

CONFERENCE PROCEEDING

Overexcitability: Uniqueness Development of Gifted and Talented Muslim Students

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ABSTRACT

The Dabrowski's concept of overexcitabilities is the heightened intensity and sensitivity displayed in the gifted students' behaviours when responding to the stimuli in the environment. Dabrowski identified five areas of intensity-psycho-motor, sensual, intellectual, imaginal, and emotional. This study was administered to identify the profile of overexcitability among gifted and talented students. This research was a descriptive and inferential quantitative study conducted in order to see the profile and correlation between the two variables. The study sample consisted of 40 students from a gifted and talented school established in Kolej GENIUS Insan, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM), Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia. This study employed Questionnaire-II (OEQ II) to measure overexcitability. The findings of this survey demonstrated that gifted and talented students have a unique personality, and there is a significant relationship at a high level between the gifted and overexcitability. However, people often give a negative impression that these students have behaviour or disciplinary problems. The result of this investigation could help to explain the overexcitability and be able to understand the positive and negative elements that exist in students. Therefore, awareness must be cultivated to enhance self-development and the skills for overexcitable adaptation in the daily life of these students.

Keywords: *Gifted and Talented Students, Overexcitability*

INTRODUCTION

The concept of overexcitabilities was introduced to the world of giftedness by Dabrowski in 1967 (Daniels & Piechowski, 2009). It has drawn many researchers to venture into identifying the presence of overexcitabilities among gifted and talented students (Ackerman, 1997; Bouchard, 2004; Gross *et al.*, 2007; Mendaglio, 2003; Piechowski, 1999; Tieso, 2007a, 2007b). The findings supported the claim that overexcitabilities were part of the gifted students' characteristics. Moreover, the extreme intensity and sensitivity influenced the students' actions, personalities, way of thinking, and also emotion (Webb *et al.*, 2005), up to a point that they might be labelled as nerd or unusually strange by their peers (O'Connor, 2002).

Unfortunately, overexcitabilities have been found to affect the personalities of gifted students in a negative way that made their peers feel uncomfortable in the learning process (Smith *et al.*, 2004). If this phenomenon is not given a fair attention, it would affect the gifted students' social and emotional functions (Webb *et al.*, 2005). Therefore, overexcitabilities should be accepted as part of the gifted students' personalities that should be understood, stimulated, and also supported to ensure a healthy development of their potentials (Daniels & Meckstroth, 2009), rather than being labelled and punished as behavioural or problematic problems.

METHODOLOGY

Research Model

The study is quantitative approach descriptive survey design. It examined the relationship between perfectionism and overexcitability among gifted and talented students.

Participants

Participants in this study were chosen using objective sampling. A sum of 40 samples was selected from lower secondary gifted and talented students (consisting of 20 male students and 20 female students) from a Kolej GENIUS Insan in Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM), Nilai, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia.

Instrument

Overexcitability Questionnaire-II (OEQ II) by Falk *et al.* (1999) used to measure overexcitability: Falk *et al.* (1999) adopted it to produce suitable instruments for quantitative studies. In this OEQ II, there were five subconstructs, particularly; psychomotor, emotional, sensory, intellectual and imagination. Next, for each construct, it had ten items which made the total number of questions was 50 items. This OEQ II was said to be able to provide a consistent measurement value compared to previous instruments. Even according to (Piiro, 2010), this instrument is easy to administer and analyze.

Based on the pilot tests administered, the instrument had high-reliability values. The Overexcitability Questionnaire-II (OEQ II) instrument had a reliability value of 0.936 Alpha Cronbach based on 50 items of questions. According to Fraenkel *et al.*, (2013), a value of 0.7 and above indicates the item has a high-reliability value. This Cronbach's Alpha value proved that this instrument had a high-reliability value and were suitable for use as a questionnaire instrument in this study.

RESULTS

The outcomes of the study included descriptive findings and profile of overexcitability. The completion of these findings indicated that overexcitability were at a moderate level.

Table 1. Profile of Overexcitability Domains

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Psychomotor	2.10	4.80	3.400	.804
2. Emotional	1.70	4.70	3.515	.676
3. Sensory	1.90	5.00	3.442	.786
4. Intellectual	2.00	4.90	3.545	.688
5. Imagination	2.00	4.50	3.405	.691

Based on Table 1, five sub-domains of overexcitability are showed for gifted and talented students. The highest domain in overexcitability was intellectual (mean = 3.545), followed by emotional (mean = 3.515), sensory (mean = 3.442), imagination (mean = 3.4050) and psychomotor domains (mean = 3,400).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Being gifted does not mean the individual has high intensity or sensitivity in his or her behaviour. Nonetheless, students who have at least one domain of overexcitabilities supported Dabrowski's notion that overexcitabilities are prevalent in gifted students (Piechowski, 1999). According to Daniels and Meckstroth (2009), Dabrowski had stated that an individual who possesses more than one overexcitability characteristic is a gifted and talented individual. This showed that an individual could be gifted even though he or she does not have overexcitability.

“One who manifests several forms of overexcitability, sees reality in a different, stronger and more multisided manner” (Dabrowski, 1972). Experiencing the world in this unique way brings great joys as well as great frustrations. The benefits and joys of being overly excitable should be celebrated. Any frustrations or negatives can be dealt with positively and used to aid the child's development.

Gifted and talented students who are frequently labelled as problematic due to their erratic behaviour should be assisted in understanding and coping with their exuberance. This would assist them in controlling and channelling their intensity and sensitivity in a positive and meaningful manner. In brief, the concept of overexcitabilities, which is prevalent in gifted students, must be addressed not only by teachers but also by the students' parents. This is because they play critical roles in the development of students in both settings, at school and at home.

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