

Research Article

A contemporary interpretation of abstraction and creativity through Islamic patterns in design education: Interior architecture studio experience

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Extended Abstract

Abstract

The goal of this study is to develop a studio experience that will allow second-year interior architecture students to incorporate the continuity of traditional Islamic patterns into contemporary designs. Islamic geometric patterns from the Seljuk eras were investigated as part of the study's focus, and these patterns were used as a foundation for the development of a novel design model. It is important for the systematization of the design process that the working methodology is structured in three phases, namely the analytical phase, the creative phase and the application phase. The process of gathering data is part of the analytical phase, but the creative phase is where the data is abstracted and interpreted. As a result, the study has been presented as a unique one in terms of bringing awareness of conventional and regional patterns in interior architecture education as well as sustainability with motivated, abstract, avant-garde, and contemporary approach.

Keywords: Islamic patterns, Creativity, Abstraction, Interior architecture

Introduction: The foundations of creative thinking are discovering the potential of cultural and architectural heritage and incorporating it into contemporary life to produce something new and original in problem-solving in design education (El-Zeiny & Ezzat, 2021). One of the original arts that directly influences modern designers design processes is culture, which serves as the main prototype of modern design. For this very reason, cultural influences are like an endless source of inspiration for modern design and its rich soil that cannot be disregarded (He, 2022). Geometric motifs are widely used in architectural elements, even though they were first used in Anatolian culture in Turks during pre-Islamic times and can be found in every age (Sönmeztürk et al., 2022: 49). Ahmed (2022) emphasized that while researchers and study geometric patterns' history, technique, philosophy, and other facets, there haven't been enough studies on how to incorporate them into modern life. However, patterns can be used abstractly in modern structures. Different techniques can be used in the educational process to realize the designers' interpretation model by abstracting traditional patterns.

Purpose and scope: The study's main issue in this context is that interior architecture education does not provide enough groundwork for creative thinking, despite the prevalence of Islamic patterns that reflect our nation's cultural identity in architectural works. The study aims to reveal original, contemporary lines that are not imitated, as well as to foster creative and abstract thinking by incorporating patterns that carry the spirit of Islamic culture and heritage into the interior design studio process. Students of interior architecture from various parts of the nation were asked to observe Seljuk structures in the cities they reside in and conduct research on the Islamic patterns of the structures as part of the study. As a result, the modern design environment is a platform that provides distinctive solutions that holistically integrate the past and



present. The concept of incorporating and developing the said approach in the educational process of various design disciplines should be expanded to increase the number of original and creative designs inspired by the cultural data of societies. Additionally, the study enhances the students' design skills as they learn interior architecture within the context of the design process.

Method: In the study, Selcuk University Faculty of Architecture and Design Interior Architecture Project II studio, within the scope of the 2021-2022 spring semester, the interior design of the store (textile, cosmetics, sports) where the products of world-famous brands are exhibited using Islamic pattern patterns were given to the students as a project subject. It aims to demonstrate various viewpoints on creativity and abstraction in this context. The abstraction action that was mentioned in the study was formal abstraction; functional and semantic abstraction were not included. Islamic geometric patterns from the Seljuk eras were investigated as part of the study's focus, and these patterns were used as a foundation for the development of a novel design model. It is important for the systematization of the design process that the working methodology is structured in three phases, namely the analytical phase, the creative phase and the application phase. The process of gathering data is part of the interior design studio process, the students' final products reflect a systematic process that integrates design and art.

Findings and conclusion: One of the most crucial requirements for creativity is the ability to come up with fresh, original ideas. According to Stein (1953), creativity should be defined according to the culture it exists in, and "innovation" or "being new" denotes the fact that creative production takes on a new form. As a result of the study, it has been found that the abstraction method, which combines the modern and the traditional and carries the past into the future, plays a key role in the development of the design and the advancement of the design process with the correct steps in the transition from concrete to abstract. With the help of the abstraction model, it has significantly aided in the growth of students' capacity for original and creative problem-solving. Islamic patterns exhibit the mirror quality that reflects the culture of societies because they have historical, cultural, and social meanings in addition to geometric ones. The study's noteworthy contribution to both the recognition of the culture and the increase in awareness and sustainability of the culture for future generations without being imitated has emerged as a result of fusing the traditional with the modern and using Islamic patterns as a design base.

Keywords: Islamic patterns, Creativity, Abstraction, Interior architecture

INTRODUCTION

Through the development of students' analytical thinking, questioning, interpretation, and original design skills, architecture and interior architecture education primarily aims to provide two- and three-dimensional solutions. The development of these abilities requires creative thinking. Since creativity is a skill that can be learned and improved (Robinson, 2001), many studies have proposed various techniques to foster creative thinking. The application of these techniques, particularly in the educational process, promotes the development of various creative outcomes (Kaya & Bilgiç, 2020: 273). The foundations of creative thinking are discovering the potential of cultural and architectural heritage and incorporating it into contemporary life to produce something new and original in problem-solving in design education (El-Zeiny & Ezzat, 2021: 595). One of the original arts that directly influences modern designers' design processes is culture, which serves as the main prototype of modern design. For this very reason, cultural influences are like an endless source of inspiration for modern design and its rich soil that cannot be disregarded (He, 2022). Geometric motifs are widely used in architectural elements, even though they were first used in Anatolian culture in Turks during pre-Islamic times and can be found in every age (Sönmeztürk et al., 2022: 49). Geometric patterns were described by Altın (2022: 531) as motifs and compositions created by combining broken and straight lines, stars, polygons, and other shapes. Patterns, which are quite prevalent in Turkish art, have a sort of defining characteristic regarding the traits of the eras in which they are used and their Fundamentals (Mülayim, 1998: 219).

In various areas (facade, interior, accessories) of contemporary architectural structures, it is now fairly common to copy Islamic patterns (Öztürk & Türkoğlu, 2016). Unconsciously copying and using patterns, however, results in the spirituality of the patterns being lost, simplified and sometimes even disidentified when viewed in terms of the meaning and identity of Islamic patterns. Being traditional without mindlessly copying and reiterating the past, while also being contemporary by interpreting the past without rejecting tradition, is one of the best solutions for modern architecture. Traditional and modern styles of Islamic architecture should



coexist in today's designs (Sobh & Samy, 2018: 1079). For this reason, it is foreseen to carry out researches that can adapt Islamic patterns to modern architecture. Ahmed (2022: 291) emphasized that while researchers and orientalist study geometric patterns' history, technique, philosophy, and other facets, there haven't been enough studies on how to incorporate them into modern life. However, patterns can be used abstractly in modern structures. Different techniques can be used in the educational process to realize the designers' interpretation model by abstracting traditional patterns.

The incorporation of these methods in the educational process is crucial in terms of maintaining the integrity of the link between the past and the present, along with studies on methods based on modern interpretation inspired by Islamic patterns (Latiff, 2012; Bökü, 2009; Özkar & Erkmen, 2019; Azari et al., 2023). It can be seen that Islamic Motifs are used as a base for the development of creativity in the design process, especially in Interior Architecture education when the studies that abstract Islamic patterns and use them in modern architecture in design education (Köse Doğan, 2017; Sobh & Samy, 2018) are examined. In the context of the Interior Architecture project course, Köse Doğan (2017) instructed the students to stylize and reinterpret the motifs present in the Seljuk period structures in Konya and Kayseri to create a unique project. The study's stylized motifs were incorporated into the design of the space's various elements, from lighting to exhibition components. Similarly, El-Zeiny & Ezzat (2021) conduct a study on the function of cultural schemes, which are a reflection of local identity and traditional life, in the interior architects, who will interpret existing cultural patterns to create modern interiors with more sophisticated solutions while preserving local identity. As a result, a creative thinking model derived from regional motifs can be seen in the design process of interior architecture education, which demonstrates an integrated structure between the past and present.

The study's main issue in this context is that interior architecture education does not provide enough groundwork for creative thinking, despite the prevalence of Islamic patterns that reflect our nation's cultural identity in architectural works. The study aims to reveal original, contemporary lines that are not imitated, as well as to foster creative and abstract thinking by incorporating patterns that carry the spirit of Islamic culture and heritage into the interior design studio process. Students of interior architecture from various parts of the nation were asked to observe Seljuk structures in the cities they reside in and conduct research on the Islamic patterns of the structures as part of the study. It is anticipated that an abstracted motif from the acquired patterns will be used as an input in the design. By abstracting the existing pattern, it is hoped that students will develop the phenomenon of creative thinking as well as knowledge of the historical background of the city they live in. The analytical, creative, and application phases of the design process model, which integrates traditional and modern by abstracting cultural patterns into tangible projects, are crucial.

Conceptual Infrastructure

Significance of abstraction and creativity in interior architecture education

People need to correctly identify, analyze, and comprehend the essence of issues in their environment in order to design. Only the act of abstraction makes it possible to define, examine, and ultimately arrive at the essence of facts and events. Abstraction provides the most important information because concrete facts and events can only provide us with a formal and external reality (Hançerlioğlu, 1993).

By ignoring components like the design or the quality and relationship of a concept, the act of abstraction helps to distinguish the general and the essential from the non-essential in a straightforward manner (Nezor, 2011: 7). To realize the most competent stage of the information process, abstraction is done at this very point. In reality, abstraction is a technique, a tool, used to return to the concrete and understand the concrete whole in its relationships with its constituent parts. Hegel claims that abstraction represents the reality of the being, which is still in its unrevealed state and is just beginning to reveal itself. The abstract and the pure and simple are equivalent in this regard (Hançerlioğlu, 2005). Semantic, functional, and formal abstractions are all handled differently (Nezor, 2011: 65). The indirect expression that characterizes the objects with the accumulation of the individual from the past is a semantic abstraction. These abstractions make use of expressions that indirectly characterize the object and are revealed by its connotations, which the individual associates with her/his own objects. Functional abstractions include space analyses for additional information and drawings comparing the functionality of various spaces to facilitate problem-solving during the design phase. On the



other hand, formal abstraction is the kind of abstraction that results from expressing concrete forms in a way that simplifies them. To describe a concrete form in pure language, one must either reduce it to its geometrical components or use abstract structure lines or contours to describe it. Examples of the formal abstraction type in architecture can be found in the impression sketches and descriptions created during the planning stage of the design process. Such sketches aid in the development of knowledge and methodical thought in architectural education (Înceoğlu, 1995). Formal abstraction is a technique used by designers to gather environmental data before beginning their work, to develop ideas for formal searches in their sketches, and to purge designs of unnecessary details (Nezor, 2011: 66). It is possible to claim that abstraction in this situation is creatively revealing. To create a product, the design process oscillates between the abstract and the concrete, rather than just developing at the abstract level. It won't ever be applicable if not. As a result, to produce this increasingly concrete architectural design product, designers cultivate their creativity by alternating between concrete and abstract (Nezor, 2011). One of the key tools for teaching and fostering creativity in the education of designers is abstraction (Robinson, 2001). According to Nezor (2011: 42), by abstracting, architecture students can capture the essence, and create original, creative designs that will boost the designer's creativity and give users a variety of options. Because designers perceive things differently, researchers claim that including abstraction in interior architecture education has a guiding and differentiating effect on design education (Ertürk, 1984). But in today's world, where communication and technology are always evolving, the idea of creativity in interior design is becoming more and more significant (Uzunarslan & Polatkan, 2011).

According to Kılıçaslan and Ziyrek (2012), creativity is a crucial factor in producing original design products in design education, and design education should be improved to foster creativity. Additionally, it was pointed out that creativity is typically assessed in terms of the final product, and it was determined that there are activities that foster students' creativity to advance design education. In the study by Tavşan and Sönmez (2010), some students studying interior architecture received instruction using the abstraction method, while a different group received instruction using the traditional method. With the results obtained, it is evident that the expression activated by the abstraction method is superior to the traditional expression method in terms of raising student achievement and the degree of knowledge permanence. The study's findings (Aşkın, 2020: 121) show that abstraction encourages the development of creative thinking in the design process. As a result, interior architecture students are able to think more deeply and without as many restrictions.

Within the context of one's mental activities, creativity includes the stages of producing and discovering; this process also involves intuitive thinking. The production of preliminary creative structure, preliminary creative discovery and interpretation, production of creative thinking, creative discovery and interpretation, and product development are all parts of this creation process, which is based on production and discovery. The creative process that emerges from these mental activities is concurrently influenced by the personal and cultural aspects of the designer (Smith et al., 1995). These cultural elements, which include Islamic patterns, act as a link between the past and the present.

Islamic patterns and their use in creative thinking in interior architecture education

Due to certain restrictions on the use of human or natural figures, geometric patterns play a significant role in Islam as an art form and for ornamental purposes. Architecture has long utilized geometric patterns, which have evolved over time and place (Reki & Arslan Selçuk, 2018: 83). Islamic art has been shaped by the conditions and traditions of each Islamic state. During the Seljuk eras, architectural creations reflected the growing understanding of Islamic art in Turkish society (Dalağan, 2012: 75). As a result, the primary visual characteristics for designating a structure as having Islamic architecture are Islamic geometric patterns. In addition, these geometric shapes and ratios highlight a crucial area of investigation for modern architecture as a tool for creativity (Matinpour & Arslan Selçuk, 2018: 89). Focusing on this subject, particularly during the designers' educational process, will encourage the development of their creative imagination (Uraz, 1993). Because family, society and education are at the forefront of the development of individuals' creativity (Kaya & Bilgiç, 2020: 283). Education in interior architecture is not organized around a rigid, one-dimensional teaching/learning process. Instead, it is a type of education that requires a framework that points design students toward active, multidimensional thought processes (Cross, 2001). The act of designing interacts with creative thinking as a fundamental component of the educational process. Methods that will support this process and bring creativity to the fore in design gain importance given that design education is a process of



creating, experiencing, and researching (Garip & Garip, 2012). Carrying the past into design by interpreting it rather than imitating it is one of the techniques used in the emergence of creative thinking. Various researchers in interior architecture education have addressed creative thinking as a way to bring the past into the present and to blend the modern with the traditional.

El-Zeiny and Ezzat (2021), using the theory of cultural schema, looked at how incorporating elements from regional identity into contemporary designs affected the graduation project process for interior architecture. With the help of this study, which lays the foundation for how to interpret Egypt's cultural heritage through the interior design process, it has been made apparent that it is possible to integrate the traditional and the modern. Similarly, Köse Doğan (2017) requested that students incorporate interior designs into her interior design project by interpreting Seljuk motifs. Students both learned about Seljuk culture as a result of the study, and they created a three-dimensional interior work using traditional two-dimensional motifs. Incorporating traditional culture into interior design projects not only satisfies modern people's desires for material goods and ideals of living but also creates a perfect marriage with a modern lifestyle that abstracts their traditional cultural beliefs and values (Liu & Li, 2016: 11110). As a result, creativity must be fostered in the transforming cultural heritage brought about by evolving technology (Angelina et al., 2021: 1132). Islamic motifs' importance in design education cannot be understated because they are a result of the culture of the society in which people live.

METHOD

In order to foster creative thinking in design education, this article focuses on the idea of developing a design module by abstracting Islamic patterns. Some societies' Islamic patterns have social, cultural, and historical significance in addition to their visual appeal. Therefore, within the context of the Interior Architecture studio course, a model has been developed to ensure the integration of the traditional and the modern in an integrated system. A design process based on Islamic patterns has been tried to be examined by using this model in design education. The right steps should be used to support the design process, which is described as the order of actions made up of the tools and techniques used during the design (Lawson, 2005: 33). In the course of analysis, synthesis, and development, the pattern is abstracted as a result of data collection efforts intended to address the issue. Designing each stage of the design process with a flexible structure that can accommodate feedback is a good idea. A feedback loop between stages of the design process is recommended by Archer (1984) and Cross (2005: 35-36). The three main phases of the proposed processes are "analytical", "creative", and "implementation" (Figure 1).



Figure 1. The design process used in the study



Interior Architecture Studio Process

In the study, Selcuk University Faculty of Architecture and Design Interior Architecture Project II studio, within the scope of the 2021-2022 spring semester, the interior design of the store (textile, cosmetics, sports) where the products of world-famous brands are exhibited using Islamic pattern patterns were given to the students as a project subject. It aims to demonstrate various viewpoints on creativity and abstraction in this context. The abstraction action that was mentioned in the study was formal abstraction; functional and semantic abstraction were not included. It aims to allow students to discover learning based on the process of an interior design studio and to forge a connection between the past and the present. The students were given restrictions in the design so they could create a path. Islamic patterns placed restrictions on the Seljuk periods. Students were asked to use the Islamic pattern in that city as a design inspiration based on the premise that the stores to be designed could be located in any city in our nation. Students visited Seljuk period buildings in the cities they lived in to gather information during the analytical phase, which is the first phase of the study. The students also looked at the motifs found on carpets and rugs from the time period in question. Following the test, the students discussed their findings and prior knowledge of Islamic patterns in the studio setting and exchanged information. Later, they finished the analysis stage of the design process by arbitrarily selecting one of the Islamic motifs they had looked at to create formal abstraction. The part-whole relationship was used to evaluate the Islamic motif that was chosen during the creative phase, and it was then simplified by interpreting. Flashbacks encountered during the abstraction process have led to the motif's essence. The application phase was finished by incorporating the acquired original state as a design element in the store's facade and at various locations inside.

FINDINGS

In the study, the stages of the concept of abstraction in design were tried to be conveyed to the students in the process of original and creative design. The students realized the act of abstraction with the method of the concept of abstraction in design with the Islamic patterns they identified through materials such as architectural artifacts, ruins, and equipment. The act of abstraction in space design aims to provide students with original thinking skills. This helps students to produce creative designs that respond to the unique needs and cultural values of users, rather than simply conforming to standard design templates. In the first phase of the study, the appropriateness of the Islamic patterns found by the students with various alternatives was emphasized and the abstraction phase of the selected pattern was started. The study was carried out in five stages and these stages are shown in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Project implementation phases



While applying the abstraction phase in the design, Arnheim's (2015) abstraction relationship between pictures and symbols was taken as a basis. The study is based on the evaluation, analysis, and interpretation of all the data belonging to the design problem and their relationships with each other.

The abstraction alternatives made by the students were realized in four stages, discussed and interpreted within the scope of the project lesson. The Islamic pattern showing the stages of abstraction and the steps of abstraction are given in Figure 3.



Figure 3. Islamic Pattern Abstraction Example

Changes/transformations have occurred in the forms and proportions of Islamic patterns, allowing abstraction to reach authenticity. With the Islamic patterns becoming simpler and free of ornamentation, a design process was realized in which traditional traces were maintained on the contemporary store interior and facade surfaces (Table 1). Thus, while reaching the final product in the design process, the abstraction method plays an important role in the formation of the design in the transition from concrete to abstract. The concept of creativity, which is associated with original thinking in the abstraction of Islamic patterns, shows that different results are obtained from person to person. In this case, it is thought that many factors such as the cultural experience that designers have physical and social characteristics are effective in creativity.

Project	Analytical Stage	Creative Stage	Implementation Phase	
Designers	(Data Collecting)	(Abstraction)	Shop Facade Suggestion	Shop Interior Suggestion
Yasemin Dişçi Maisalrim Khattab Channel Store	Afyon Ulu Mosque Wooden console scarves between cardigan pattern			
Merve Çakmak M.Metehan Uyanık Dolce Gabbana Store	Ince Minaret Madrasa Konya Bayındır stamp			and have
Melike Öztürk Gökçe Öncel Alexander McQueen	Ram horn motif			
Başak Yazgan Merve Nur Çukuryer Steiff Store	Konya Alaeddin Mosque pulpit			

Table 1. Interior architecture studio process and final products



This is comparable to the research accomplished by Kılıçaslan and Ziyrek (2012) on the teaching of creativity in interior architecture. However, while deciding to use the Islamic pattern, details about the local identity and culture were learned through techniques like actually seeing the architectural structures, making observations, and taking pictures of them. As a result, recognizing cultural heritage and investigating the potential of patterns for design, complements the work of El-Zeiny and Ezzat (2021). Another finding from the same study shows similarities to research that has greatly aided the education of interior architects in a variety of designs by interpreting cultural diversity. As a result, more study is necessary to fully understand and interpret the geometric structure of Islamic patterns, as stated by Ahmed (2022) and Fatihaddin et al., (2018).

CONCLUSION

One of the most crucial requirements for creativity is the ability to come up with fresh, original ideas. As a result, one of the qualities a design student should possess is creativity. It is crucial to incorporate the designs that students envision in their minds with culture to strengthen the connection between the past and the present in order to foster creativity in design education. According to Stein (1953), creativity should be defined according to the culture it exists in, and "innovation" or "being new" denotes the fact that creative production takes on a new form. Existing information or material may require new integrations, but must also contain new elements (as cited in Öncü, 1992).



In the past and present, societies have used a variety of geometric patterns to express their history, culture, and traditions in a variety of design contexts, including textiles and architecture. These patterns' underlying meanings reveal cultural influences. Traditionality and locality are in danger of becoming extinct in every aspect of contemporary life, which is uniformizing as a result of globalization. Researchers have emphasized maintaining the identity of the current culture while preserving its meaning and passing it on to future generations without being copied for this reason. As a result of the study, it has been found that the abstraction method, which combines the modern and the traditional and carries the past into the future, plays a key role in the development of the design and the advancement of the design process with the correct steps in the transition from concrete to abstract. In the study, a design education process was carried out to draw attention to the concepts in question for students studying design, in order to address the problem of not being able to integrate cultural and local traces into contemporary life. With the help of the abstraction model, it has significantly aided in the growth of students' capacity for original and creative problem-solving. Islamic patterns exhibit the mirror quality that reflects the culture of societies because they have historical, cultural, and social meanings in addition to geometric ones. The study's noteworthy contribution to both the recognition of the culture and the increase in awareness and sustainability of the culture for future generations without being imitated has emerged as a result of fusing the traditional with the modern and using Islamic patterns as a design base. The process of getting design products that are plain, free of ornaments, and made with essential geometric shapes has also positively impacted the designers' creativity. This is because Islamic patterns have a strong aesthetic appeal that transcends time and space as well as language and culture. The patterns may not resemble Islamic motifs due to "contemporary" touches. However, the underlying structure of the geometries is the abstraction of traditional Islamic patterns. Thus, this study is important in terms of contributing to the production of new forms of design strategies and ideas in interior architecture education and the physical evolution of the traditional towards the modern. The abstraction of patterns is not a rupture, but in fact a step of self-discovery. Thus, it creates a form that not only encompasses traditional Islamic design, but also allows these designs to evolve with contemporary interiors as a new and additional art of Islamic geometries. The endless pattern-making process of Islamic geometric art offers a rich blend of cultural background, the origin of geometries and a contemporary view of exploration. The intuitive impulse to adapt to contemporary practices takes on a role that allows it to become a hallmark and signature of the designer who created it.

As a result, the modern design environment is a platform that provides distinctive solutions that holistically integrate the past and present. The importance of the study in the scientific platform is expressed by researching various cultural elements, developing a model through the application, and incorporating them in the design process through the interior design studio. The concept of incorporating and developing the said approach in the educational process of various design disciplines should be expanded to increase the number of original and creative designs inspired by the cultural data of societies. Additionally, the study enhances the students' design skills as they learn interior architecture within the context of the design process.

Authors' Contributions

The 1st author contributed 50%, the 2nd author contributed% 50 to the study.

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Competing Interests

There is no potential conflict of interest.

Ethics Committee Declaration

Ethics committee approval is not required.



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Figure References

Figure 1: According to Archer (1984: 64) and Cross (2005: 35), edited by the authors.

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