



## ***Emotional intelligence and perfectionism among gifted and non-identified students***

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The current study comparatively examines the emotional intelligence and perfectionism of gifted and non-identified students. A total of 857 students participated in the study. Data were collected through the Positive and Negative Perfectionism Scale, which measures students' perfectionism levels and the Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory Youth Version EQ-i:YV, which measures students' emotional intelligence. Our findings indicate that gifted students' scores in the intrapersonal and adaptability subdimensions of emotional intelligence and their overall scores in emotional intelligence are higher than those of non-identified students; while non-identified students' average score of positive perfectionism is higher than that of the gifted students. Additionally, we found a negative correlation between positive impression and negative perfectionism in the non-identified group, while the correlation between these variables was positive amongst the gifted participants. Our findings may help design successful educational and guidance programmes for the gifted and their non-identified peers and in-service programmes for their teachers and counsellors.

**Keywords:** Giftedness, gifted, emotional intelligence, perfectionism, comparative

First submission 13<sup>th</sup> September 2022; Accepted for publication 31<sup>st</sup> January 2023

### **Introduction**

The interplay between emotional intelligence and perfectionism is a relevant issue not only in personality research but also in research on giftedness. Perfectionism and emotional intelligence (EI) are two influential factors closely related to giftedness (Abdulla Alabbasi et al., 2021; Chan, 2010; Clark, 2015; Ogurlu, 2020). The inclusion of characteristics other than IQ in giftedness is consistent with an approach that focuses on talent

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development to understand human abilities despite its varying definitions. Rather than being a one-dimensional characteristic, giftedness is a complex set of characteristics that can be developed (Treffinger & Feldhusen, 1996). Giftedness can be defined as the high level of cognitive intelligence, the outstanding potential for academic/professional performance, the desire and capacity to exert oneself to the fullest extent possible, and the capacity to approach challenges more creatively and innovatively than other people do (Bar-On, 2007).

It is, therefore, safe to assume that the emotional intelligence and perfectionism of gifted individuals play an important role in their lives. Multiple studies have shown that gifted students, compared to their non-identified peers, have higher emotional intelligence (Kaya et al., 2016; Lupu, 2012; Sharifi & Sharifi, 2014) and tend to be more perfectionist (Locicero & Ashby, 2000; Orange, 1997; Neumeister, 2004; Parker & Adkins, 1995; Schuler, 2000; Siegle & Schuler, 2000). Nevertheless, a great deal of research has found conflicting evidence regarding whether gifted people are more perfectionist (Parker et al., 2001; Parker & Mills, 1996) and have higher EI (Al-Onizat, 2012; Dijkstra et al., 2012; Li et al., 2017; Olszewski-Kubilius et al., 1988; Robinson & Clinkenbeard, 2008) than their non-identified gifted peers. The aim of this study is to assess and compare the association between perfectionism and emotional intelligence levels in these two groups, as well as the relationship between perfectionism and emotional intelligence within each group. The following subsections provide definitions and theoretical frameworks of emotional intelligence, perfectionism, and giftedness respectively.

## **Theoretical Background**

### *Perfectionism*

Burns (1980) defines a perfectionist as one who strives to achieve perfection by avoiding mistakes and spending excessive effort to achieve it. In general, perfectionism can be defined as continually setting high standards for oneself and others and striving to maintain them (Hill et al., 1997; Rice et al., 1998), as well as the desire to reach the highest standard one sets for oneself (Frost et al., 1990).

Giftedness and perfectionism are interrelated (Locicero & Ashby, 2000) and perfectionism is a characteristic that is frequently observed in gifted individuals (Clark, 2015). Investigating the characteristics of the gifted people, Hollingworth worked with children with a score of 180 and above and concluded that perfectionism is the main characteristic of gifted people (Mısırlı-Taşdemir & Özbay, 2004). Silverman (1993) considers perfectionism as a positive or negative energy that an individual can make use of depending on their level of awareness. The feeling of inadequacy in reaching the standards set by oneself or others, for instance, may either be a driving force behind one's success or cause the person to fail (Silverman, 2007).

### *Emotional Intelligence*

According to Bar-On, emotional intelligence is the capacity to comprehend oneself and others, form connections with others, adapt to one's surroundings, and use one's coping mechanisms to deal with one's environment (Carney, 1999). The Bar-On Model of Emotional Intelligence includes the social, personal, emotional, and survival dimensions of intelligence, which are non-cognitive aspects of intelligence that are

more useful for coping with daily life than cognitive intelligence (Stein & Book, 2011). Bar-On's definition of emotional intelligence consists of five main dimensions: adaptability to terms and environment, interpersonal, intrapersonal, stress management, and general mood (Multi Health Systems Inc., 2002).

### *Giftedness*

The concept of 'giftedness' has emerged over time since different characteristics of individuals who stood out in various fields such as art, music, leadership, and gymnastics, as well as those with high cognitive intelligence scores, required a unique identification (Clark, 2015). The needs and characteristics of gifted individuals are different from each other and it is, therefore, difficult to be limited to certain concepts and generalize them. For this reason, various theories have emerged to define intelligence and ability, thus making it insufficient to determine the characteristics of those who are gifted through a single method (Kurnaz & Kaynar, 2020).

### *A Look at Gifted Education in Turkey*

In Turkey, the concept of 'giftedness' was first used in the strategy and implementation plan published by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) (Bilgiç & Ataman, 2020) in 2013. According to the Special Education Services Regulation at the MoNE, a gifted person is "an individual who learns faster than their peers, who thrives on ahead creativity, art, and leadership capacity, has special academic abilities, can understand abstract ideas, likes to act independently in their pursuits, and performs at high levels" (MoNE, 2020, p 2).

The definition of giftedness in Turkey therefore covers international criteria in the literature as well as priorities, common educational goals, and policies the country has regarding gifted individuals (Kurnaz & Kaynar, 2020). While studies on gifted children have increased in recent years, the total number of research studies still lags behind what is expected. To identify gifted individuals and improve their abilities for the benefit of society is the main goal of the state as well as individuals (Sak, 2008).

The Science and Art Centres (BİLSEM) and the Guidance and Research Centres (RAM) are the foremost institutions in Turkey the diagnosis of giftedness (Kurnaz & Kaynar, 2020). The Science and Art Centre is the official institution where students who are diagnosed as gifted in fields such as general mental ability, music, and visual arts, receive their education. In addition, some private schools have full-time and pull-out programme training programmes aimed at gifted students. In the process of diagnosis, private schools use merely the IQ tests that measure general mental ability. The main reason why so much weight is given to intelligence tests is that the lack of supply-to meet the demands. In selecting gifted students, if there are too many candidates involved in the identification process, it is not possible to use assessment tools such as non-standardized tests, self-assessment inventories, and observation forms.

### *Objective of the Study*

This study aims to compare the emotional intelligence and perfectionism levels of gifted and non-identified students. The research questions to be answered are:

1. Do the scores in emotional intelligence (adaptability, positive impression, intrapersonal, interpersonal, stress management, general mood, inconsistency, total emotional intelligence) and of perfectionism (positive perfectionism, negative perfectionism) differ between gifted and non-identified students?
2. Is there a relationship between the level of perfectionism and emotional intelligence among gifted students and among non-identified students?

## Methodology

### Participants

The study group of the research consists of 4th, 5th, and 6th-grade gifted and non-identified students. Of the 857 students in total, 474 are girls, and 383 boys. Gifted attend two BİLSEMs, one of which is in the Anatolian and the other in the European side of Istanbul, and the special classes within private schools, while those who are non-identified are students in private and public schools. Table I shows the distribution of students participating in the study.

Table I. Distribution of students participating in the research study

Identification	School type	Level	Sex		Total	
			Female	Male		
Gifted With Special Ability	BİLSEM	Grade 4	55	45	100	
		Grade 5	37	18	55	
		Grade 6	12	22	34	
		Total	104	85	189	
	Private School	Grade 4	37	44	81	
		Grade 5	52	35	87	
		Grade 6	43	39	82	
		Total	132	118	250	
		State school	Grade 4	55	45	100
			Grade 5	53	46	99
Grade 6	28		25	53		
Total	136		116	252		
Non-Identified	Private school	Grade 4	54	35	89	
		Grade 5	28	13	41	
		Grade 6	20	16	36	
		Total	102	64	166	
	Total			474	383	857

### Data Collection

Once permission was obtained from the Istanbul Provincial Directorate of National Education, the scales were handed over to the principals of the respective schools, and information concerning the implementation was

provided to the vice-principals, teachers, and guidance teachers. In order for the students to participate in the research, the Family Consent Form was distributed to the students one week before administration (by the researcher).

*Bar-On emotional quotient inventory: youth version (EQ-i:YV).* The present study used the Turkish equivalent of EQ-i:YV which was translated and validated by Köksal (2007), to measure the emotional intelligence of gifted and non-identified students. The scale was developed by Bar-On and Parker in 2000. It is a 60-item inventory to be answered by children between the ages of 7-18. An average of 20-25 minutes is required to complete the test. EQ-i:YV is about the personal, social, and emotional aspects of intelligence based on Bar-On's model of emotional and social intelligence. It is a 4-point Likert scale and consists of a total of 7 subdimensions which are Stress Management, Interpersonal, Positive Impression, Intrapersonal, Adaptability, General Mood, Inconsistency Index, and Total EQ. The scale's Cronbach Alpha was found to be .78 (Stress management), .78 (Intrapersonal), .53 (Positive impression), .79 (Interpersonal), .86 (Adaptability), .83 (General mood), and .92 (Total) for the data in this study.

*Positive-negative Perfectionism Scale.* The *Positive and Negative Perfectionism Scale* was developed by Kırdök (2004) to assess negative and positive perfectionism among gifted and non-identified students. Conducting an explanatory factor analysis, the researcher found 17 items in the scale fitted the predetermined criteria. Consisting of 17 items in total, this scale has two dimensions, namely positive perfectionism (10 items, 10 - 40), and negative perfectionism (7 items, 7 - 28). The higher the score to be obtained in both subscales, the greater the level of perfectionism (Kırdök, 2004). The scale's Cronbach Alpha was found to be .86 (positive perfectionism) and .81 (negative perfectionism) for the data in this study.

*Personal Information Form.* The researcher created a form to identify the demographics of the participating students. This form included questions on the current date of the day, birth order, sex, and grades of the students.

### *Data Analysis*

A total of 857 students took part in this study. To decide on the tests to be used for data analysis, a normality test (Shapiro-Wilk) was implemented to determine the compatibility of the data with the normal distribution. The evaluation of the normal distribution of the scores on the Bar-On Emotional Intelligence and Positive-Negative Perfectionism Scale revealed that the data did not have a normal distribution ( $p < .05$ ). Nevertheless, because of skewness and kurtosis, the values of other normality assumptions, were between  $\pm 2$ , and the sample size is 30 and above, which is in accordance with the central limit theorem. The data was thus considered to be normally distributed (George & Mallery, 2010). Parametric tests were used in data analysis, and an independent-sample t-test was used to compare the emotional intelligence and perfectionism levels of gifted students and their non-identified peers. Pearson's correlation coefficient was estimated in the correlation analysis. The results of all tests were assessed at the 0.05 level of significance.

## **Results**

The emotional intelligence and perfectionism of gifted students and their non-identified peers were compared through an independent group t-test. The findings are presented in Table II.

Table II. Emotional Intelligence and Perfectionism Scores of Gifted and Non-identified Students

	Student group <sup>1</sup>		t	p
	Non-identified (n=418)	Gifted with Special Ability (n=439)		
	$\bar{X} \pm S.S.$	$\bar{X} \pm SS$		
<b>Baron Emotional Quotient Inventory</b>				
Intrapersonal	15.25 ± 4.39	16.34 ± 4.23	-3.711	.000*
Interpersonal	39.42 ± 5.79	39.92 ± 5.67	-1.275	.203
Stress management	34.77 ± 6.77	34.80 ± 6.63	-0.064	.949
Adaptability	30.43 ± 6.27	32.25 ± 5.50	-4.515	.000*
General mood	46.03 ± 6.80	46.32 ± 6.46	-0.640	.522
Positive impression	15.01 ± 3.08	15.00 ± 3.07	0.056	.955
Total	180.90 ± 23.32	184.62 ± 21.91	-2.405	.016*
<b>Perfectionism Scale</b>				
Positive perfectionism	32.92 ± 5.65	31.28 ± 6.18	4.059	.000*
Negative perfectionism	17.02 ± 5.34	17.57 ± 5.26	-1.533	.126
Note: <sup>1</sup> Independent sample t test, *p<0.05				

Gifted students' total mean score in emotional intelligence (184.62±21.91), along with the intrapersonal (16.34±4.23) and adaptability (32.25±5.50) sub-dimensions, are significantly higher than those of non-identified students. Non-identified students have significantly higher scores (32.92±5.65) in positive perfectionism than their gifted peers ( $p < .05$ ). However, other emotional intelligence levels and negative perfectionism scores do not differ significantly between the two groups of students ( $p > .05$ ).

The relationship between the emotional intelligence and perfectionism of gifted students was analysed using Pearson's correlation test (Table III). The intrapersonal sub-dimension (emotional intelligence) is positively correlated with positive perfectionism ( $r = .22$ ), and negatively correlated (weak but significant correlation) with negative perfectionism ( $r = -.19$ ) ( $p < .01$ ). There is a positive and significant correlation at normal level between the interpersonal sub-dimension and positive perfectionism ( $r = .44$ ) ( $p < .01$ ), but no significant correlation between negative perfectionism and interpersonal sub-dimension ( $r = .09$ ). Stress management has a positive correlation ( $p < .01$ ) with positive perfectionism ( $r = .27$ ), and a negative, weak and significant correlation with negative perfectionism ( $r = -.36$ ). A positive and significant correlation at normal level has been found ( $p < .01$ ) between adaptability sub-dimension of emotional intelligence and positive perfectionism ( $r = .43$ ). There is no significant correlation ( $p > .05$ ), however, between negative perfectionism ( $r = .04$ ) and adaptability. There is a positive and significant correlation ( $p < .01$ ) at normal level

between general mood and positive perfectionism ( $r = .49$ ) but no correlation between negative perfectionism and general mood ( $r = -.05$ ). Positive impression has been found to have a positive and significant correlation ( $p < .01$ ) at normal level with positive perfectionism ( $r = .40$ ) and negative perfectionism ( $r = .11$ ). The total score of emotional intelligence has a positive correlation at normal level with positive perfectionism ( $r = .55$ ), and a negative and significant correlation with negative perfectionism ( $r = -.11$ ) ( $p < .05$ ).

Table III. Relationship Between the Emotional Intelligence and Perfectionism of Gifted Students

		Intrapersonal	Interpersonal	Stress management	Adaptability	General mood	Positive impression	Total
Positive	r	.215**	.444**	.72**	.431**	.490**	.397**	.547**
	p	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
Negative	r	-.190**	.087	-.362**	.037	-.052	.113*	-.114*
	p	.000	.070	.000	.440	.276	.018	.017

Note: Pearson correlation, \* $p \leq 0.05$ , \*\* $p \leq .01$

The relationship between emotional intelligence and perfectionism of non-identified students was analysed with the Pearson correlation test (Table IV).

Table IV. Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence and Perfectionism of Non-identified Students

		Intrapersonal	Interpersonal	Stress management	Adaptability	General mood	Positive impression	Total
Positive	r	.120*	.404**	.340**	.457**	.415**	.360**	.513**
	p	.014	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
Negative	r	-.383**	-.014	-.470**	-.137**	-.265**	-.166**	-.348**
	p	.000	.771	.000	.005	.000	.001	.000

Note: Pearson correlation, \* $p \leq 0.05$ ; \*\* $p \leq 0.01$

The intrapersonal sub-dimension of emotional intelligence has a positive correlation ( $p < .01$ ) with positive perfectionism ( $r = .12$ ), and a negative weak but significant relationship with negative perfectionism ( $r = -.38$ ). Whereas a positive and significant relationship ( $p < .01$ ) at normal level is observed between interpersonal sub-dimension and positive perfectionism ( $r = .40$ ), no significant correlation ( $p > .05$ ) was found between negative perfectionism and interpersonal ( $r = -.01$ ). Stress management has a positive but weak correlation with positive perfectionism ( $r = .34$ ), and a negative and significant correlation at normal level with negative perfectionism ( $r = -.47$ ) ( $p < .01$ ). Adaptability has a positive correlation at normal level with positive perfectionism ( $r = .46$ ), and a negative, weak and significant correlation with negative perfectionism ( $r = -.14$ ) ( $p < .01$ ). General mood has a positive correlation at normal level with positive perfectionism ( $r = .42$ ), and a negative, weak and significant correlation with negative perfectionism ( $r = -.27$ ) ( $p < .01$ ). Positive impression

has a positive weak correlation with positive perfectionism ( $r = .36$ ), and a negative and significant correlation at normal level with negative perfectionism ( $r: -0.166$ ) ( $p < .01$ ). The total score of emotional intelligence has a positive correlation at normal level with positive perfectionism ( $r = .51$ ), and a negative and significant correlation at normal level with negative perfectionism ( $r = -.35$ ) ( $p < .01$ ).

## **Discussion**

The findings of the present study suggest that gifted students' scores in intra-personal and adaptability and in overall emotional intelligence are higher than those of non-identified students, while non-identified students' average score in positive perfectionism is higher than that of the gifted students. However, the difference between the average scores of negative perfectionism and the other sub-dimensions of emotional intelligence, namely interpersonal, stress management, general mood, and positive impression, was not statistically significant; suggesting that there is no difference between the two groups.

Even though previous research suggests that gifted students have higher scores in general mood (Abdulla Alabbasi et al., 2021), several studies found similar findings to those of our study (MacCabe et al., 2010; Missett, 2013). These conflicting findings may result from various factors such as the type and degree of giftedness, the educational support given to students, and the personal characteristics of gifted children (Neihart, 1999). Most of the gifted students participating in our research were identified as students with high IQ, while the non-identified students in our sample had previously undergone a diagnosis process but were not diagnosed with giftedness. Therefore, studies comparing different populations of gifted and non-identified students may have different results.

Gifted students in our study have a higher average score than non-identified students in intrapersonal and adaptability, as well as in overall emotional intelligence, indicating that they are more flexible and creative than their peers in understanding and expressing their emotions, tolerating everyday problems, and coping with change and that they are satisfied and happy with themselves (Köksal, 2007). Previous research reported that gifted students outperform their peers in terms of physical, emotional, and social adaptability (Cutts & Moseley, 2001). This is important issue to address when dealing with the unique challenges that may arise from gifted students' differing cognitive capacities (Abdulla Alabbasi et al., 2021). For instance, gifted students who start school early and attend an accelerated programme may perform better than expected in adapting to a learning environment with older classmates. Our research, therefore, indirectly supports the view that acceleration practices may not be as disadvantageous as it is thought for gifted students (Sak, 2014; Steenbergen-Hu & Moon, 2011). Non-identified students' average score in positive perfectionism is significantly higher than that of the gifted students. In his study with 820 6<sup>th</sup> grade gifted students, Parker (2000) found that gifted students did not have higher perfectionism levels than non-identified peers. Contrarily, in their study with 83 gifted students aged 12-15 years, Locicero and Ashby (2000) found that a majority of the students had positive perfectionism, while Kramer (1988), Roberts and Lovett (1994), and Schuler (1997) reported that gifted individuals have higher levels of perfectionism than non-identified peers.



Most gifted individuals force themselves to be perfect by setting goals and objectives that are difficult to achieve. Having a highly developed imagination, they always compare themselves to the most perfect because they tend to achieve extraordinary results (Kanlı, 2011). As a result they may not be able to raise their positive perfectionism level to that of non-identified students. Perfectionists' and gifted individuals' belief that they should always do the best can lead to their dissatisfaction with their performance (; Davis, 2006; Davis & Rimm, 2003). According to Cooper (2013), such an unrealistic sense of responsibility can have long term negative impact on social, emotional, and academic development.

We found a positive correlation between the positive perfectionism of gifted students and emotional intelligence and its sub-dimensions intrapersonal and stress management. Negative perfectionism has a negative correlation with emotional intelligence but not with adaptability and general mood. While individuals with high emotional intelligence are successful in recognizing and managing their own emotions and those of others, individuals with perfectionism may worry about others' opinions, adjust themselves accordingly, and may develop enosiophobia. When lacking in both intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships, people with low emotional intelligence tend to have more negative perfectionist tendencies.

According to Clark (2015), the characteristics of gifted individuals that most reflect their emotional turmoil are sensitivity, perfectionism, intense emotions, and introversion. Dabrowski (1966) explained extraordinary sensitivity and excitement in terms of overexcitability and stated that most of the problems gifted people experience in the course of emotional development are related to overexcitability. Even though perfectionists struggle with negative emotions that arise from feeling compelled to achieve the high goals they set for themselves, those with high emotional intelligence are able to control themselves and focus on success. In such a case, emotional intelligence can help to reduce the negative effects of perfectionism (Corson et al., 2018)

Our findings suggest that overall emotional intelligence of non-identified students is positively correlated with positive perfectionism, and negatively correlated with negative perfectionism. As emotional intelligence increases, positive perfectionism increases, and negative perfectionism decreases. Examining the perfectionism and emotional intelligence levels of music and core teacher candidates, Saracaloğlu et al. (2016), similarly, observed a negative correlation between perfectionism and emotional intelligence. Gerçek (2020) found a similar relationship amongst university students.

Evaluating the correlation between perfectionism and emotional intelligence amongst gifted and non-identified students together, we observe a number of differences in the relationship between negative perfectionism and emotional intelligence sub-dimensions. The correlations between emotional intelligence and negative perfectionism of non-identified students are higher. In addition, while there is a negative significant correlation between adaptability and general mood scores and negative perfectionism of non-identified students, there is no significant relationship between the scores of gifted students. The most salient difference is the negative correlation between positive impression and negative perfectionism of non-identified students, this correlation is found to be positive in the case of gifted students.

It should be noted that different personality traits of gifted students may also have an impact on these relationships, which implies that researchers should take into account in further studies these. Although the positive correlation between positive impression and negative perfectionism amongst gifted students may seem like a paradoxical situation, it may be due to the asynchronous development of gifted students. Asynchronous development is defined as the mental development being ahead of physical and emotional development (Eriş, 2015). When individuals who are mentally driven to achieve better cannot reach the criteria they set with their physical qualifications, their negative perfectionism increases; resulting in such reactions such as being dissatisfied with and quitting what they are doing. Cognitive development may increase positive impression, while physical and emotional development may increase negative perfectionism. In our literature review, we have not encountered a similar result to this finding of the present study, and we recommend that it needs to be examined further in studies on perfectionism and emotional intelligence.

Finally the implications of the present study need to be considered in the light of its limitations. This study was carried out with 857 students consisting of 4th, 5th, and 6th graders. To achieve more generalizable results, further research is to be carried out with a wider range of students and in provinces other than Istanbul. Besides, further analyses are to be conducted taking account of various demographic variables such as age, birth order, socioeconomic status, and similar factors. Furthermore the present study does not take into account the type of school the students come from, whether public or private, when they enrol in BİLSEM. These factors need to be taken into consideration in future studies.

### **Declaration of Conflicting Interests**

The study is based on the first author's master thesis, which was supervised by the second author. The authors have disclosed no potential conflicts of interest in researching, authoring and/or publishing this article.

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