



THE SOCIAL, COGNITIVE AND SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF POTENTIALLY GIFTED CHILDREN

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Abstract/Izveček

The research results suggest that teachers find potentially gifted children to be academically more competent and sociable as opposed to students without the same potential. Likewise, potentially gifted children tend to have better academic achievements. When it comes to their socio-demographic profile, there seem to be more female students than male, and they often live in urban areas. Additionally, both parents of potentially gifted children show higher levels of education when compared to parents of non-potentially gifted children. The results of the hierarchical regression analysis point to significant effects by gender, place of residence and parental education have in explaining children's academic competence and sociability; results also reveal significant incremental validity in the assessment of cognitive ability, motivation, and creativity.

Keywords:

giftedness, academic
competence, sociability,
gender, parental
education

Ključne besede:

nadarjenost, akademska
kompetenca, družabnost,
spol, izobrazba staršev

Socialni, kognitivni in sociodemografski profil potencialno nadarjenih otrok

Rezultati raziskave kažejo, da učitelji potencialno nadarjene učence ocenjujejo kot bolj učno kompetentne in družabne v primerjavi z učenci, ki to niso. Prav tako imajo potencialno nadarjeni učenci boljši šolski uspeh. Glede njihovega sociodemografskega profila se zdi, da je učenek več kot učencev in da pogosteje živijo v večjih urbanih območjih. Prav tako imata oba od staršev potencialno nadarjenih otrok višjo stopnjo izobrazbe kot starši otrok, ki niso prepoznani kot potencialno nadarjeni. Rezultati stopenjske regresijske analize kažejo na pomemben prispevek spola, kraja bivanja in izobrazbe staršev pri razlagi učne kompetence in družabnosti otrok, medtem ko naj bi imele ocene kognitivnih sposobnosti, motivacije in ustvarjalnosti pomembno inkrementalno veljavnost.

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Giftedness signifies the possession and use of unlearned and spontaneously expressed abilities in at least one ability domain, whilst implying that the individual in question is at least in the top 10% among his peers (Gagné, 2004). The term presupposes relatively high intellectual capacity and an advanced level of at least one of the following capabilities: general intelligence, creativity, socioemotional ability and/or sensorimotor ability (França-Freitas, Prette and Prette, 2014).

Renzulli's three-ring model of giftedness (Renzulli, 2005) represents an applicable model in the school environment. This model often forms the basis for the development of assessment scales intended for teachers and parents who seek to identify gifted students. The three-ring model assumes that giftedness comprises of three characteristics: ability, motivation/task orientation and creativity. It is only when these three characteristics combine that we can consider giftedness. Abilities imply above average general intellectual abilities and/or specific abilities, which are measured with an intellectual ability test. Motivation does not primarily belong to the intellectual domain; it implies commitment to a task, perseverance, dedication, positive energy and an especially strong motivation in solving a problem. Creativity refers to curiosity, originality, ingenuity, fluency, flexibility, curiosity, as well as solving problems in a new, different way.

When it comes to gifted children and their characteristics, the literature thus far has been mostly saturated with research referring to their intellectual abilities, while the studies dealing with their social and emotional characteristics, as well as their adjustment, are relatively scarce and of recent date.

It is clear that high intellectual abilities separate the gifted from the non-gifted. Indirectly, we could conclude that high intellectual capacities contribute to academic success, although some research indicates that gifted students do not always prove to be the most academically successful ones, and that academically successful students need not always be extremely gifted (Parekh, Brown and Robson, 2018). However, in gifted children there tends to be a discrepancy in developmental aspects relating to outstanding intellectual abilities that surpass the intellectual abilities of their peers, while the emotional and social development is at the same level. Authors have different names for this "discrepancy" in development, such as "dyssynchrony" (Terrassier, 1985) or "asynchrony". Inconsistency in terms of developmental aspects results in internal and social gap (Shechtman and Silektor, 2010). This discrepancy can cause problems with child's emotional and social adjustment.

The same discrepancy is also at the root of specific emotional and social needs of gifted children, which makes them different from non-gifted ones. This in turn indicates that gifted children belong to an emotionally and socially sensitive group. It is safe to assume that gifted children feel “different” and have different emotional and social needs that affect their social relationships (Bain and Bell, 2004).

The most common specificities connected with giftedness, apart from those pertaining to intellect, are excitability, sensitivity, persistence and self-determination (Lovecky, 1992). These specificities lead to increased awareness of one’s own emotions (Cross, 2002). Thus far, the results pertaining to this field of research pointed to strength, but also to sensitivity of gifted people; in other words, giftedness can be both positive and negative at the same time (Peterson, 2009). This is why we come across opposite conclusions in literature. On one hand, the research results suggest that gifted students tend to have more developed social skills (França-Freitas, Prette, Prette, 2014), more developed self-regulation and self-efficacy (Guez, Peyre, Le Cam, Gauvrit and Ramus, 2018), more positive self-esteem (Amini, 2005; Bain and Bell, 2004), more positive academic self-image and more developed empathy (Shechtman i Silektor, 2010). By comparing social aspects of gifted students’ self-image and of students with high academic achievements, Bain and Bell (2004) concluded that gifted children achieved higher results on the assessment scale of physical abilities, physical appearance and generally had a more positive self-image, whereas teachers’ assessment of peer relationships suggested otherwise – an absence of differences between students assessed as gifted and those who are not. By comparing self-concept and perceived competence of gifted and non-gifted students, Litster and Roberts (2011) concluded that gifted students rated academic and behavioural competencies significantly higher than non-gifted students. Likewise, gifted students seemed to have a more positive general self-concept, and yet, when compared to non-gifted ones, they perceived their physical appearance and sports competence to be lower. The following variables were found as moderating ones: the classes students attended, the method by which giftedness was identified, and the year of publication. The less recent papers favour the absence of differences between gifted and non-gifted children, while recent studies point to their existence. The reason behind these opposite interpretations seems to primarily be in the fact that the methods and measures that were used to identify giftedness differed across time periods.

Research conducted on preschool children indicated that there were no behavioural, emotional or social differences between gifted children and non-gifted children (Peyre, Ramus, Melchior, Forhan, Heude and Gauvrit, 2016). Gifted children were generally more socially mature (Robinson, 2008).

On the other hand, the results indicated an insufficient adaptation of gifted students, which manifested in the greater presence of behavioural disorders in gifted students as opposed to non-gifted ones (Guénolé et al., 2013). Moreover, gifted students tend to have a greater sense of isolation and are less satisfied with social support (Vialle, Heaven and Ciarrochi 2007). When it comes to comparisons in terms of well-being, the data indicated a relatively small difference concerning lower self-esteem and social acceptance in gifted students (Kroesbergen, van Hooijdonk, Van Viersen, Middel-Lalleman and Reijnders, 2015). Gifted children seem to have the same needs as everyone else, but it is their interests and aspirations that make them special. Diverging interests and environment not suited to their interests can become a possible source of boredom, which may lead to depression, social anxiety (Stankovska, Pandilovska, Taneska and Miftari Sadiku 2013) and isolation (Shechtman and Silektor, 2010).

An important issue associated with giftedness is related to personal characteristics and their interrelationship, and consequently to the adaptation of gifted children. In this context, the relevant set of variables covers both parents' gender and education. Research results indicate that male children whose parents have high-status jobs are more likely to be identified as gifted (Parekh, Brown and Robson, 2018). Likewise, academic achievement is connected to parents' level of education (Guez et al. 2018), as well as with the students' gender (Parekh, Brown and Robson, 2018). Male students are more often identified as gifted, while female students are identified as academically more successful. Students who have parents with higher levels of education are typically more successful in terms of academic achievement, as opposed to those who have parents with lower levels of education. The level of education, employment and average earnings of both parents stand out as significant predictors of giftedness and they have been shown to explain 5% of the variance in college enrolment (Conejeros-Solar and Gómez-Arízaga, 2015). Research conducted on children between the ages of 4 and 7 indicated the importance that socio-demographic properties have on giftedness.

For example, boys show a higher level of creativity than girls, while children who attend private preschools tend to be more creative than the ones attending public schools, and the same goes for children whose parents have better economic status. It has been assumed that more educated parents, and parents with better earnings, understand their child's needs better and use adequate parenting behaviours (Çetinkaya, 2010). It has been shown that stimulative parenting and school environment contribute to the adaptation of gifted children (Reis and Renzulli, 2003), i.e., they affect both self-image and the child's adaptation (Bain and Bell, 2004). However, some authors were keen to conclude that the identification of giftedness connects more to economic wealth than achievement, which in turn makes giftedness a symbol of prestige and academic dominance (Parekh, Brown and Robson, 2018).

In any case, giftedness is doubtlessly a very complex phenomenon that depends on three factors, as described in Renzulli's three-ring model. Nonetheless, identification of gifted children has been affected by individual socio-demographic profile. In order to resolve some of the aforementioned issues, one of the goals of this research is to identify clear social and socio-demographic characteristics that potentially distinguish gifted children from non-gifted ones.

The primary goal of our research was to examine the differences in academic achievement, academic competences and inter-peer sociability, between children who were identified as potentially gifted by teachers and those who were not. Additionally, the research examined the differences between the two groups of students with regard to some of the socio-demographic characteristics (gender, parents' education, place of residence). Finally, we made an effort to determine the predictive value of socio-demographic characteristics and characteristics of gifted children when it comes to explaining their academic competence and sociability.

Method

Research participants

The study involved 76 primary school teachers from all across the Republic of Croatia, with assessments being collected for 1419 students of the 2nd grade of primary school (some of the data was incomplete). The nation-wide sample consisted of 48.27% (N=685) female students and 49.47% (702) male students coming from four different regions of the country:

littoral part of Croatia, N=910 (64.13%); Lika, N=81 (5.71%), Central Croatia N=303 (21.35%); Slavonia, N=125 (8.80%). When it comes to the place of residence, 77.38% of students were from an urban area (N=1098), and 22.62% were from a rural area (N=321).

The subgroup of participants on which we collected data on cognitive abilities and on parents' education consisted of students from primary schools in Zadar (N=487). As far as data on parents is concerned, the information was collected on 378 parents. The average age of mothers was 37.73 years, while the average for fathers was 40.31 years. The majority of parents completed high school education, with some having acquired a university degree or having completed higher vocational education, while the smallest portion of parents had only primary school education. The percentage of girls in this subsample was 51.59%, and boys 48.15%, which corresponds to the entire sample.

Measuring instruments:

A scale for assessing potential giftedness in children (Šimić Šašić, Proroković, Klarin and Šimunić, 2020). The scale consists of 13 subscales and a total of 86 statements. Eleven subscales refer to abilities (linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, physical-kinaesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, artistic, technological, theatrical and attentive). The data obtained from the subscales on their technological abilities and attention were not included in further analyses because a large number of assessments on the subscale of technological abilities were missing (the teachers found it difficult to provide them), while assessments of attention correlated highly with other subscales of abilities. Additional two subscales evaluated motivation (task orientation) and creativity. This scale was intended for teachers. Their task was to provide assessments on a five-point rating scale in relation to specific students – whether something applies to them or not (1 – *doesn't apply at all*, 5 – *fully applies*). They were also provided an option *I am unable to assess*. The results on all subscales have been formed as the sum of assessments on their corresponding individual statements. Higher scores on these subscales indicate that a particular trait/ability has developed more in an individual.

The criterion for identifying potential giftedness was an achievement on at least one of the subscales of abilities, and on the scales of motivation and creativity, which ranked above the 3rd quartile, i.e., it fell within the 25% of the highest assessments.

As a result, two groups of students were formed: those who are potentially gifted and those who are not gifted according to the criteria defined. Based on it, 233 students were identified as potentially gifted (16.51%), and 1178 as non-gifted (83.49%). The lack of assessments of all student characteristics resulted in a different number of participants in individual analyses.

Adapted questionnaire of the *Academic competence* (Zeidner and Schleyer, 1998) is a scale containing 6 statements on a five-point scale where 1 indicates *the stated statement does not apply to the student at all* and 5 indicates *the stated statement fully applies to the student*. The results of our research revealed a one-factor structure of this measuring instrument with $Eig=3.98$, while the total variance explained was 66.26%. The following is an example of a typical statement included in the questionnaire: *He/she often does not understand teaching materials*. The score on the questionnaire stands for a teacher's assessment of student's academic competence.

Adapted peer sociability questionnaire (Curby, Rudasill, Rimm-Kaufman and Konold, 2008) consisted of 5 statements with the possibility of answering on a five-point scale where 1 indicated *the stated statement does not apply to the student at all* and 5 indicated *the stated statement fully applies to the student*. The results revealed a one-factor structure ($Eig. =4.13$) which explained 82.65% of the common variance. With statements such as *He/she has a lot of friends*, the overall result on the questionnaire represents a teacher's assessment of student's social competence.

The study also collected data on academic achievement, students' gender and, only for sub-sample purposes, data on the parents' level of education and the place of residence.

Procedure

The research was carried out as part of a wider project "*ZadarZaDar*" *Doživljajna pedagogija u prirodoslovnim predmetima za razvoj darovitih učenika* UP.03.2.2.02.0102 (eng. Experimental pedagogy in natural sciences for the development of gifted students). The teacher's task was to assess each student, but it also included data on school achievement, gender, place of residence, and for a subgroup of children attending primary schools in Zadar County, we collected data on parent's level of education ($N=371$).

Results

The first research question referred to the potential differences between two student peer groups in terms of their academic achievement, academic competence and sociability.

Table 1. Results of descriptive statistics and internal consistency for scales assessing potential giftedness in children, academic competence, sociability among peers and academic achievement for children identified as either gifted or non-gifted (N=1419)

Variable	N _{gifted}	N _{non-gifted}	M _{gifted}	M _{non-gifted}	SD _{gifted}	SD _{non-gifted}	Cr α
Linguistic	231	1175	4.77	3,01	0.50	1.08	0.96
Logical-mathematical	232	1175	4.60	2.82	0.65	1.18	0.98
Spatial	210	981	4.80	3.42	0.64	1.03	0.93
Musical	213	1093	4.54	3.22	0.81	1.11	0.93
Physical Kinaesthetic	233	1178	4.86	3.86	0.60	1.05	0.92
Intrapersonal	232	1171	4.15	2.96	0.63	0.88	0.70
Interpersonal	232	1175	4.66	3.30	0.53	0.96	0.92
Artistic	233	1170	4.61	3.35	0.85	1.13	0.91
Theatrical	232	1177	4.76	3.29	0.61	1.16	0.93
Motivation	233	1146	4.91	3.15	0.30	1.05	0.97
Creativity	233	1168	4.80	2.90	0.37	1.04	0.96
Academic competences	219	1167	4.88	3.54	0.50	1.03	0.90
Sociability	233	1177	4.82	3.75	0.61	1.02	0.95
Academic achievement	216	1108	4.97	4.80	0.29	0.44	

Given that the variance was inhomogeneous in both groups and that the Levene's homogeneity test is deemed important in this context, we turned to the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test, and the results are shown in Table 2.

When it comes to differences across the observed groups, the results show better academic achievement, more positive academic competence and greater sociability among the peers of gifted students when compared to non-gifted ones.

Table 2. Results of the Mann-Whitney U test for academic achievement, academic competence and sociability among peers between non-gifted students (group 1) and potentially gifted students (group 2)

	Rank Sum 1	Rank Sum 2	U	Z	p	N1	N2
Academic achievement	713542.0	163608.0	99156.00	-3.99	0.00	1108	216
Academic competences	708660.5	252530.5	27132.50	-18.52	0.00	1167	219
Sociability	741060.5	253694.5	47807.50	-15.73	0.00	1177	233

The next research question referred to differences between potentially gifted and non-gifted students with regard to some socio-demographic characteristics. To this end, a series of χ^2 tests was done and they are shown in Tables 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7.

Table 3. Differences between groups of potentially gifted and non-gifted students in terms of gender

	Gifted students		Non-gifted students		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Boys	99	43.23	598	52	697	50.54
Girls	130	56.77	552	48	682	49.46

$\chi^2=5.87$; $df=1$; $p=0.015$

Results shown in Table 3 indicate the existence of a statistically significant difference between groups of potentially gifted and non-gifted students with regards to gender. Girls were more often identified as potentially gifted than boys.

Table 4. Differences between groups of potentially gifted and non-gifted students with regards to their place of residence

	Gifted students		Non-gifted students		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Rural area	34	10.59	287	89.41	321	22.75
Urban area	199	18.26	891	81.74	1090	77.25

$\chi^2=10.57$; $df=1$; $p=0.001$

Results from Table 4 indicate that there were significantly more potentially gifted students who lived in the urban area compared to those who lived in the rural area. Tables 5 and 6 reveal significant differences between potentially gifted and non-gifted students with regard to the education of the father and the mother.

Since there were fewer parents in categories with lower educational status, the educational status has been reclassified into two categories: one category contained parents with completed high school education, and the other contained parents with degrees from higher vocational institutions and universities.

The results (Table 6) indicate a clear statistically significant difference between groups of potentially gifted and non-gifted students with regards to fathers' level of education. Fathers of gifted children held post-secondary level degrees in 50.88% of cases, and only 27.96% of fathers of non-gifted children had the same qualification.

Table 5. Differences between gifted and non-gifted students with regards to father's level of education

Level of education	Gifted students		Non-gifted students		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Completed secondary level of education	28	49.1	170	72.03	198	67.58
Higher vocational education or a university degree	29	50.88	66	27.96	95	32.42

$\chi^2 = 10.99$; $df = 1$; $p = 0.001$

Table 6. Difference between potentially gifted and non-gifted students with regards to the mother's level of education

Level of education	Gifted students		Non-gifted students		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Completed secondary level of education	20	32.79	159	57.61	179	53.12
Higher vocational education or a university degree	41	67.21	117	42.39	158	48.88

$\chi^2 = 12.36$; $df = 1$; $p = 0.000$

Mothers' levels of education were also significantly different between groups of gifted and non-gifted children. The results show that mothers of gifted children are generally of higher educational status.

The next issue in our study concerned the predictive value of socio-demographic characteristics (gender, place of residence and education level of mother and father), as well as some other characteristics of potentially gifted students, when it comes to explaining assessments of academic competence and sociability among peers.

In the first step, the education of the mother was singled out as a significant predictor of academic competence, but it lost its significance the second step, turning it over to verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, visuo-spatial, musical and intrapersonal abilities, and finally, motivation.

Both sets of predictors explained 79% of the variance in academic competence. When it comes to sociability, the gender of the child and the education of the mother stood out as predictors in the first step. In the second step, mother's education remained a significant predictor together with visuo-spatial abilities, intrapersonal and especially interpersonal abilities. Both sets of predictors explained 71% of the variance in sociability among children.

Table 7. Results of hierarchical regression analyses where the sociodemographic characteristics and other traits of potentially gifted children were included as potential predictors, while the assessments of academic competence and sociability among children were the criteria (N=187)

		academic competences		sociability	
		β		β	
Step 1	Gender	-0.02	R=0.30	-0.17*	R=0.27
	Rural/Urban area	0.07	R ² =0.09	-0.02	R ² =0.07
	Father's education	0.12	F _(4,187) =4.61	0.00	F _(4,187) =3.73
	Mother's education	0.21*	p=0.001	0.21*	p=0.006
Step 2	Gender	-0.04	R=0.89	-0.04	R=0.84
	Rural/Urban area	-0.05	R ² =0.79	-0.01	R ² =0.71
	Father's education	0.05	F _(15,176) =44.01	-0.02	F _(14,177) =29.05
	Mother's education	0.04	p=0.000	0.13*	p=0.000
	Verbal-linguistic abilities	0.21*	Δ R ² =0.70	-0.10	Δ R ² =0.64
	Logical-mathematical abilities	0.36*	p=0.000	0.03	p=0.000
	Visuo-spatial abilities	0.12*		0.15*	
	Musical abilities	-0.16*		-0.08	
	Physical-kinaesthetic abilities	-0.01		0.07	
	Intrapersonal abilities	0.18*		-0.29*	
	Interpersonal skills	0.03		0.75*	
	Artistic abilities	-0.04		0.03	
	Theatrical abilities	0.10		0.09	
	Motivation	0.40*		0.13	
Creativity	-0.02		0.03		

Discussion

Previous research did not provide consistent results when it comes to the potential of high intellectual abilities to clearly differentiate students in terms of their school achievement and some socioemotional features. Consequently, the primary objective of our research was to determine whether the group of students identified as potentially gifted by teachers differ in some characteristics from students who were deemed otherwise.

The results indicate that teachers' assessments of sociability and academic competences differ across these two groups of students. In other words, teachers assessed that potentially gifted students were academically more competent and more successful in peer relationships. Based on the data indicating their better school performance, we argue that potentially gifted children tend to be more successful in mastering educational content. Despite some findings that support the discrepancy in the development of cognitive abilities in relation to social and emotional development, or the propositions that gifted children resemble their peers in socioemotional development (Silverman, 2002), the results of this research suggests otherwise. Teachers assess intellectually advanced children as being more academically and socially competent than average children. Based on the results of this research, it appears justified to conclude that potentially gifted students in the developmental period of middle childhood not only have above-average cognitive abilities, but are more socially competent and more successful in peer relationships; these results are corroborated by some other research as well (see França-Freitas, Prette and Prette, 2014). The abilities that gifted children possess, especially in terms of self-regulation, empathy and self-efficacy, probably contribute to the quality of their relationships with peers (Guez et al., 2018). Moreover, gifted students are probably better in their cognitive evaluations, which should contribute to more effective coping with different social situations. We could also assume that better success in school contributes to a more positive self which in turn contributes to social competence. Nevertheless, some studies have spoken in favour of higher academic competences (Ayğar and Gündoğdu, 2017; Infantes-Paniagua, Fernández-Bustos, Ruiz and Contreras-Jordán, 2022), but weaker social competences when it comes to children in middle childhood years and adolescent age (Infantes-Paniagua et al., 2022). This leads us to conclude that the child's age should be kept in mind when interpreting the obtained research results. Despite the fact that giftedness manifests itself at children's earliest ages, the self-image develops as a function of social relationships and social comparison. School becomes a place where students compare themselves, compete, and make efforts in all fields of development. Experiencing yourself as different, or gifted, tends to be a process that occurs during adaptation to various cognitive tasks and environmental demands. Correspondingly, the research conducted on children in their early childhood phase indicated an absence of differences between gifted children and those who were not (Peyre et al., 2016), which does not entail that these differences will remain invisible as the child

grows up. In the end, the social maturity that some authors talk about (Robinson, 2008) and that gifted children seem to possess, contributes to the use of mechanisms that enable them to successfully adapt in peer relationships. In this context, we ought to stress the importance of assessing and identifying giftedness in terms of cognitive abilities and academic success, as well as monitoring socioemotional requirements that may be specific to gifted children.

The following relevant set of variables that was tested in the context of students' potential giftedness were socio-demographic ones, especially those pertaining to student's gender, place of residence and their father's and mother's education. The obtained results reveal that female students were identified as potentially gifted more often than their male colleagues, and that the students who live in the urban areas were more frequently identified as gifted as opposed to students from smaller rural areas. Likewise, the students who were identified as potentially gifted more often had both parents of higher educational status.

The results of a large number of studies indicate a tendency of giftedness being more frequently identified in male students (see Greeman and Garces-Bacsal, 2015; Petersen, 2013; Çetinkaya, 2010; Parekh, Brown and Robson, 2018). In this context, Petersen discussed gender bias when identifying gifted students (2013); her meta-analysis of 130 studies showed that male students were 1.19 times more likely to be identified as gifted. The author pointed out that these gender differences were most prominent with students of pre-adolescent age. One related hypothesis that agrees with such results refers to greater variability of cognitive abilities in male students, which in turn relates to higher probability of them being identified as gifted compared to female students (Petersen, 2013; Freeman and Garces-Bacsal, 2015). Also, it is important to point out that the identification of giftedness with regard to gender differs according to the area of giftedness. The ratio of gifted male students to gifted female students in the STEM field is 3:1, while the ratio in the area of verbal giftedness favours the female students and is 2:1 (Heilbronner, 2013), i.e., giftedness appears to heavily depend on the field in question. When it comes to teacher assessments as a criterion, male students tend to be more often identified as gifted compared to female students (Greeman and Garces-Bacsal, 2015). It is certainly possible that the difference stems from the assumption of gifted female students being less able to withstand pressure and competitiveness, as well as needing more time to think when performing tasks when compared to their male colleagues (Boaler, William and Brown, 2000).

The results of our research do not speak in favour of male-dominant giftedness; on the contrary, female students were more often assessed as gifted by teachers. However, it seems important to point out that some studies support these findings when it comes to teacher assessments of younger children, where female students tend to be identified as gifted more frequently, which then changes at a later age, with male students being more often identified as gifted (Reis, 2002).

Furthermore, a higher level of parental education has proven to be a characteristic of gifted children in other studies as well (Guénolé et al., 2013). The assumption has been that parents with higher levels of education better understand their child and their needs, and at the same time have a better chance to financially afford their children some, otherwise less accessible, life experiences that stimulate intellectual development. Similar research conducted on gifted children aged 4 to 7 shows that their fathers and mothers were more likely to work as government officials, which provided the family and children greater financial support and consequently a richer environment that encourages giftedness (Çetinkaya, 2010). The results of our research support these findings, i.e., point to the conclusion that children of parents with higher educational status were more likely to be identified as gifted. In this regard, Sekulić-Majurec (1995) argued that the fact that gifted children appear more often in families of higher social and educational status does not entail them being more often born in these families, but only indicates that a higher socioeconomic status provides an incentive for the development of giftedness. A richer environment certainly appears to contribute to richer experiences and talent development. It seems plausible to assume that parents with a higher educational status tend to have higher expectations of their child and provide them with support in this regard. Additionally, place of residence has proven to be a significant determinant of potential giftedness; potentially gifted children live in urban areas more often than children who are not identified as such. We should interpret this data in a similar manner as with the role of parents' education; urban environments probably provide children with significantly more content and opportunities for giftedness to manifest, develop, and to be subsequently identified.

The results of the regression analysis indicate a significant effect that some socio-demographic characteristics had in explaining academic competence and sociability, however, the independent contribution of cognitive abilities, motivation and creativity was significantly greater for both academic competence and sociability.

In other words, the variables that define giftedness according to Renzulli's model explain both criterion variables to a considerably greater extent in this research. Finally, we could conclude that cognitive abilities and motivation stand out as significant predictors of academic competence, whereas interpersonal and intrapersonal abilities as predictors of sociability. Gender, parents' education and place of residence contribute to a significantly smaller degree in the explanation of variance regarding both academic competences and socialization among peers.

Conclusion

The results of this research lead us to infer greater academic competence and better socialization skills among peers in children who have been identified as potentially gifted as opposed to those who have not. In addition, girls were more often recognized as gifted. Parents of potentially gifted children tend to have a higher educational status and these families live more often in urban areas compared to parents of non-gifted children. In general, the results of this study suggest that the factors of giftedness, proposed by Renzulli's three-ring model of giftedness, contribute significantly more to academic and social competences in children than their socio-demographic characteristics.

The primary contribution of this research has been a rather large sample size, as well as its representativeness, which enables the generalization of the obtained results. Moreover, given the rarity of research regarding the socioemotional development of gifted children, the research has not only theoretical, but also important practical value for all experts who work with gifted children in the educational system. On the other hand, the method used to assess the potential giftedness in children should be singled out as a serious shortcoming of this research, i.e., the study relied solely on teachers' assessments of children's abilities and other characteristics. Such assessments need not necessarily be objective, due to some individual inclinations and other biases of those who assess, or their inability to have complete insight into all behavioural aspects of the children they assess. Future research should also take into account some other criteria when identifying potential giftedness in children (e.g., apply greater number of specific cognitive abilities tests, examine some behavioural correlates of giftedness, mutually compare performances and achievements among children etc.).

Longitudinal research and long-term tracking of children identified as gifted should also help us figure out the best criteria for identifying giftedness.

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