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VĚRA KONEČNÁ

SELF-CONCEPT OF THE INTELLECTUALLY GIFTED CHILDREN – SEX DIFFERENCES¹

Abstract: Proposed study is a part of the dissertation research project focused on the self-concept of the intellectually gifted children. In case of the difference analysis between gifted and non-gifted boys and girls the authors come to distinct conclusions. Our research sample consists of 125 children aged from 7 to 10 years, from those 52 children were identified as intellectually gifted (29 boys, 23 girls) and 73 children were average gifted (32 boys, 41 girls). We used Susan Harter's questionnaire called Self-Perception Profile for Children (SPPC, Harter, 1985) to find out the level of the self-concept. The results of our research are in accordance with those studies which find higher level of the self-concept at gifted girls than at gifted boys. These significant differences are related to the domains of the social acceptance, physical appearance and behavioural conduct.

Key words: self-concept, giftedness, sex differences

Introduction

The literature concerning the social and emotional development of the gifted children is very extensive and the self-concept of the gifted children is one of the most often researching area. It results in huge amount of contrary findings. There is no conclusive agreement whether social and emotional problems are more common by the gifted children. In a similar way in the issue of the differences between gifted girls' and boys' self-concept researchers reach distinct conclusions.

Method

Participants

In the first phase of the research we addressed 925 children at the age of 7 to 10 at 21 primary schools in Brno, in the Czech republic. From the whole sample we chose 65 children where we supposed high intellectual talent (none or one

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mistake in the Raven's test, labelling by parent or teacher). In the second phase of the research these children were invited with their parents on two appointments where there was used wide battery of tests. In this research report we use data necessary for the analysis of the sex relationship, intellectual talent and self-concept of children. In the third phase of the research we formed comparative group of 60 children at the age of 7 to 8. The whole sample of 125 children we divided into two groups according to the external criterion – IQ reached in the Raven's test = 130 (Table 1).

Table 1. Sample

Sex	Group $IQ_{\text{Raven}} \geq 130$				Group $IQ_{\text{Raven}} \leq 129$			
	N	%	Average age	Average IQ	N	%	Average age	Average IQ
Boys	29	55,77	8/4	136,67	32	43,84	8/1	111,78
Girls	23	44,23	8/2	138,67	41	56,16	7/9	108,00
Total	52	100,00	8/3	137,68	73	100,00	7/10	109,66

(The age is in years and months)

Instrument

We used the Raven's Coloured progressive matrices for the identification gifted children. On the basis of the scholarly articles and literature studies we chose Susan Harter's questionnaire called Self-Perception Profile for Children (SPPC, Harter, 1985) to find out the level of the self-concept. This method is frequently used in the area of the research of younger children's self-concept including the intellectually gifted children (e.g. Hoge, McScheffrey, 1991; Van Den Bergh, De Rycke, 2003; Van Den Bergh, Van Ranst, 1998; Cornell a kol. 1995 etc.).

Statistical Analyses

In consequence of variables distribution which differ from normal distribution we used the non-parametrical statistics for hypotheses testing. We used Mann-Whitney's U test for the assignment of the statistical significance of the differences between groups.

Results

Gifted and non-gifted girls

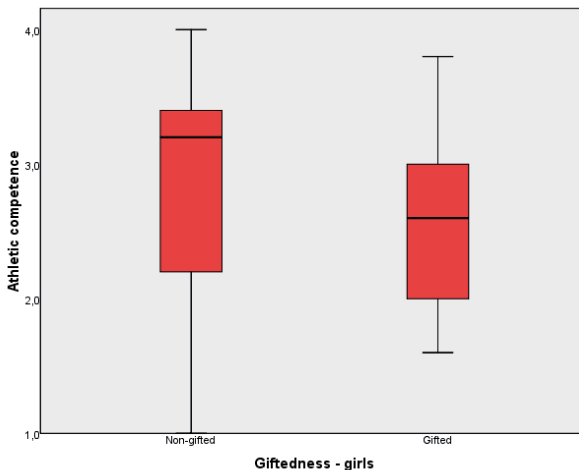
At the early school age we notice statistically significant differences between gifted and less gifted girls only in the domain of the athletic competence. In this area the gifted girls reach lower self-concept than their less gifted peers (Table 2). Klein and Zehms (1996) describe similar results who compared 104 gifted and 30 non-gifted girls' self-concept in the third, fifth and eighth class. There is a significant decrease of the level of the overall self-concept in the group of gifted girls between both periods. While there is a decline of the self-concept only between

third and eighth grade in the comparative group. The oldest gifted girls evaluate themselves much more negatively in the areas of behaviour, school competence, social status at school and popularity than the oldest girls from the comparative group. It seems that there is an important turn in the development of the girls' self-concept in the adolescent age. Gifted girls probably more restructure their personality in the context of social expectations than girls with average talent. For example Reis (1987) also describes the tendency into decreasing of the girls' self-confidence in the adolescence. She accredits the negative influence to the expectations of parents, teachers and society.

Table 2. Differences between gifted and non-gifted girls

		N	Median	p
School competence	Gifted	23	3,4	0,07
	non-gifted	41	3,0	
Social acceptance	Gifted	23	3,0	0,32
	non-gifted	41	3,0	
Athletic competence	Gifted	23	2,4	0,05
	non-gifted	41	3,2	
Physical appearance	Gifted	23	3,4	0,27
	non-gifted	41	3,4	
Behavioural conduct	Gifted	23	3,5	0,78
	non-gifted	41	3,4	
Global self-worth	Gifted	23	3,8	0,22
	non-gifted	41	3,6	

Figure 1: Differences between gifted and non-gifted girls – athletic competence



Gifted and non-gifted boys

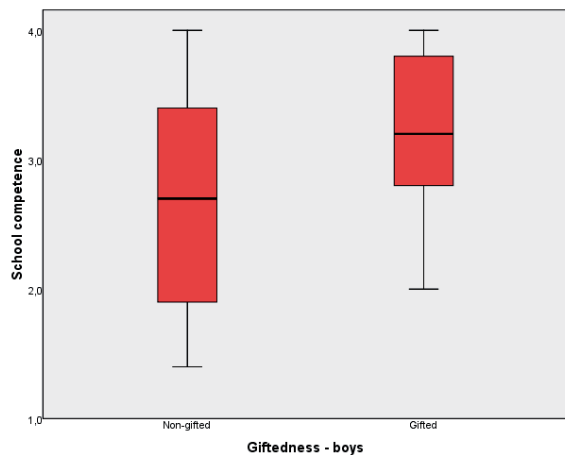
We noted a statistical significant difference in the area of the school competence in the boys group. Gifted boys reach higher scores in this area (Table 3).

This result partially corresponds with the Hoge and McSheffrey's research (1991) who explored the self-concept of 280 gifted pupils from 4th – 8th special classes. The gifted children achieved higher level of the school competence and the global self-evaluation than pupils from common classes. On the contrary they attained lower (not significant) level in the domains of the social and athletic competences.

Table 3. Differences between gifted and non-gifted boys

		N	Median	p
School competence	gifted	29	3,2	0,01
	non-gifted	32	2,7	
Social acceptance	gifted	29	2,6	0,44
	non-gifted	32	2,7	
Athletic competence	gifted	29	2,6	0,50
	non-gifted	32	2,8	
Physical appearance	gifted	29	3,0	0,14
	non-gifted	32	3,2	
Behavioural conduct	gifted	29	3,0	0,72
	non-gifted	32	3,0	
Global self-worth	gifted	29	3,2	0,72
	non-gifted	32	3,4	

Figure 2: Differences between gifted and non-gifted boys – school competence



Gifted boys and girls

We came to the most interesting results in the comparison of the gifted boys and girls. We obtain the statistical significant differences in three domains of the self-concept – social acceptance, physical appearance and behavioural conduct. Girls assess themselves better than boys in all mentioned areas (Table 4). We can assume better social adaptation, less problems with behaviour, better personal composure

or lower self-criticism than gifted boys. In view of the fact that there are not these differences in the non-gifted group (except the behaviour), we tend to the opinion that expecially gifted boys can have the problems with perception of their body and difficulties in the social area.

Table 4. Differences between gifted boys and girls

	Gifted	N	Median	p
School competence	boys	29	3,2	0,48
	girls	23	3,4	
Social acceptance	boys	29	2,6	0,01
	girls	23	3,0	
Athletic competence	boys	29	2,6	0,63
	girls	23	2,4	
Physical appearence	boys	29	3,0	0,01
	girls	23	3,4	
Behavioural conduct	boys	29	3,0	0,001
	girls	23	3,5	
Global self-worth	boys	29	3,2	0,05
	girls	23	3,8	

Figure 3: Differences between gifted boys and girls – social acceptance

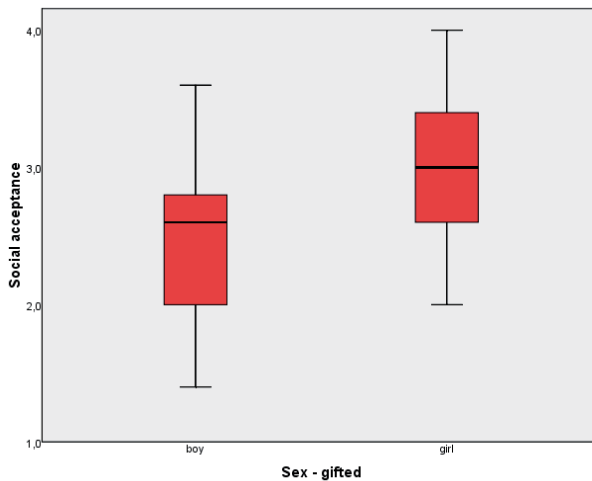


Figure 4: Differences between gifted boys and girls – physical appearance

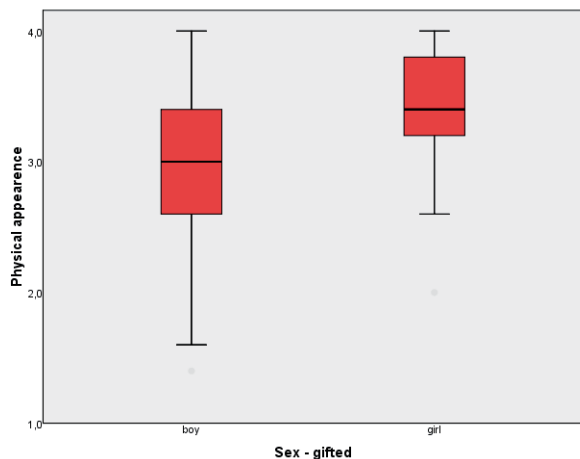
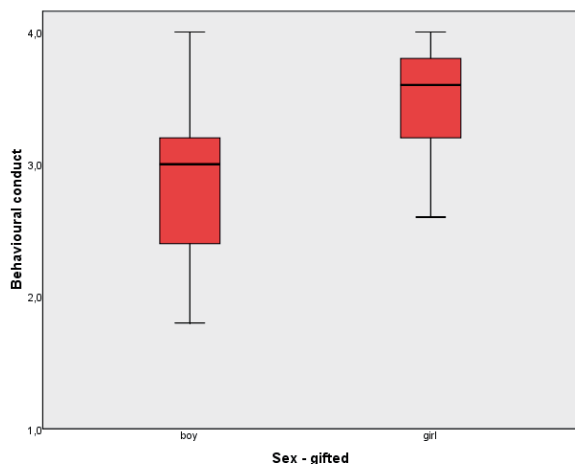


Figure 5: Differences between gifted boys and girls – behavioural conduct



Seeing that the authors pay less attention to the sex differences and also the studies which focus on these differences are concerned older children and adolescents, it is difficult to compare our results with their conclusions. Our results differ from the results of these studies which come to the conclusion that gifted girls reach lower self-concept than gifted boys (e.g. Kelly, Colangelo, 1984; Reis, 1987; Kelly, Jordan, 1990; Lea-Wood, Clunies-Ross, 1995; Klein, Zehms, 1996; Luscomb, Riley, 2001). These researchers interpret lower self-concept of the gifted girls usually in relation to internal personality factors like perfectionism and sensitivity which result in the fact that other people perceive them more critical and less supportive. In combination with the external pressure to conformity related to stereotype expectations, these internal factors lead to the fact that

gifted girls feel less competent and their self-confidence declines. In consequence of that they choose next studies and career.

Our results can be partially supported by researches of Coleman a Fults (1982, 1983), Loeb a Jay (1987) or Ablard (1997).

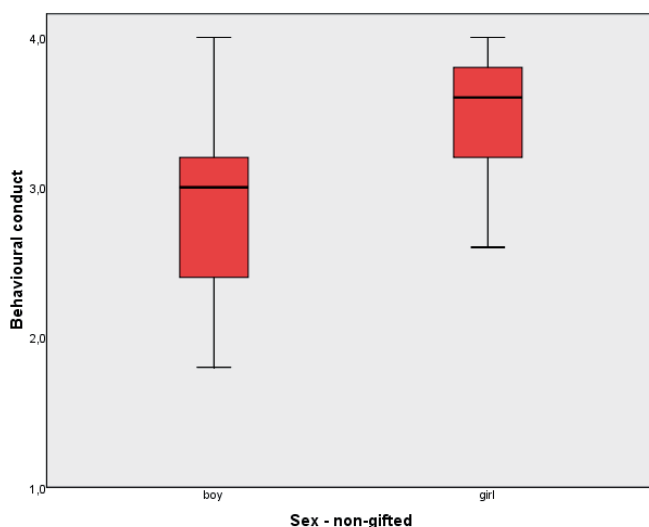
Non-gifted boys and girls

There is a statistically significant difference between non-gifted girls and boys only in the domain of behavioural conduct. Girls reach higher level of the self-concept in this area than boys (Table 5). This result is identical for both groups (gifted and non-gifted) and therefore it is probably independent on the level of gift.

Table 5. Differences between non-gifted boys and viros

	Non-gifted	N	Median	p
School competence	boys	32	2,7	0,09
	girls	41	3,0	
Social acceptance	boys	32	2,7	0,25
	girls	41	3,0	
Athletic competence	boys	32	2,8	0,60
	girls	41	3,2	
Physical appearence	boys	32	3,2	0,99
	girls	41	3,4	
Behavioural conduct	boys	32	3,0	0,001
	girls	41	3,4	
Global self-worth	boys	32	3,4	0,31
	girls	41	3,6	

Figure 6: Differences between non-gifted boys and girls – behavioural conduct



Conclusion

In our research gifted girls at the early school age reach lower self-concept in the domain of athletic competence than less gifted girls. The specialized literature often describes gifted girls' lower self-concept however the decline of their self-confidence is observed especially in adolescence. Gifted boys reach higher level of the self-concept in the area of school competence than less gifted peers. The area of school competence is considered one of the most relevant predictor of the overall self-concept of the intellectually gifted children (Hoge, McSheffrey, 1991; Byrne, Schneider, 1988; Harter, 1985).

As concerns the differences between gifted boys and girls, the results of our research are in accordance with that studies which find girls' higher self-concept. These significant differences are related to the domains of the social acceptance, physical appearance and behavioral conduct. In all these areas girls evaluate themselves better than boys. In the group of non-gifted children the situation differs. The girls reach higher rates only in the domain of behavioral conduct. Such a consistent result in both groups probably matches the social reality – girls are „good“, „calm“, „adaptable“ and they have less behaviour problems than boys.

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SEBEPOJETÍ ROZUMOVĚ NADANÝCH DĚTÍ – POHLAVNÍ ROZDÍLY

Předkládaná studie je součástí dizertačního výzkumného projektu zaměřeného na téma sebepojetí rozumově nadaných dětí. V případě analýzy rozdílů mezi nadanými i nenadanými chlapci a děvčaty dospívají autoři k rozdílným výsledkům. Náš výzkumný soubor je tvořen 125 dětmi ve věku 7 – 10 let, z toho 52 dětí bylo identifikováno jako rozumově nadaných (29 chlapců, 23 dívek), a 73 dětí s průměrným rozumovým nadáním (32 chlapců, 41 dívek). K zjišťování úrovně sebepojetí jsme použili Profil sebepojetí pro děti S. Harterové (1985). Výsledky našeho výzkumu jsou v souladu s těmi studiemi, které uvádí vyšší úroveň sebepojetí u nadaných dívek, než u nadaných chlapců, a to v oblastech sociální akceptace, fyzického vzhledu a chování.

Klíčová slova: sebepojetí, nadání, pohlavní rozdíly

