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Research Article

Multiple Intelligences and Perfectionism in Middle School Gifted Students

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Abstract

In this study, the perfectionism levels of 181 sixth, seventh, and eighth grade gifted students' were investigated in terms of multiple intelligences. In the study a relational screening model, Survey of Positive and Negative Perfectionism, developed by Kırdök (2004), was used to assess the level of the students' positive and negative perfectionism. The Multiple Intelligences Inventory, developed by Saban (2001), was used to determine the students' multiple intelligences, and a personal information form was implemented to obtain socio-demographic data. The results of the study showed that [verbal-linguistic intelligence, mathematical-logical intelligence, and intrapersonal intelligence] [intrapersonal intelligence, mathematical-logical intelligence, and verbal-linguistic intelligence] predicted 34% of the students' perfectionism levels ($p<.001$). The explanatory power of the scores in multiple intelligences over negative perfectionism was not found to be statistically significant for any of the sub-dimensions. In order to develop gifted students' positive perfectionism qualifications, assuming that multiple intelligences can be used as a tool, some suggestions were presented for researchers, counselors, and teachers.

Keywords

gifted students, multiple intelligences, perfectionism

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Introduction

Although the concepts of talented and gifted have distinct meanings, they have been discussed in the literature as if their meanings were synonymous. According to a definition which was put forward in the USA, in 1994, a "gifted" person is a person who displays a high level of performance with his intellectual, artistic, leadership or creative potential, and who needs a special education in order to use his abilities effectively and to develop them more fully (Davaslıgil, 2004). In Turkey, the tendency towards using the concept of talented was first observed in the National Talented Children Congress, in 2004. In the World Council, the concept of "talented and gifted" is preferred (Kök, 2012).

Because the most important indicator of talent has been stated to be intelligence, intelligence tests, which are generally regarded to assess intelligence, were developed and began to be applied in the late 1800s (Akarsu, 2004). Tests, such as the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Test and the Wechsler Intelligence Test, consider intelligence to be an innate (Gardner, 1993) and comprehensive ability (cited in Dağlıoğlu, 1995). According to Gardner (1993), intelligence is an ability, a capacity, and a skill which a person uses to enact the following: to solve those problems which show up as the outcomes of a specific culture and a society; to specify a goal while approaching a situation and set a course to achieve this goal; to be able to create and transfer cultural products which transfer emotions, thoughts, and beliefs; to find effective solutions for problems in daily life; and to discover new problems which need to be solved.

The Theory of Multiple Intelligences (TMI) developed by Gardner (1983), who objected to the approaches which regard intelligence as one dimensional, marked an era in both the definition and the education of gifted children. According to TMI, a person has eight different intelligences: verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, visual-spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical-rhythmic, intrapersonal, interpersonal, and existential (Saban, 2001).

According to the theory of multiple intelligences, intelligence types, which students are either better or worse at, can be identified. As a result, gifted students have the opportunty to be educated in such a way that their natural abilities are not ignored. The life of a successful adult is not adequately evaluated in terms of how regularly one reads or how adept one is at accounting. Success involves many abilities, particularly interpersonal and intrapersonal ones. Therefore, the concept of multiple intelleginces, which helps to understand the different abilities of gifted children, is very important (Hoerr, 1994). It is indicated that to meet and go beyond the expectations of gifted children, one of the helpful tools can be multiple intelligences (Çalık & Birgili, 2013).

Perfectionism is defined as craving for flawlessness and setting high standards for performance and making overly critical evaluations of one's behavior (Flett & Hewitt, 2002). Perfectionism is considered as personality construct in which individuals set unrealistically high standards and strive to attain these standards (Burns, 1980; Frost, Marten, Lahart, & Rosenblate, 1990). Adderholt and Golberg (1992) state that perfectionism starts in childhood. The combination of family pressure, self-pressure, social pressure, media pressure, and unrealistic role models forces an individual to work hard, to have lifelong feelings of anxiety and guilt, whereby he thinks that as long as he remains imperfect he will not be loved or accepted. Bowers (2012) proposes that perfectionism originates from the following multiplicity of factors: the effort of society to make the individual adapt to the society; the effort of the individual to show people that he cares and loves them; the growth of an individual in a chaotic family atmosphere; the sensitivity the individual shows in order to avoid the chaos and problems; the family's expectations of a high degree of success; the child-raising attitudes of parents who have narcissist personality characteristics; the effort of the individual to be happy within the society; society's expectations of a perfect performance from the child; and the media's highlighting of the perfect and the ideal, thus orienting individuals towards those values.

According to Somov (2010), perfectionism is a kind of hunger and perfectionistic individuals have three basic hungers: the hunger for approval/confirmation, the hunger for projection/attention, and the hunger for control/certainty. The hunger for approval/confirmation is the need of a perfectionist for his deeds be approved by others in order to keep his mind comfortable. The hunger for projection/attention is the need of the perfectionist to attract the attention of the people surrounding him and to be the focus of their interest. The hunger for control/certainty is the need of the perfectionist to feel certain of his deeds and to command an excess of control in order to feel that certainty.

There is a common view that gifted children are perfectionists. Kramer (1988) found that gifted children have a higher level of perfectionism than children with normal intelligence. Kline and Short (1991) found that gifted female students' perfectionism levels increase along with their class level. Roberts and Lovett (1994) found that gifted high school students have a higher level of perfectionism than do students with a normal level of intelligence. Schuler (2000), in his study on talented adolescents, concluded that students have a high level of perfectionism. In his study, Baker (1996) found that perfectionism leads to more stress for gifted children than for normal children, but that a pathological aspect begins when perfectionism prevents the gifted child from properly seeing the efficiency of his performance.

A lot of researches address that there is a general perception that gifted children are perfectionist. (Baker, 1996; Bencik, 2006; Ciğerci Coşar, 2006; Kline & Short, 1991; Kramer, 1988; Roberts & Love; 1994; Schuler, 1997). Researches about gifted perfectionism indicated that (1) some of the gifted children are perfectionist, (2) they are more perfectionist than their non-gifted peers and (3) perfectionism can be a factor for their high achievement (Schuler, 2002).

Burka and Yuen (1983) state that people growing up in a family atmosphere in which their parents expect very high-level goals, or regard the capacities and abilities of their children as extremely high, make an effort to meet the expectations of their family and display delaying behaviors more often than in less extreme family environments. Discovering and guiding gifted children in their early ages, can expedite their development, and problems which otherwise might negatively affect their development can be avoided. In today's world, where knowledge and creativity have an important place, gifted people have important qualifications which can contribute to their area of interest, to the sectors in which they are working, and to the society in general. When their academic, social, intellectual, and educational needs are not met, and they aren't guided properly, gifted people can do harm to themselves and to the environment. With the approach of an equality of opportunities in education, gifted people are presented with educational settings that are enriched and diversified in accord with their needs, and they are afforded the advantage to benefit from these settings (Akarsu, 2004).

Davaslıgil (2004) points out that in the identification of gifted people, intelligence should include aspects of general intellectual and specific academic abilities, creativity, leadership, and artistic ability which is based on seeing and performance. Gardner states that there is a relationship between a person's intellectual processes and his prominent intelligence. Prominent intelligence types affect the processes of learning and thinking and a person can develop his learning style according to his prominent intelligence type. In the tests which were developed as being suitable to the Theory of Multiple Intelligences, prominent and weak intelligence types are specified and suggestions specific to the person are presented for solutions. With those aspects that enable prominent intelligence types to be known and developed, the Theory of Multiple Intelligences is different from other intelligence approaches which maintain that intelligence is constant (Gürel &Tat, 2010).

According to Multiple Intelligences Theory, although a healthy person has each type of intelligence, all of the individual intelligence types do not operate at the same level. When the person encounters a problem, s/he generally solves it with her/his prominent intelligence. However, intelligence types work in harmony. It is important for educators, who plan and implement educational processes, to know

students well enough in order to make plans according to the needs of multiple intelligences (Temiz, 2007).

The view that gifted students' positive perfectionism development is left to chance is the problem of this study. There is a common opinion that by evaluating gifted students' multiple intelligences with an inventory, multiple intelligences can be used as a tool to promote gifted students' perfectionism levels. It is remarkably important that because of their individual and societal benefits, gifted students should have positive perfectionism and their perfectionist characteristics should be enhanced. Therefore, in this study, the possible effect of multiple intelligence types on the positive and negative perfectionism scores of sixth, seventh, and eighth grade gifted students' were investigated.

Method

A relational screening model was used in this study. Relational screening models are kinds of research models which determine the existence and level of joint change among two or more variables (Karasar, 2009).

Sample

The population of the study is sixth, seventh, and eighth grade gifted students in Istanbul. The sample of the study is 190 sixth, seventh, and eighth grade gifted students from two private schools. These students take extracurricular courses at the Istanbul Science and Art Center which offers group studies outside of normal school hours. However, data analysis was conducted on a total of 181 students. According to the analysis of the participants' demographic information, among the sixth, seventh, and eighth grade gifted students, there were 69 (38.1%) female participants and 112 (61.9%) male participants. 84 (46.4%) of the students were sixth graders, 64 (35.4%) were seventh graders, and 33 (18.2%) were eighth graders. 54 (29.8%) of the students' mothers and 32 (17.7%) of their fathers were high-school graduates; 87 (48.1%) of their mothers and 99 (54.7%) of their fathers had a bachelor's degree; and 43 (23.8%) of their fathers had a graduate degree.

Data Collection Tools

Positive and Negative Perfectionism Scale

In order to define the students' perfectionism characteristics, the Positive and Negative Perfectionism Scale (PNPS), developed by Kırdök (2004), was used. PNPS assesses both positive and negative perfectionism characteristics of pre-adult students at the second stage of primary education. PNPS uses a 4-point Likert scale. The scale has a total of 17 items, 10 of which assess characteristics of positive perfectionism and 7 of which assess negative perfectionism characteristics. The scoring of the scale is as follows: (1) not applicable for me, (2) sometimes applicable for me, (3) generally applicable for me, and (4) totally applicable for me.

There is no total score in the scale. The scores are interpreted according to their value; the higher the score, the higher the positive or negative perfectionism level; and the lower the score, the lower the level of positive or negative perfectionism (Kırdök, 2004).

Multiple Intelligences Inventory

Multiple Intelligences Inventory (MII) is an inventory with a 5 point Likert scale. There are 10 sub-sections and a total of 80 questions in the inventory. The scoring in the scale is as follows: (0) not applicable for me, (1) barely applicable for me, (2) partly applicable for me, (3) quite applicable for me, and (4) totally applicable for me. Assessment of MII is based on the total intelligence score, which is acquired through summing the scores of the subsections. Intervals of total scores of intelligence types are described as following: (0-7) not developed, (8-15) underdeveloped, (16-23) averagely developed, (24-31) developed, and (32-40) fully developed (Saban, 2001)

Data Analysis

In order to analyze whether multiple intelligences affect perfectionism, a simple regression analysis was conducted. Accordingly, regression analyses were conducted in order to examine the extent to which type of intelligence explain negative and positive perfectionism.

Findings

The results of the regression analysis, examining whether the scores in the subsections of the Multiple Intelligences Inventory affect the scores of positive perfectionism, can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. The results of simple regression analysis between gifted students' scores in subsections of multiple intelligences inventory and their positive perfectionism scores

Predictor	**Predicted**	**B**	**SD $_B$**	**β**	**t**	**p**
Verbal-Linguistic Intelligence	Positive Perfectionism	14,222	2,012		7,068	,000
		,417	,065	,434	6,438	,000
R= ,434	R^2= ,183	F= $_{(1,179)}$ 41,451			p=,000	
Logical-Math. Intelligence	Positive Perfectionism	17,918	1,821		9,841	,000
		,302	,060	,355	5,078	,000
R= ,355	R^2= ,121	F= $_{(1,179)}$ 25,789			p=,000	
Visual-Spatial Intelligence	Positive Perfectionism	22,293	1,576		14,149	,000
		,171	,056	,223	3,062	,003
R= ,223	R^2= ,044	F= $_{(1,179)}$ 9,377			p=,003	
Musical-Rhythmical	Positive Perfectionism	23,774	1,120		21,235	,000
		,130	,043	,222	3,041	,003

Intelligence						
R= ,222	R^2= ,044	F= $_{(1,179)}$ 9,250			p=,003	
Predictor	**Predicted**	**B**	**S2D $_B$**	**β**	**t**	**p**
Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence	Positive Perfectionism	20,665	1,749		11,815	,000
		,227	,061	,266	3,695	,000
R= ,266	R^2= ,066	F= $_{(1,179)}$ 13,651			p=,000	
Interpersonal Intelligence	Positive Perfectionism	20,527	1,865		11,005	,000
		,225	,064	,255	3,530	,001
R= ,255	R^2= ,060	F= $_{(1,179)}$ 12,461			p=,001	
Intrapersonal Intelligence	Positive Perfectionism	16,254	1,792		9,069	,000
		,367	,060	,415	6,104	,000
R= ,415	R^2= ,168	F= $_{(1,179)}$ 37,258			p=,000	
Naturalistic Intelligence	Positive Perfectionism	23,989	1,059		22,654	,000
		,129	,043	,220	3,024	,003
R= ,220	R^2= ,043	F= $_{(1,179)}$ 9,147			p=,003	

When Table 1 is examined, the results of a simple regression analysis, conducted to determine the extent to which the scores in sub-dimensions of Multiple Intelligences Inventory predict positive perfectionism scores, show that the scores in the verbal-linguistic intelligence, logical-mathematical intelligence, and visual-spatial intelligence subsections predict positive perfectionism at a statistically significant level (p<.001). Gifted students' verbal-linguistic scores predict 19% of the variance of positive perfectionism and the equation of simple regression analysis is Positive Perfectionism=14,222+0,434 verbal-linguistic intelligence.

Logical-mathematical scores predict 13% of the variance of positive perfectionism and the equation of simple regression analysis is Positive Perfectionism=17,918+0,355 logical-mathematical intelligence. Visual-spatial intelligence scores predict 0.5% of the variance of positive perfectionism and the equation of simple regression analysis is Positive Perfectionism=16,254+0,415 visual-spatial intelligence.

The explanatory power of the scores in musical-rhythmic intelligence and naturalistic intelligence over the positive perfectionism scores is found to be statistically significant (p<.01). Gifted students' scores in musical-rhythmical and naturalistic intelligence predict .05% of the variance of the positive perfectionism scores. The explanatory power of the scores in bodily-kinesthetic intelligence (p<.001) and interpersonal intelligence (p<.01) on the positive perfectionism scores is found to be statistically significant. Gifted students' scores in bodily-kinesthetic and interpersonal intelligence predict %.07 of the variance of positive perfectionism. The explanatory power of the scores in intrapersonal intelligence on the positive perfectionism scores is found to be statistically significant (p<.001).

Talented students' scores in intrapersonal intelligence predict 2% of the variance of the positive perfectionism scores.

Table 2. The results of simple regression analysis between gifted students' scores in sub-dimensions of multiple intelligences inventory and their negative perfectionism scores

Predictor	Predicted	B	SD B	β	t	p
Verbal-Linguistic Intelligence	Negative Perfectionism	14,334	1,936		7,403	,000
		,057	,062	,068	,909	,365
R=,068	R^2=-,001	F= (1,179) ,826			p=,365	
Logical-Math. Intelligence	Negative Perfectionism	13,635	1,683		8,104	,000
		,081	,055	,110	1,475	,142
R= ,110	R^2= ,006	F= (1,179) 2,177			p=,142	
Visual-Spatial Intelligence	Negative Perfectionism	14,403	1,399		10,295	,000
		,061	,049	,091	1,226	,222
R= ,091	R^2= ,003	F= (1,179) 1,504			p=,222	
Musical-Rhythmical Intelligence	Negative Perfectionism	14,323	,988		14,493	,000
		,071	,038	,139	1,878	,062
R= ,139	R^2= ,014	F= (1,179) 3,527			p=,062	
Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence	Negative Perfectionism	16,143	1,577		10,236	,000
		-,003	,055	-,004	-,050	,960
R= ,004	R^2= -,006	F= (1,179) ,002			p=,960	
Interpersonal Intelligence	Negative Perfectionism	14,339	1,672		8,578	,000
		,060	,057	,079	1,056	,292
R= ,079	R^2= ,001	F= (1,179) 1,115			p=,292	
Intrapersonal Intelligence	Negative Perfectionism	14,611	1,709		8,551	,000
		,050	,057	,065	,869	,386
R= ,065	R^2= -,001	F= (1,179) ,756			p=,386	
Naturalistic Intelligence	Negative Perfectionism	15,557	,943		16,503	,000
		,022	,038	,043	,580	,563
R= ,043	R^2= -,004	F= (1,179) ,336			p=,563	

When Table 2 is examined, the results of a simple regression analysis, conducted to analyze the extent to which scores in sub-dimensions of Multiple Intelligences Inventory predict negative perfectionism scores, show that the explanatory power of the scores in verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, visual-spatial, musical-rhythmical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic intelligence to predict negative perfectionism scores is not statistically significant.

Discussion

Intelligence types affect gifted students' positive perfectionism scores. The explanatory power of the scores in all intelligence types over the positive perfectionism scores is statistically significant, and the scores in verbal-linguistic intelligence predict 19% of the variance of positive perfectionism. Scores in logical-mathematical intelligence predict 13% of the variance of the positive perfectionism scores. Scores in visual-spatial intelligence, musical rhythmical intelligence, and naturalistic intelligence predict .05% of the variance of the positive perfectionism scores. Scores in bodily-kinesthetic intelligence and interpersonal intelligence predict .07% of the variance of positive perfectionism. Scores in intrapersonal intelligence predict 2% of the variance of positive perfectionism. In this sense, it can be seen that especially verbal-linguistic intelligence, logical-mathematical intelligence and intrapersonal intelligence are effective in terms of explaining positive perfectionism. Although the explanatory power of other intelligence types is statistically significant, it can be stated that their effect is less productive, but developments in these intelligence types can enhance the scores of positive perfectionism.

There are different studies related to perfectionism in the literature. In these studies, generally speaking, characteristics of perfectionism have been investigated in relation to other personal characteristics, psychological disorders, attitudes, behavioral patterns, socio-demographic aspects, parents' attitudes, and different psychological characteristics (Baker, 1996; Bencik, 2006; Ciğerci Coşar, 2006; Kline and Short, 1991; Kramer, 1988; LoCicero and Ashby, 2000; Roberts and Lovett; 1994; Schuler, 2000).

The fact that the explanatory power of verbal-linguistic intelligence scores over positive perfectionism is significant is thought to be due to the fact that people with a developed verbal-linguistic intelligence can express themselves efficiently in spoken and written language; can communicate effectively and interactively; have better interpretation skills; and enjoy discussing, listening, and reading (Saban, 2001; Selçuk et al. 2004; Temiz, 2007). It can be stated that these attributes contribute to turning perfectionism into a personal characteristic in accordance with abilities such as problem solving, communicating, and expressing oneself.

The significant explanatory power of logical-mathematical intelligence over positive perfectionism can be attributed to the fact that people with a developed logical-mathematical intelligence have the effective skills of recognizing cause-effect relationship, reasoning, questioning, thinking logically, and assessing risky behaviors. Therefore, they can question their decisions while setting goals and contemplate the results of those decisions. Accordingly, they can set accessible aims rather than excessively high ones, thereby avoiding dangerously risky behavior (Özden, 2008; Saban, 2001; Temiz, 2007).

It can be stated that the significant explanatory power of intrapersonal intelligence over positive perfectionism is due to the fact that people with a developed intrapersonal intelligence have the effective skills of knowing themselves; being at peace with themselves; taking lessons from past personal successes and failures; and setting realistic goals, thanks to their ability to determine high and accessible targets (Bümen, 2005; Özden, 2008; Saban, 2001; Temiz, 2007).

Gifted students' intelligence types don't affect their negative perfectionism scores. When the explanatory power of the scores in multiple intelligence types over negative perfectionism is examined, this explanatory power is not found to be statistically significant for any of the sub-dimensions of negative perfectionism. Therefore, it can be stated that multiple intelligences don't have any effect on negative perfectionism.

Results and Suggestions

According to these findings and the effect of multiple intelligences on positive perfectionism, it has been found that verbal-linguistic intelligence, mathematical-logical intelligence, and intrapersonal intelligence predict 34% of the gifted students' positive perfectionism level. The explanatory power of multiple intelligences over negative perfectionism is not found statistically significant for any of the sub-dimensions.

In this sense, it can be seen that gifted students can use their multiple intelligence types as a tool to develop their positive perfectionism qualities. Therefore, it is believed that gifted students can maximize their intelligence capacities. With guidance programs developed to increase gifted students' positive perfectionism level and to minimize their negative characteristics, positive perfectionism can be promoted through activities designed especially for mathematical and logical intelligence as well as the other multiple intelligence types. Teachers can indirectly contribute to the development of positive perfectionism through activities which are designed in accordance with the contents of their courses, and which include tasks supportive of multiple intelligence types. With those educational programs, educators can help prevent talented students from experiencing problems which could lead to negative perfectionism. Gifted students should work with counselors and other teachers in order to appropriate the positive effects of perfectionism, to achieve high levels of success, and to accommodate their personal development. Because teachers are important models for their students' attitudes and behaviors at all levels, they should review gifted students' expectations, evaluate their own behaviors and attitudes which affect the characteristics of negative perfectionism, and organize activities which will promote students' awareness regarding this issue. Because parents' high

expectations of their gifted children affect their negative and positive perfectionism, parents should exhibit favorable behavior and suitable attitudes which will contribute positively to their children's perfectionist character development. Besides, starting from an early age, and without imposing excessively high standards, parents and educators alike should use strategies which help children develop their unique blend of intelligence types. The research results are limited in the sense that data were collected only from a limited number of participants and data collection tools were supposed to be valid.

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