



## Non-Academic Self-Concept of Gifted Pupils

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### Abstract

*The self-concept is of the most common areas of research in the field of gifted pupils in last thirty years. Self-concept is an important factor that largely influences the position of gifted pupil in a group. Because of that, we can conclude that social self-concept is an essential part of general self-concept. The self-concept model created by Marsh and Shavelson in 1985 has hierarchic structure. The highest level of the self-concept is known as the general self-concept. Its divided into academic self-concept and non-academic self-concept. The academic self-concept consists of mathematics self-concept, verbal self-concept and school self-concept. The non-academic self-concept is composed of emotional, social and physical components. The Self-Description Questionnaire - short form (SDQ-II-S) was the research tool used to measure pupil's self-concept. The research sample consisted of 207 gifted pupils at secondary school. We have examined the relation between GPA (Grade Point Average) and non-academic self-concept. In our research, we did not find any degree of correlation in all three areas of self-concept. This means that with an increase in non-academic self-concept, their grades do not improve.*

**Keywords:** *self-concept, non-academic self-concept, SDQ-II-S, secondary school.*

### 1 Introduction

Self-concept is a set of beliefs and attitudes towards oneself. It includes how a person perceives himself, how he feels about himself, what emotional relationship he has or how he treats himself. Poliach [1] presents two aspects of self-concept. The first aspect is the self-image and the second is the self-relationship. The self-image consists of a physical, mental and social scheme. The physical scheme consists of perceptions and attitude of one's own body - both its external appearance and its intrinsic qualities. The mental scheme includes ideas about his temperament, abilities and character. The social scheme includes ideas about one's place in society, about the social positions hold in family, school or work. The other aspect of self-concept is created by the emotional part. It does decide about life and death. At one extreme side it can take the form of self-love, known as narcissism. On the other extreme side, it can have the form of self-hate. More often, there are milder and more complex forms of relationship towards oneself. For an example, the same person can admire something, be angry and be ashamed of something at the same time. The self-concept is a concept that is influenced by the social context - especially important people, their opinion, attitudes, but also personal variables such as a personal experience, predispositions and so on. No one can acquire social and personal identity just from themselves, only through others we are able to realize our equality and at the same time our differences [2]. Thus, the consciousness of the Self is formed in the process of socialization also through the mechanisms of social learning.

Shavelson defined the self-concept as self-perception and introduced one of the possible models of self-concept [3]. With regard to the internal structure of self-concept, he and his colleagues suggested a multidimensional and hierarchical construct. The highest level of the self-concept is known as general self-concept. Its divided into academic self-concept and non-academic self-concept.

### 2 Non-academic self-concept

Authors Hoge and Renzuli [4] write about two theoretical assumptions for gifted pupils to achieve a more positive self-concept than their regular peers. The first is that high skills are reflected in achieving success. However, this hypothesis is based on the assumption that exceptional abilities always translate into higher and more demanding performance. This hypothesis does not indicate whether the increased self-concept applies to all areas. In addition, the extent to which performance affects particular area of self-concept depends on the degree of importance that the pupil attaches to that performance.

The second prerequisite for increasing self-concept is the very process of designating a child as gifted. However, emotional and social problems arise in gifted pupils. As early as 1891 Lombroso talked



about gifted pupils as disturbed and weak [5]. Terman opposed and reported that gifted children are not significantly emotionally threatened than the average population [6]. On the contrary, he emphasized their superiority in cognitive areas of development.

According to the research tool (the questionnaire), we used in our research to include non-academic self-concept, we include:

**Social self-concept:** is the idea of how other people perceive us. The most important thing for any individual is the acceptance by people those he considers to be the most important in his life (family, friends, peers...). Social acceptance is important, and it appears to be the most important factor during the time of puberty. Pupil needs to know where he belongs, what his role is and what his place in society is. Gifted pupil is socially independent and with average self-confidence. Such a pupil organizes and leads various group games and influences the behavior of the group members, does not like authoritative communication and questions issues with various authorities. He is also not afraid to point out the falseness of their response. The gifted pupil has a good sociability, is popular in the collective, however, this does usually change during the school period [7].

**Emotional self-concept:** represents the experience of feeling states and emotions. It is essential for the pupil to create a confidential environment where he will not be afraid to express his opinion and confront the problems. Crucial is also to have teacher's support, in which he finds understanding and respect. The teacher is supposed to create a positive class climate, improve and promote classroom relationships. The emotional aspect of self-concept expresses the emotional relationship to itself and is realized mainly in self-esteem.

**Physical self-concept:** consists of an image of one's bodily abilities and one's own appearance. Young people, especially adolescents, consider their appearance very strictly and are characterized by high sensitivity in the perception and evaluation of their own body. The perception of one's body comes from within the person rather than from the outside world. Especially girls are very critical to assessing their outwardness and sensitively perceive the views of the others. The body is an important source of self-confidence or conversely, a sense of physical inadequacy [8]. The teacher should motivate the pupils to do sports, not to deprecate others on the basis of external differences. Teacher should help in creating a positive relationship with one's body, even though it may not be according to our ideals. The present time presents a human cult with high demands on appearance. The body is considered a design product, an "object" to invest in. This could be seen as a reason to increase the importance of physical self-concept in human life. Certain authors even claim, that the importance of physical self-concept is the most important component of general self-concept [9,10]. Present period gives us "template" that he should follow. This effort is not always successful, because not everybody can properly assess own body and could be over-critical. Many researches point out that we are capable of providing relatively realistic evaluation (critique) of others, but not towards ourself. Research has shown that negative self-concept already occurs in children aged 4-6 years [11]. From a self-concept perspective, it's crucial how does the pupil interpret his school performance, how he holds up in comparison with others (in school class). His interpretation is strongly influenced by attitudes and evaluations of important adults (especially parents). The opinion of his peers becomes increasingly important [12].

Priority in the assessment is the progress in the pupil's holistic development and in his self-development and attitudes [13]. The pupil learns to evaluate himself, his progress in relation to himself, to assess his learning and his performance (individual relationship norm). If he is to compete with someone, it is with him-self, so in the future he will be able to manage his self-development for healthy and happy life.

### 3 Methods and Participants

For the purpose of this paper we have used the SDQ-II-S abbreviated SDQII questionnaire created by Ellis, Marsh and Richards [14]. The questionnaire has 11 factors and every area of self-concept can tell us a lot not only in the complex examination of this issue, but also about every single pupil. Pupils have completed the questionnaire by self-rating items on a 6-point, Likert-type scale. The scale ranges from 1 (I do not agree) to 6 (I agree). We used a non-academic part from the questionnaire which, as we can see in Figure 1, is composed of three categories. The research sample consisted of 207 gifted pupils at secondary school. These pupils attend segregated classes for the gifted (School for Gifted Students).

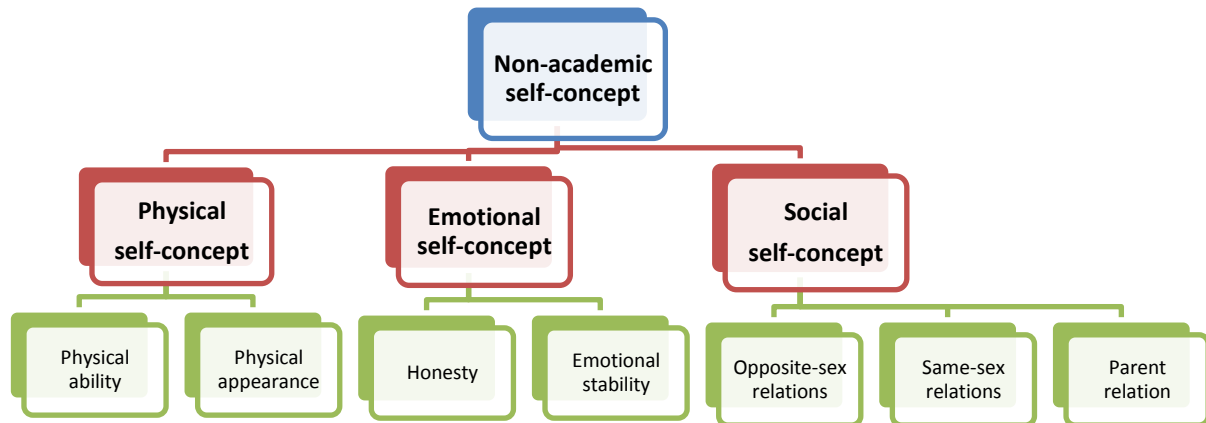


Fig.1. Structure of non-academic self-concept by SDQ-II-S

#### 4 Results

The objective of our work was to find out whether non-academic self-concept of gifted students affects their performance. The reason behind our goal was that research shows a higher number of social and emotional problems in gifted pupils. We wanted to find out if there is any connection between the non-academic self-concept and GPA (Grade Point Average) in the group of gifted pupils. We have calculated the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient between the intensity of specific areas of non-academic self-concept and GPA of gifted pupils. The calculation was carried out in a specialized program known as the STATISTICA. The results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient

Area of non-academic self-concept ↔ GPA	R
Physical self-concept ↔ GPA	-0.0919
Emotional self-concept ↔ GPA	-0.0685
Social self-concept ↔ GPA	-0.2135

Since the scaling of non-academic self-concept is from 1 to 6, where 6 is the best rating, however the scale of school grades has the opposite trend - value 5 is the worst grades, therefore all correlation coefficients are negative numbers. Based on the calculated values of the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient, we can conclude that there is none correlation between the GPA and all three areas of non-academic self-concept in the group of gifted pupils. Therefore, we can declare that grades have no influence on the non-academic self-concept.

There is no degree of binding between the GPA and the physical self-concept in gifted pupils ( $R = -0.0919$ ), as well as between GPA and emotional self-concept in gifted pupils ( $R = -0.0685$ ). And also, between the GPA and the social self-concept in gifted pupils there's a zero degree of binding ( $R = -0.2135$ ).

And because of all above, we can claim that even with the specifics of a gifted pupil and research showing their social and emotional problems, their non-academic self-concept does not affect their school performance.

#### 5 Conclusions

Researches [15,16] were focused on the impact of relationships/correlation in the performance. Their researches show that adolescents who draw their self-confidence primarily from exercise usually have more stable self-concept than those who rely primarily on the views of others. Gifted pupils may seem to us as not socially matured, which is based on their specific characteristics. They often have problems in the social and emotional areas, but that is only because of the fact that they just want to get more attention for themselves. Teachers should be prepared for such a behavior and they should be able to react properly which is essential for develop of self-concept of the gifted pupils. The main

tasks of the school are undoubtedly the educational process as well as the versatile development of the pupil's personality are the main tasks of the school.

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