in 4.8% - group I and 10% - group II. One child from group I (4.8%) and two children from group II (10%) have a twin: a brother or sister. Note that the drawings of most of the children reflected the real positions of the siblings in the family, but the degree of accuracy in the representation of the proportions of the figures fluctuated.

A comparative analysis showed that in the families of gifted preschoolers there are two children more often (the gifted one is one) than in the families of their peers (the difference at the level of the trend, $p < 0.058$). Among gifted children who have siblings, more often than peers (also with siblings), there are those who are in the position of a younger child ($p < 0.038$).

Features of the emotional relationship

When drawing all the children had pencils / felt-tip pens. Some preschoolers used all the colors, painstakingly painted the drawings, others were limited only to drawing the contour and individual details. Pictures of children differed in the prevailing colors, the degree of color. The overall color gamut of the picture, reflecting the child's positive attitude (no black, dark background, etc.) is characteristic of 83.30% - Group I and 66.7% - Group II (difference at the level of trend, $p < 0.066$). Taking into account the possibility of influencing the emotional characteristics of a picture of such a factor as upbringing in an incomplete family, the drawings of children from complete and incomplete families were analyzed separately. The analysis showed that among children from complete families, the overall color gamut of the pattern, reflecting a positive attitude, is more often observed in preschool children of Group I (85.2%) than Group II (66.7%), the difference is significant ($p < 0.05$). Children raised in single-parent families account for 10% in each group, and 6.6% showed signs of a positive attitude.

Adequate distribution of human figures on a sheet was noted in 70% of Group I and 56.7% of Group II, but the observed differences did not reach the level of significance.

Drawn small figures and the location of the figures in the lower part of the sheet were less common in the drawings of preschool children of group I (13.3%) than in the drawings of their peers from group II (40%), the difference is significant ($p < 0.007$).

Representations of preschoolers about themselves in the conditions of the family microenvironment

The features of the image of the child himself (I-figure) in the family picture were analyzed. At the same time, the focus was on the family context - the environment in which the preschooler portrayed himself. The results of the distribution of preschool children with regard to the image of the I-figure are presented in Table 1.

Image features of I-figure	Group (level of creative potential), n (children), %									
	I					II				
	n (children)	full family (90%)		incomplete family (10%)		n (children)	full family (90%)		incomplete family (10%)	
		boys	girls	boys	girls		boys	girls	boys	Girls
I'm among relatives	90	33,3	46,7	6,7	3,3	80	40	36,7	-	3,3
I am alone	-	-	-	-	-	3,3	3,3			
The absence of I-figure	10	10	-	-	-	16,7	6,8	3,3	3,3	3,3

Table 1. Distribution of preschool children depending on the image of the I-figure in the family drawings

The data presented in Table 1 indicate that the most frequent were the drawings in which the child depicted himself among other family members: mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters. This version of the picture - "I am among relatives" was noted in 90% of children in group I and 80% in group II.

The complete opposite of such a drawing was a work in which only an I-figure was present, and there were no other people's figures. This version of the picture was found only in one child - Nastya P. from group II. The girl drew herself without a smile with her arms and long fingers spread to the sides, next to herself she drew a large blue flower.

In the works of some children (10% of children of group I and 16.7% of group II) there was no I-figure. In the drawings of these preschoolers, one could see besides family members of other people (grandmother, aunt, etc.) or animals (parrot, dog), as if replacing the missing I-figure.

Comfort of the family microenvironment

A comprehensive analysis of the above aspects of the family microenvironment and the peculiarities of their perception by preschool children was carried out, and those who perceive the family microenvironment as comfortable and favorable were identified.

The family microenvironment is perceived as comfortable and favorable only by a part of gifted children (43.3% from group I) and some of their peers (16.7% from group II), the differences are significant ($p < 0.011$). Among these children there are those who are raised in full families: there are more of them in group I (36.7%) than in group II (16.7%), the differences are significant ($p < 0.04$). And there are those who are brought up in single-parent families: 6.6% from group I.

In the drawings of most of the preschool children (56.7% of children of group I and 83.3% of group II), both signs of a positive attitude and comfort of the family microenvironment and signs (of varying severity) of certain discomfort (signs of uncertainty, anxiety, conflict) were highlighted.

4. DISCUSSION

Preschool age is an important stage in the formation of personality, the disclosure of creative potential, which can manifest itself quite early. But precisely at this age the impact is made on the child by adults created environment, and above all, the family microenvironment is felt to the greatest extent. To understand the nature of its impact on the gifted preschooler, it was necessary to consider his position in the family, the perception of the family microenvironment. The study was aimed at this.

The use of the projective methodology “Family Drawing” made it possible to identify and analyze the features of the family image, relations in it, the position of the gifted child.

R.Fan notes (Fan 2012) that drawing serves as a bridge between the inner self and the outside world for child. Researchers believe that the pictures of children 5-7 years old reveal their experiences and inner world much deeper than verbal techniques or even the method of observation. The most popular method in the study of preschoolers is the Family Drawing. Many psychologists distinguish the “Family Picture” as a highly informative means of knowing the child’s personality, reflecting the perception of himself and other family members, the feelings and experiences of a preschooler, his attitude to close adults. Our research confirms this conclusion.

It is revealed that most of gifted preschoolers live in full families. The structure of the real and painted family coincided in most of gifted children. By order of birth, a little more than half of the extraordinary children were the first in the family. Most of the gifted have siblings, all siblings are depicted in family drawings. Among gifted children with siblings, more often than peers (also with siblings), there were those who were in the position of a younger child.

The overall color scheme of the picture, reflecting the positive attitude of the child (no black, dark background, etc.), an adequate distribution of the figures of people on the sheet are characteristic for the majority of the gifted. And although some of the figures depicted small figures, the location of the figures in the lower part of the sheet was less common in the drawings of gifted preschoolers than in the drawings of their peers. This feature suggests that the feeling of insecurity, the experience of the inferiority of the family situation is less inherent in gifted preschoolers than their peers.

The analysis of the features of the image of a gifted child himself (I-figures) in the family picture showed: the most frequent were the drawings in which the preschooler depicted himself among other family members: mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters. In the works of some children there was no I-figure, which could indicate a feeling of inferiority, rejection in the family, inadequacy of the family microenvironment. When interpreting the drawings of preschool children, especially those who have not painted themselves, a detailed and comprehensive analysis of the situation of raising a child is necessary in order to avoid hasty and unreasonable conclusions.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The obtained results expand the scientific understanding of the features of young gifted children and the specifics of the microenvironment of their development.

The study once again confirms the large role of the family in the development of children's giftedness at the stage of preschool age.

The family microenvironment is perceived as comfortable and favorable only by a part of gifted children and some of their peers. A comparison of the drawings of gifted boys and gifted girls allowed to conclude that girls more often perceive the family microenvironment as comfortable in comparison with boys.

The drawings of most preschoolers, both gifted and peers, reflect the complexity and multidimensionality of the perception patterns of the family microenvironment: they highlighted both signs of a positive attitude and comfort of the family microenvironment, and signs (of varying severity) of a certain discomfort (signs of uncertainty, anxiety, conflict) and etc.).

The results obtained necessitate a more careful attitude to the position of the preschooler in the family, his perception of the family situation. For the successful development of the child, the disclosure of children's abilities and talents for adults, it is extremely important to understand its capabilities and needs not only in the conditions of the educational microenvironment, but, most importantly, in the conditions of the family microenvironment.

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