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RESEARCH ARTICLE / ARAŞTIRMA YAZISI

Exploring the Needs and Profiles of Gifted Children: An Analysis of WISC-R Results and Test Administrators' Recommendations

Üstün Yetenekli Çocukların İhtiyaçlarının ve Profillerinin Araştırılması: WISC-R Sonuçlarının Analizi ve Test Yöneticilerinin Önerileri

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Abstract:

Gifted individuals play a significant and indispensable role in the development of any society. It is vital that gifted individuals are identified and provided with appropriate educational opportunities so that their capabilities can be channeled into productivity and their well-being is supported accordingly. Their education, however, bears certain challenges, including accurately determining and exploring their needs. In that sense, the current study was conducted to contribute to the literature and diagnosis process by analyzing Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised **(**Wisc-R) profiles, commonly used in diagnosing gifted children, and recommendations by test administrators. The current study employed a concurrent parallel research design, one of the mixed methods approaches. Within the scope of the study, 99 gifted children's WISC-R intelligence test results were analyzed. Descriptive statistics and dependent and independent t-tests were used in the quantitative part, while content analysis was used in the qualitative part. The quantitative findings indicate that gifted children's intelligence scores show a heterogeneous distribution; their performance scores are relatively higher than their verbal scores, and there is a significant difference between their verbal scores and performance scores. The qualitative findings regarding test administrators' reports are also documented under three main themes: children's characteristics, information and recommendations for the family, and information and recommendations for the school. The test administrators focused more on cognitive, emotional, personal, and social characteristics, while their reflections were quite limited about the children's physical properties and the twice-exceptionality condition.

Keywords: *Wisc-r, Gifted, Test administrator.*

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Öz:

Üstün yetenekli bireyler herhangi bir toplumun gelişmesinde önemli ve vazgeçilmez bir rol oynamaktadır. Çünkü üstün yetenekli bireylerin tespit edilerek, onların yeteneklerinin verimliliğe yönlendirilmesi ve refahlarının desteklenmesi için uygun eğitim fırsatlarının sağlanması hayati önem taşımaktadır. Ancak eğitimleri bazı zorlukları da beraberinde getiriyor; bu zorluklardan biri de ihtiyaçlarının doğru belirlenmesi ve araştırılmasıdır. Bu çalışma, bu anlamda, üstün yetenekli çocukların teşhisinde yaygın olarak kullanılan Wechsler Çocuklar İçin Zeka Ölçeği-Revize (Wisc-R) profilleri ve test yöneticilerinin önerileri incelenerek literatüre ve tanı sürecine katkı sağlamak amacıyla yapılmıştır. Bu çalışmada karma yöntem yaklaşımlarından biri olan yakınsak paralel araştırma deseni kullanılmıştır. Araştırma kapsamında 99 üstün yetenekli öğrencinin WISC-R zeka testi sonuçları analiz edildi. Nicel kısımda tanımlayıcı istatistikler, bağımlı ve bağımsız t testleri, nitel kısımda ise içerik analizi kullanılmıştır. Nicel bulgular üstün yetenekli çocukların zeka puanlarının heterojen bir dağılım gösterdiğini; performans puanlarının sözel puanlarına göre nispeten daha yüksek olduğu; sözel puanları ile performans puanları arasında anlamlı farklılık bulunmaktadır. Sınav yöneticilerinin raporlarına ilişkin niteliksel bulgular da çocukların özellikleri, aileye yönelik bilgi ve öneriler ile okula yönelik bilgi ve öneriler olmak üzere üç ana tema altında belgeleniyor. Test uygulayıcıları bilişsel, duygusal, kişisel ve sosyal özelliklere daha fazla odaklanırken, çocukların fiziksel özellikleri ve iki kez istisnai olma durumu hakkında yansıtmaları oldukça sınırlı görülmüştür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Wisc-r, Yetenekli, Test yöneticisi.

Introduction

Every individual has the right to education and learning without any discrimination. Although educational programs are designed by considering the average characteristics of society, it should be ensured that individuals who differ can also benefit from education fully and completely. To achieve inclusivity, all individuals must be recognized, and their needs, interests, and competencies must be discovered. One group that differs from the average of society is gifted children. Although various theoretical approaches try to explain and find giftedness (Sternberg, 2000) most common way is intelligence tests.

Intelligence tests used to assess intelligence are important tools, especially in clinical and educational settings, to determine individual strengths and weaknesses for diagnosing, predicting, providing appropriate treatment, and designing proper educational environments (De Lemos, 1994). Such widely accepted intelligence tests, such as the Revized-Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC-R), are still used today (Uluç, Öktem, Erden, Gençöz, & Sezgin, 2011).

In the literature, previous studies have examined WISC-R profiles of children with learning disabilities/dyslexia (Poletti, 2016), the Flynn effect (Kanaya & Ceci, 2018), children with attention deficit disorder/hyperactivity (Taddei, Contena, Caria, Venturini, & Venditti, 2011), children with mental disabilities (Ayraler, Çetin, Işık, & İşeri, 2015) and children with autism spectrum disorder (Nader, Jelenic, & Soulières, 2015). However, research is limited to investigating WISC-R profiles of gifted children (Buzinkai, 2013; Taşdemir & Ergül, 2015; Wilkinson, 1993). In these studies, only WISC-R profiles were focused on; the test administrators' comments and recommendations which are supplementary to the test results and are essential in terms of education, are not included. The current study aims to examine WISC-R profiles of gifted children and analyze test administrators' recommendations. In line with the purpose, the study addresses these research questions:

Is there a significant difference between the verbal and performance sub-scores of the gifted children on the WISC-R?

What is the difference distribution between the gifted children's verbal and performance intelligence coefficients?

Which specific subtests of the WISC-R highlight the strengths and weaknesses of gifted children?

Are there any significant differences in the WISC-R intelligence and subtest scores of gifted children based on gender?

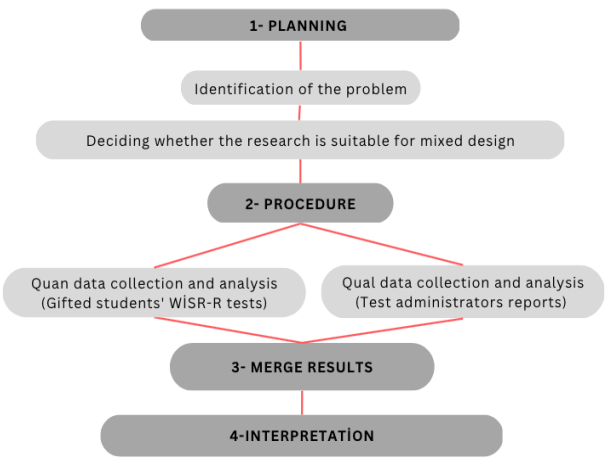
What issues do test administrators focus on in the test reports of the children diagnosed with giftedness?

Method

Research Design

Convergent parallel research design was employed as one of the mixed methods approaches. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected simultaneously in the study. In the quantitative research, the researchers outlined WISC-R profiles of gifted children and examined whether the profiles differed regarding certain variables. In the qualitative part of the study, the test administrators' recommendations regarding children's WISC-R results were examined.

Figure 1. *Mixed Method*



Participants

Within the scope of the quantitative dimension of the study, the WISC-R intelligence test results of 71 males and 28 females aged 6–11.3 years (Mean = 7.42, Standard Deviation = 1.29) gifted children having applied to the weekend enrichment courses were examined. The voluntary consent form was obtained from the parents of the children participating in the study. These intelligence tests were examined in that they were carried out not to evaluate children with different characteristics (learning problems, behavioral problems) but to directly identify gifted children. While reviewing the relevant documents, test results meeting the following criteria were included in the research.

(1) Intelligence tests of children with an IQ (general intelligence) score of 120 and above,

(2) Tests with all subtest and sub-field standard scores,

(3) Tests of the children between the ages of 6-10 are included.

While examining the relevant documents, test results without comments from the test administrator were not included in the research.

Data Collection and Analysis

The ethical approval of the research was obtained with the decision of the Ethics Committee of İstanbul Sabahattin Zaim University with application number ET-FR-674, date: 27.11.2023. In quantitative data analysis, children with a WISC-R score of 120 or above were accepted as "gifted." kurtosis and skewness values showed normal distribution and parametric tests were selected accordingly for the data analysis. No outlier values were found. Independent and dependent group t-test analysis was conducted to determine whether the WISC-R subtest standard scores differ significantly according to the gender variable.

In the qualitative part of the study, the content analysis method was used in the analysis of the recommendations by the test administrators. The study's qualitative data were obtained from 25 intelligence tests selected randomly from the 99 intelligence tests. 25 (15 males and 10 females, aged 6-11.2 years, mean = 7.5 and Standard Deviation = 1.31) test administrators' recommendations in these tests were examined. Written recommendations were transferred to the computer, and codes, categories, and themes were created. Analyses were repeated until a consensus was reached on the emerging themes.

Results

The first question addressed in the research is, 'Is there a significant difference between the verbal and performance sub-scores of the gifted children on the WISC-R?' The results obtained are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 *The results of the dependent group's t-test*

	Mean	**sd**	**n**	**t**	**df**	**p**
Verbal	128.10	12.72	99	-3.58*	98	.001
Performance	133.74	11.46	99			

When the results of the intelligence tests are examined in Table 1, the average verbal intelligence score is 128.10, and the performance intelligence average score is 133.74. It is also seen in Table 1 that the variance in terms of verbal and performance intelligence coefficients of children whose giftedness was determined by the WISC-R test was in favor of their performance scores. (t (98) = -3.58, p <.05).

The second question addressed in the research is 'What is the distribution of the difference between the gifted children's verbal and performance intelligence coefficients?' Considering the direction of the variance values, the frequency and cumulative percentage values were calculated and presented in Table 2.

Table 2 *Frequencies and Cumulative Percentage Values of the Differences between Verbal and Performance Intelligence Test Scores*

Performance Score > Verbal Score			**Verbal Score > Performance Score**		
Variance	**Frequency**	**Cumulative Percentage**	**Variance**	**Frequency**	**Cumulative Percentage**
52	1	1,0	38	1	1,0
38	1	2,0	31	1	2,0
32	1	3,0	24	1	3,0

31	2	5,1	22	1	4,0
30	1	6,1	16	1	5,1
29	2	8,1	15	2	7,1
28	1	9,1	14	2	9,1
26	2	11,1	12	1	10,1
25	5	16,2	11	1	11,1
24	2	18,2	10	3	14,1
23	2	20,2	9	1	15,2
22	1	21,2	8	3	18,2
21	1	22,2	7	2	20,2
20	2	24,2	6	3	23,2
18	1	25,3	5	2	25,3
16	2	27,3	4	4	29,3
15	2	29,3	3	3	32,3
13	1	30,3	2	2	34,3
11	2	32,3	1	5	39,4
10	3	35,4			
9	1	36,4			
8	1	37,4			
7	4	41,4			
6	3	44,4			
5	3	47,5			
4	3	50,5			
3	4	54,5			
2	3	57,6			
1	2	59,6			
0	1	60,6			

According to Table 2, when the verbal IQ is higher than the performance IQ, 7.1% of the tests (7 individuals) show a variance of 15 points or more, and 3% (3 individuals) have a 30 points or more variance. Conversely, when the performance IQ is higher than the verbal IQ, 29.3% of the tests (29 individuals) show a variance of 15 points or more, and 6.1% (6 individuals) have a variance of 30 points or more.

The third question addressed in the research is 'Which specific subtests of the WISC-R highlight the strengths and weaknesses of gifted children?' The results obtained are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. *Subtests in Which Children Performed Strengths and Weaknesses*

	Subtests	**High**		**Very High**		**Poor**		**Very Poor**	
		n	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**
Verbal	General Knowledge	3	3	0	0	20	20.2	3	3
	Similarity	26	26.3	1	1	3	3	2	2
	Arithmetic	7	7.1	0	0	11	11.1	0	0
	Vocabulary	9	9.1	0	0	3	3	0	0
	Comprehension	10	10.1	0	0	11	11.1	1	1
Performance	Picture Completion	2	2	0	0	10	10.1	1	1
	Picture Arrangement	11	11.1	0	0	3	3	1	1
	Block Design	24	24.2	1	1	5	5.1	1	1
	Object Assembly	5	5.1	0	0	10	10.1	0	0
	Coding	9	9.1	1	1.1	17	17.2	5	5.1

Table 3 shows that 41% of children excelled in the Block Design subtest (performance domain) and 10.9% in the Similarities subtest (verbal domain). The poorest performances were in the Coding subtest (18.7%) and Picture Arrangement (10.9%) in the performance domain, and the Comprehension subtest (9.3%) in the verbal domain.

In both the verbal and performance domains, around 44% of the children scored above the average in at least one subtest, while 41-45% scored below average in at least one subtest. 80.8% of children showed strengths and weaknesses across subtests, with scores differing from their subfield averages.

The fourth question addressed in the current study is 'Do gifted children's WISC-R intelligence scores and subtest scores differ by gender?' Independent groups t-test was conducted to compare the WISC-Rprofiles of female and male children. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. *Intelligence Coefficients and Subtests Independent Groups t-Test Results by Gender*

Group	Male			Female					
	Mean	**sd**	**n**	**Mean**	**sd**	**n**	**t**	**df**	**p**
General Knowledge	13.08	2.96	71	12.21	2.78	28	1.377	52.494	.174
Similarity	15.61	3.34	71	16.18	2.53	28	-0.923	65.246	.359
Arithmetic	14.27	2.36	71	13.36	2.91	28	1.476	41.755	.148
Vocabulary	13.97	2.64	71	14.57	3.21	28	-0.956	97	.342
Comprehension	14.01	3.20	71	14.11	2.79	28	-0.143	56.364	.887
Picture Completion	14.08	2.32	71	14.00	3.10	28	0.130	39.432	.897
Picture Arrangement	15.37	2.87	71	15.00	2.78	28	0.586	50.981	.561
Block Design	16.35	2.63	71	15.04	3.75	28	1.980	97	.051
Object Assembly	14.52	2.69	71	14.14	3.50	28	0.515	40.154	.610
Coding	13.42	3.15	71	14.86	2.07	28	-2.224	97	.028*
Verbal	128.25	12.11	71	127.71	14.38	28	0.175	42.90	.862
Performance	133.65	10.10	71	133.96	14.57	28	-0.123	97	.902
General	133.93	9.35	71	133.57	12.48	28	0.156	97	.877

When Table 4 is examined, the general intelligence and verbal and performance subfield coefficients differ according to the gender variable. When the subtests are examined, there is a significant difference in favor of female children only in the coding subtest of the performance subfield ($t(97) = -2.224$, $p < .05$). No other significant difference is observed based on gender in the other subtests.

The current study's qual part sought answers to the following question: 'What issues do test administrators focus on in the reports of children diagnosed with giftedness? Accordingly, the recommendations offered by the test administrators according to the WISC-R test results are summarized in Table 5 under three main themes.

Table 5. *Themes, Categories, Sample Codes*

Themes	Categories	Sample Codes
Child triads	Cognitive	• Is ahead of other children and, when diagnosed, outperforms them
	Emotional	• Shows different emotional development
	Physical	• Asynchronous development
	Social	• Underestimating and looking down on peers
	Personal	• Hasty
	Twice Exceptional	• Difference between verbal and mathematical success
	Perception of superiority	• Research on the superiority of family and teacher
	Behaviors in the testing process	• Timid and babyish features during the test
Information and Recommendations For Families	Expectation	• Family and environment's expectation of excellence
	Positive Discipline	• Consistency between parents
	Academic Support	• Family activities
	Communication	• Creating an environment to get along with peers
	Psychological Assistance	• Counseling on emotional expression
	Cooperation	• Family-teacher-school cooperation
	Private School Guidance	• Must take the SAC exam
Information and Recommendations for School	Enrichment	• Analysis, synthesis, and development of creativity, high-level thinking activities
	Differentiation	• Identifying and encouraging interests
	Acceleration	• Presenting high-level information in academic courses
	Individualization	• Individualized Education Program
	Vocational Orientation	• Become a successful engineer or architect
	Teacher Support	• Teachers' self-improvement

When Table 5 is examined, it is seen that the explanations and recommendations by the experts (test administrators) regarding the children's WISC-R test results are primarily focused on the characteristics of the gifted children, and recommendations are directed at their families and schools.

Considering the literature (Clark, 2007), the traits of gifted children, such as stronger memories (U17) and asynchronous development (U16), are discussed in the reports.

Another theme in the data analysis is information and recommendations for families, which consists of the categories of positive discipline, expectation, academic support of the family, communication, psychological support, cooperation, and private school guidance. Concerning the expectations, the experts underlined such issues as the expectation of excellence, anxiety, and compliance with rules are highlighted because of the expectation of excellence.

Under the theme of information and recommendations for schools, the instructional interventions emphasized by the experts for gifted children are enrichment, differentiation, acceleration, individualization, vocational orientation, and teacher support. Enrichment, which means broadening or deepening the content of the subject studied, is the most emphasized instructional intervention by the experts. The experts on this intervention strategy stress developing higher-order thinking skills, process skills such as reading books, mentoring, observation and research, development of mental skills, field trips, courses in different disciplines, hobby studies and activities, and time management skills.

Discussion

The children's intelligence scores varied across general and sub-domains, aligning with previous studies on children with special abilities (Wilkinson, 1993). In this study, children performed better in the performance domain compared to the verbal domain, although some research indicates no significant differences between the two (LaFrance, 1997). Factors such as ethnicity or risk

group status (Saccuzzo, Johnson & Russell, 1992) might explain these differences, especially given that the children were previously undiagnosed and lacked access to appropriate educational enrichment.

The study found that 59.6% of the children had higher performance than verbal scores, with differences ranging between 1-52 points. In contrast, 36.8% had higher verbal scores than performance, with a difference range of 1-38 points. A small percentage (1.0%) showed equal scores in both domains. These findings are consistent with research showing that the difference between performance and verbal scores can vary widely (Kaufman, 1976; Silver & Clampit, 1990; Taşdemir & Ergül, 2015). Children with special abilities, including those with learning difficulties, exist across all demographic groups and need to be identified and educated to support their development. Families, teachers, and peers play critical roles in the diagnosis process, emphasizing the importance of raising awareness about giftedness. Özkardeş (2013) highlights that learning disabilities are often studied too late despite the need for early diagnosis. Gifted children's identification is delayed because of misconceptions, such as the assumption that all gifted children achieve easily. Toffalini, Pezzuti, and Cornoldi (2017) found that children with learning difficulties may also be intellectually gifted, possibly more so than typically developing children.

Three themes emerged from test administrators' reports, with the first being characteristics of gifted children. Administrators highlighted cognitive, emotional, personal, and social traits while largely overlooking physical characteristics, intuitive traits, and twice-exceptionality (gifted children with disabilities). This neglect may reflect administrators' limited knowledge of gifted development. Asynchronous development in gifted children can impact motor skills and physical activity, making attention to physical traits important (Clark, 2007; Yılmaz, 2015). Intuitive abilities, vital for creativity, and the twice-exceptionality condition common in gifted children (Kaplan Sayı, 2018) also deserve more focus.

When analyzing the second theme, family information and recommendations, test administrators primarily focused on positive discipline, academic support, and communication while focusing less on psychological support, school-family cooperation, and private school guidance. Various recommendations may indicate a belief that giftedness should mainly be addressed within the family rather than through external support. Few experts suggested the SAC exam or specialized schools for gifted children, possibly due to limited awareness or negative views on such options. Sibling relationships, a common family challenge, were also neglected. However, other areas like motivation, stress management, emotional regulation, peer relations, and family dynamics were well-covered, indicating that test administrators have considerable knowledge of gifted children's social-emotional development (Kokot, 2011).

Under the third theme, test administrators focused on enrichment, differentiation, and teacher support as instructional strategies, likely because enrichment is widely used in Turkey (Kaplan Sayı, 2018). Acceleration and individualization were rarely mentioned, possibly due to negative attitudes toward acceleration or its limited use in Turkey (Rogers, 2002; Sak, 2010). Grouping, another underused strategy, can be highly effective when students are grouped by ability, improving their educational outcomes. Other neglected areas in school recommendations include promoting social-emotional development, leadership skills, and maximizing students' potential, all key concerns in the literature (Kaplan Sayı, 2018).

Conclusion

The study's quantitative findings showed that gifted children displayed a wide range of scores in general IQ and subtests, with higher scores in the visual-motor domain than in the linguistic-verbal domain. There was a positive correlation between general IQ and subtest scores, and a difference was noted between verbal and performance IQ, with many children having higher performance IQs.

The qualitative part identified three main themes: characteristics of gifted children, family recommendations, and school recommendations. Cognitive, emotional, social, and personal traits were emphasized, but physical characteristics and twice-exceptionality were mostly overlooked. Intuitive traits were also missing from reports. For families, the focus was on positive discipline, academic support, and communication, while psychological support, school-family cooperation, and private school guidance received less attention.

Recommendations

Our findings suggest that similar studies could be conducted with various age groups and sample types. Future research might compare intelligence profiles of children diagnosed in state vs. private institutions. Comprehensive training on gifted children's characteristics and education is recommended for practitioners. Finally, a holistic methodology and standardized tests after nomination can improve diagnostic accuracy. Thus, WISC-R results and test experts' recommendations should be followed closely.

Limitations

The research was conducted on 99 test reports from Turkey, which is a limitation regarding the generalizability of the findings.

Declarations

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

The study obtained permission from the Ethics Committee of İstanbul Sabahattin Zaim University with application number ET-FR-674, date: 27.11.2023. Ethical rules were followed during the study, and consent forms were obtained from the participants. Approval was also obtained from the İstanbul Sabahattin Zaim University of Directors for school data collection.

Consent for Publication

Not applicable.

Availability of Data and Materials

Not applicable

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Financing

Not applicable

Authors' Contributions

The first Author contributed to the conceptualization. The first, second and third authors writing of the method, data collection, analysis, and interpreted data contributed to the conceptualization of the research, analysis of data, translations, editing, and proofreading of the article. All authors have read and approved the final version of the article.

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