

# CHILD PERSONALITY AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION: CREATIVITY PROFILE IN CHILDREN

Efrain Duarte Briceño<sup>1</sup>, Isaí Abraham Kantún May<sup>1</sup>, Martha Vanessa Espejel López<sup>1</sup>, Maite Garaigordobil Landazabal<sup>2</sup>

*Autonomous University of Yucatan (MEXICO)*

*Basque Country University (SPAIN)*

## Abstract

This goals of the present study are: (a) to identify the characteristics that shape the creative personality profile in 6<sup>th</sup> grade children, (b) to establish significant differences in the creative personality profile by gender; and (c) to establish significant differences in the creative personality profile by age. Historically, there have been different approaches when investigating creativity; early research sought to analyze characteristics and personality traits, especially of those people who were considered geniuses; later research focused on the cognitive processes of perception, reasoning and memory, involved in problem solving. In this sense, people who are considered creative often build solutions classifications and create digests of ideas that they know how to use at appropriate times. Therefore, although creative personality is hard to define, it helps in having a clearer idea of the features and dimensions of those who possess this skill; giving rise to intervention programs that identify and promote characteristics that foster the creation of better responses and environments in the people's lives, in this case, regarding the prevention of violence. To achieve the objectives, a descriptive research *ex post facto*, with a single measurement was conducted. The sample included 89 6<sup>th</sup> grade students from two public schools in Merida, Yucatan, Mexico, located in sub-urban areas with characteristics of marginality in which a program of prevention of violence is being developed; and 89 parents of each child (mother or father); and 2 teachers from each group, the selection of participants was not probabilistic. Three instruments were used to assess participants and thus shape the creative personality profile: (1) Torrance Test of Creative Thinking, verbal section TTCT (Form A), (2) Duarte Stimulus Sheet (Form A) and (3) Garaigordobil Creative Personality Scale in their modalities of self-evaluation, heteroevaluation by parents and, heteroevaluation by teachers. The participant's general profile was created from the obtained results, finding that: (a) Positive values were presented in the self-perception of the creative personality, in the perception of teachers about their students' creativity, in graphic creativity, verbal creativity and verbal originality, which indicates that children did well in these features; and (b) Negative values were presented in the perception of parents regarding their children's creativity, graphic fluency, flexibility and originality, and verbal fluency, indicating that children had little or none of these features. Also, significant differences by gender were found in the students, favoring girls in verbal creativity, verbal fluency and verbal flexibility, and favoring boys in graphic originality. Regarding the age, no significant differences were found.

Keywords: Creative personality, violence, creative profile, creative thinking.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The present work is part of a research project on *Child personality and violence prevention*. In which creativity was considered as the analysis and execution a person does considering different materials and contexts to solve a problem; offering -in most cases- innovative answers to a determined situation. The person who develops creativity possesses the skill of invention.

There are definitions of creativity in other contexts which are not necessarily scientific. When some people are asked, they consider creativity is

Doing something that benefits the individual itself and his/her alike, ...filling a space with new ideas and attitudes, ...a positive way of life, ... discovering and rediscovering life with a self-sensitivity, ...a different way of seeing life, using the five senses to create something new of different, ...movement, life, joy, interpreting new ways of manifestation, ...giving birth to a part of you (Waisburd, 1996, pp. 43-48).

There are three factors which are regularly used -from Guilford- to have a more adequate assessment of creativity. These are fluency, flexibility and originality. Fluency can be defined as the capability of producing a large amount of words, ideas, associations, phrases or expressions. Flexibility implies a high degree of transformation in the creative realizations; in other words, the different categories in which answers can correspond. Finally, originality can be defined as those answers that fall out of the common ground, considered different or even strange, but correct in their content (Laimé Pérez, 2005; Puente, 1999; Rodríguez Estrada, 1995; Sosa Correa & Duarte Briceño, 2004).

The creative process is an exploratory, repetition and evaluation activity in order to choose the appropriate solutions for each problem and discard those possibilities which may be attractive and innovative but do not comply with the necessary specifications to solve a particular situation (Marina & Marina, 2013).

On another hand, defining the creative personality or looking for characteristics in common among people considered as creative is a complicated task due to the different components that conform the personality construct and the differences and individuality of people called creative geniuses. Despite all of this, there are personality qualities or traits present in most of creative people.

Various studies have confirmed that highly creative subjects can attain the following characteristics: high intelligence, inclination to experience, lack of prejudices and inhibitions, sense of aesthetics, cognitive and motivation flexibility, independence of thought and action, high levels of creative energy, dedication to the creative effort and constant search for solutions to the difficult problems stated. In general, the description of a creative person can be classified in three main categories: cognitive characteristics, personality and motivational qualities, and special experiences or events during development (Prieto Sanchez, Lopez Martinez, & Ferrandiz Garcia, 2003, p. 70).

Similarly, there have been identified nine personality traits categories which have been positively related to the person's creativity: (1) persistence, (2) joy for work, (3) cognitive adaptation, (4) multidimensional reasoning, (5) independence, (6) problem solution, (7) interaction and caution, (8) interest, and (9) intuition and imagination (Yeh, Yeh, & Chen, 2012).

To summarize all of the above, personality involves many traits and in different scale, making it thus difficult having a clear image of the traits that conform it. To facilitate this clarity, it is essential to design a profile which consists in the process of defining the personality traits that fit within a list of relevant characteristics defined by the researcher (Garrido, 2012).

Therefore, one of the benefits of studying creativity and knowing its characteristics, is that by knowing its different components, life quality can be improved by making it more productive, with multiple solutions, with innovative ideas and having individuals who propose positive changes, live with joy and feel useful undertaking productive projects (Ramirez, Cantu Hinojosa, & Ruiz Sepulveda, 2001).

Also, being creative, thinking creatively or having a creative attitude, allows devising new ways, finding new paths or means to facilitate adaption, either to a change or a new or unpleasant situation. It is an exercise of freedom in which the child can change the world that surrounds him/her to make it a pleasant place to be and live consciously happy.

On the contrary, violence is the structured and mechanical response to an unfavorable situation or when the individual feels threatened; it is a phenomenon which is present in the different spaces where humans interact. It is also becoming more frequent and intense. According to a report from the Public Education Department (SEP, by its initials in Spanish, 2009), which was made public through the *National Report on Gender Violence in elementary Education*, students from 6th grade mentioned that in the last two years they received some kind of mistreatment inside the school: girls said that 20.8% of the aggressions were perpetrated by their female partners and 17.4% by their male partners; boys said they were physically abused by their male counterparts in a 32.9% and by their female counterparts in a 30.7%. Other data from the National Institute for Education Assessment (INEE, by its initials in Spanish, 2007), in their study *Discipline, violence and substance abuse* in primary and secondary schools of Mexico, show that at primary level, 19% of students were involved in fights where they got physical, 10.9% participated in a groups of students to rob or threat another one, 9% were involved in vandalism within the school and 2.1% stole money or items inside the school.

One remarkable issue in both studies, is that violence is seen as something natural. Several boy and girls responded that it was fun to upset or hurt their peers; this data prompts to reflect upon how dangerous quotidian violence can be. For this reason, when there is no reflection upon violence, both by the aggressor and the victim, this phenomenon (violence as something natural) is fed. In addition,

when aggression, either physical or verbal is seen as something normal, the responses and violent ways to confront different situations can become a part of the individual and a way of life (Duarte Briceño, 2007).

Therefore, it is important that primary school children are capable of redirecting their senses, thoughts and behaviors to create new solutions to an event or adverse common situations. Knowing how to relate different experiences to create a new one increases the chances of modifying their own environment.

On another hand, knowing the creativity profiles and the environment characteristics that foster creativity, are essential to develop positive attitudes and reduce the anxiety associated to improving higher thinking skills (Andiliou & Murphy, 2010), especially if it is considered that the teachers' role is very important to develop creativity in primary school students, since they spend a large amount of time with their students (Kampylis, Berki, & Saariluoma, 2009).

Accordingly, the purpose of the present investigation was to define and establish a creative personality profile in 6<sup>th</sup> grade elementary school students as a basis to generate actions aimed to prevent violent behaviors and develop competences for a better coexistence.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Objectives

To identify the characteristics that allow to conform a creative personality profile.

To establish a general creative personality profile in 6<sup>th</sup> grade elementary school children, according to the representative scorings of participants.

To identify the characteristics by gender that allow to conform a creative personality profile for males and females.

To establish a gender based creative personality profile in 6<sup>th</sup> grade elementary school children, according to the representative scorings of participants.

To identify the characteristics by age that allow to conform a creative personality profile for the different age categories.

To establish an age based creative personality profile in 6<sup>th</sup> grade elementary school children, according to the representative scorings of participants.

### 2.2 Development of the research

The research was a traditional quantitative ex post facto type since it intended to establish a statistical measurement of the creative personality profile of participants (Hernández Sampieri, Fernández Collado & Baptista Lucio, 2010).

A total of 89 students from 6<sup>th</sup> grade primary school from Merida, Yucatan participated, 39.32% (35) female and 60.67% (54) male, with ages between 10 and 14 years and a mean of 11. The schools were located in suburban marginal areas. The sampling was directed non-probabilistic (Hernández Sampieri et al., 2010). Also, 89 parents of each student (father or mother) participated; and the two professors from each group. The participants' selection was non-probabilistic.

To design the creative personality profile, three tests to evaluate verbal creativity, graphic creativity and creative personality were used and are further described:

*Creative Thinking Test (TTCT Torrence Test of Creative Thinking)*. The TTCT-Verbal (form A) consisted of six activities, where the first three ones were based on a drawing (an A shaped goblin) in which it was requested to ask as a first task, all series of questions to know what was happening in the figure; in the second task the participants are asked to guess all the possible causes of this; afterwards, they were asked to provide all possible consequences that could happen from the original statement; the fourth activity required that the participant improved a toy (an elephant); the following activity consisted on responding how to use a cardboard box in unusual ways (form A); and finally an unlikely situation was presented (a rope hanging from the clouds) in which the subject had to provide all possible explanations derived from it (Garaigordobil, 2010). It was found that the three indicators of this test presented significant discriminations (Fluency:  $t = -11.60$ ,  $p = .000$ ; Flexibility:  $t = -6.31$ ,  $p =$

.000; Originality:  $t = -8.11$ ,  $p = .000$ ), so none of them were eliminated. Also, a Cronbach alpha of .78 was obtained, which can be considered high (Aiken, 1996).

*Stimulus Sheet (Form A)*. This instrument consisted on one letter sized sheet containing a 3 cm curved line in its central part. The top section had a written sentence which read: "DRAW FREELY CONTINUING WITH THE LINE", this instruction was considered as the simplest one without influencing the participants' performance. The scoring was obtained according to each one of the variable's indicators using standardized scoring charts. Fluency was graded according to the quantity of objects, figures and ideas drawn by the individual. Flexibility was graded according to the number of categories of objects, figures and ideas drawn, and originality was graded according to the classification typical products stated in a standardized chart (Duarte Briceño & Ortega, 2004). The reliability of the test obtained a Cronbach alpha of 0.72 in a meta-analysis which included 1,866 participants from primary, secondary, preparatory and university levels (Duarte Briceño, 1997).

*Creative Personality Scale*. This instrument consisted of 22 statements or phrases to evaluate behaviors and traits of a creative personality. The estimation scale to evaluate the personality behavior or trait was subject to four categories: not, a bit, some and very. The test had three versions: self-evaluation, heteroevaluation parents and heteroevaluation professors. These versions could be applied collectively; the difference is that in heteroevaluation, parents and professors were asked to make reference to the evaluated student's behavior or personality (Garaigordobil, 2010). The general alpha of the Creative Personality Scale versions indicated these instruments are valid and consistent in measuring creative personality as a global construct (Krumm & Lemos, 2012).

*Creative profile conformation*. To elaborate the general profile, the instruments' mean measures were converted z scorings having thus the same grading parameter, allocating each test's scorings in the profile. To know the level of z scorings, the total Rank was divided in four; the first one in the low level, the second in the middle level, the third one in the mid-high level, and the fourth one in the high level; all levels were present both in the positive as well as the negative values. Finally, the indicators of the three tests were sorted according to their polarity, positive first and negative afterwards, within each of these categories; they were sorted from higher to lower according to the mean scores obtained.

### 3 RESULTS

To guarantee the inferential analysis corresponded to the research objectives, the reliability was verified by the internal consistency method (Cronbach Alfa) and the validity was verified by a discrimination analysis (student  $t$ ). The following results were obtained from these analyses:

Creative Thinking Test, Cronbach alpha of .78, which can be considered as high (Aiken, 1996); their three indicators presented significant discriminations (Fluency:  $t = -11.60$ ,  $p = .000$ ; Flexibility:  $t = -6.31$ ,  $p = .000$ ; Originality:  $t = -8.11$ ,  $p = .000$ ), therefore, none of them was discarded.

Stimulus sheet (Form A), Cronbach alpha of .49, which is considered mid-low (Aiken, 1996); their three indicators presented significant discriminations (Fluency:  $t = -3.47$ ,  $p = .000$ ; Flexibility:  $t = -3.51$ ,  $p = .000$ ; Originality:  $t = -6.86$ ,  $p = .000$ ), so none of them were eliminated.

Creative Personality Scale (self-evaluation), Cronbach alpha of .85, which is considered high (Aiken, 1996); its 22 statements presented significant discriminations, so none of them were discarded.

Creative Personality Scale (heteroevaluation professors), Cronbach alpha of .97, which is considered high (Aiken, 1996); its 22 statements presented significant discriminations; therefore, none of them were discarded.

Creative Personality Scale (heteroevaluation parents), Cronbach alpha of .87, which is considered high (Aiken, 1996); where 20 of the 22 statements presented significant discriminations, which did not affect the instrument's validity.

The general profile of 6<sup>th</sup> grade children from the participant schools can be seen in Table 1; it can be observed that there were positive values in verbal flexibility, self-perception of creative personality, professors' perception of their students' creativity, graphic creativity, verbal creativity and verbal originality, which indicated these characteristics were well in children. Verbal flexibility was the characteristic with the highest value; self-perception of creative personality, professors' perception of their students' creativity and verbal creativity were at a mid-low level, which means these traits were present on a regular basis, but tended to a low level. Finally, graphic creativity and verbal originality were at a low level, this means children had little of these traits.

On the other hand, it can be seen that the parents' perception of their children's creativity, fluency, flexibility, graphic originality and verbal fluency presented negative values, which indicates they had little or none of these characteristics. From all the characteristics, the parents' perception of their children's creativity was the lowest one, which indicates parents saw little of these traits in their children; fluency, flexibility and graphic originality were at a mid-low level, which means they were present on a regular basis but tended to be low. Finally, verbal fluency was at a mid-high level which means they had very little of this characteristic.

Table 1. Creative Behavior Profile of participant children.

Characteristics	Mean	z scorings	Classification
	Positive values		
Verbal Flexibility	18.02	8.74	High
Creative Personality (Self- evaluation)	52.57	4.23	Mid-low
Creative Personality (Professors)	57.56	3.61	Mid-low
Verbal Creativity	89.54	3.47	Mid-low
Verbal Originality	35.75	2.08	Low
Graphic Creativity	8.94	1.94	Low
	Negative Values		
Verbal Fluency	35.77	-5.97	Mid-high
Graphic Fluency	1.99	-3.89	Mid-low
Graphic Flexibility	2.02	-3.89	Mid-low
Graphic Originality	4.48	-2.78	Mid-low
Creative Personality (Parents)	52.57	-1.55	Low

To verify statistically significant differences of the research variables (gender and age), a one factor analysis of variance was performed. Regarding the significant differences by gender in the creative personality profile, it can be seen on Table 2 that there were differences in the following factors: Graphic originality, Verbal creativity, Verbal fluency and Verbal Flexibility. Therefore, gender is a factor that had an influence in the general profile conformation.

Table 2. Differences in the creative personality profile by gender.

Creative Personality Profile	M		F*	p
	Female	Male		
EPC Self-evaluation	53.88	54.17	.015	.90
EPC Heteroevaluation parents	52.39	52.70	.012	.91
EPC Heteroevaluation professors	62.00	54.88	2.66	.10
Graphic creativity	7.71	9.00	1.81	.18
Graphic Fluency	1.88	2.05	.317	.57
Graphic flexibility	2.11	1.96	.256	.61
Graphic originality	<b>3.71</b> (z = 4.16)	<b>4.98</b> (z = -5.55)	<b>3.79</b>	<b>.05</b>
Verbal creativity	<b>101.00</b> (z = -3.19)	<b>82.33</b> (z = 1.07)	<b>4.06</b>	<b>.04</b>
Verbal fluency	<b>41.17</b> (z = 2.64)	<b>32.37</b> (z = 5.41)	<b>6.56</b>	<b>.01</b>
Verbal flexibility	<b>20.23</b> (z = -4.16)	<b>16.62</b> (z = 1.17)	<b>6.27</b>	<b>.01</b>
Verbal originality	39.58	33.33	1.43	.23

\* g/ = 1

On the other hand, there were no significant differences among the age groups; therefore, it was not a variable that affected the group of factors that encompass the creative personality general profile.

#### **4 CONCLUSIONS**

According to the obtained results and the performed analysis, to accomplish the goal referring to the creative personality profile of the participating children, verbal flexibility was found to be in the high positive Rank, which indicates students were capable of having a wide range of word use being able to classify a single verbal stimulus into different categories. Regarding verbal originality, participants had a low positive rank, in other words, the relative rareness of their verbalization, despite being positive, it was considered poor and their capacity to create uncommon words was limited. On another hand, their verbal fluency was within the mid-high negative rank which evidenced a considerable lack of words that can be produced in a given topic.

According to the ranks obtained by the participants in the investigation, the overall verbal creativity scoring was placed -within the profile- in the mid low positive rank, which indicates the students from the two participant schools had a verbal performance from limited to acceptable; therefore, it is recommended to focus more attention to encourage in students constructing words that have a useful meaning their setting which can facilitate language use and increase their creative verbalization capacity.

Regarding the children close to the age group and school grade, that are considered creative according to Rodriguez Estrada (1995), it can be stated that the participants in the present investigation were far from what would be considered creative children considering their low scorings in many or the characteristics mentioned by the author. However, the participants possessed important characteristics in their verbal broadness, a high tolerance to linguistic ambiguity as well as the ability to adapt to different types of unfamiliar verbalizations.

The three components of graphic creativity (fluency, flexibility and originality) were placed within the mid-low negative rank. This indicates that the amount, variety and relative rareness of the graphic productions that students had were poor and limited. Therefore, the graphic creativity scoring was placed in the low-positive rank which indicates a very limited performance regarding the graphic creations that students displayed. Given all this, it is important to encourage and promote wider use of graphics capability to provide children with tools that allow different ways of expression and appreciation of ideas which allow to open new paths and ways to face everyday problems and not so common ones in the students' lives.

Considering the levels in which participants were located and according to the seven dimensions proposed by Marina and Marina (2013), it becomes evident the poor graphic expressiveness and poor search for options aside from the known or stereotyped models in students; therefore, the acquired impotence prevails over the discovery of new graphic possibilities and passiveness prevails over creative activities, probably due to a poor stimulation during the students' development.

In relation to the Creative Personality, in the self-evaluation, which is the perception students had about themselves regarding their creative personality, they were found within the mid-low positive rank; this means student perceived themselves with a poorly creative personality and considered their attitudes reflect little inclination towards creative processes.

Regarding the Creative Personality, in the heteroevaluation, the professors placed students within the mid-low positive rank, which indicates they also perceived students with a little creative personality, and the parents placed them in the low negative rank, which means parents perceived their children as not creative with a personality far from the processes which shape this concept.

The suburban context with marginality characteristics in which the participants live, can be compared with the blocking by social factors (Garaigordobil Landazabal, 1995), which mentions that parents with a poor scholar education are poorly tolerant to pluralism of ideas; similarly, the social environment does not provide the opportunities to exchange or discover different realities, which are factors that disturb creativity, which could be probably affecting directly in the creative conception that students had about themselves and the perception that professors and parents had.

With all this into consideration, it is of utmost importance to emphasize in the self-perception that participants have about their creative personality, as well as the professors perception about their owns students; but above all, it is important that parents perceive and nurture the creative personality in their children, since this capacity can help students learning to find novel solutions that improve their

personal and academic development, which would be reflected in wellbeing to them and their surroundings. In addition, considering a large amount of people's life is spent within the family, it is a priority that parents motivate their children to develop skills related to a creative personality and attitudes that foster wellbeing.

It is worth mentioning that Prieto Sánchez et al. (2003) emphasize that both parents and professors must pay special attention in this developmental stage of children, because the lack of interest and inadequate intervention towards children can lead to indiscipline as well as a distortion of their reality.

In relation to the second research objective which refers to the difference in the creative personality profile according to gender, there were significant differences in four factors of the general profile. In the first place, verbal flexibility was located in the extreme opposites between male and female students; both scorings were located in the mid-high rank, however, males scored positively and female negatively. This indicates that on one side, males had a good variety in relative rareness when verbalizing, since they could give different uses and meanings to the used words, on the contrary, females had few resources when using a word in a different category which is not regularly used. According to personal observations, this is probably because when males verbalize, they use more double sense words and play more with phonetics and meaning, which exercise and facilitates the creation of new categories for one same phonological and semantical order of words.

In verbal fluency, both male and female scored positively, but in a different rank; males were in the mid-high rank whereas females scored in the mid-low rank, so when considering the number of words they could give to a certain topic, males had some advantage.

In relation to the overall verbal creativity, males were located within the low positive rank and females in the mid-high negative rank, and, when considering their three components (fluency, flexibility and originality) the contrast in verbal creativity was evident: (a) in the case of originality, both males and females were in the mid-low positive rank, (b) in the case of flexibility, males were placed in the low-positive rank ( $z = 1.17$ ) and female in the mid-low negative rank ( $z = -4.16$ ), finally, (c) in the case of fluency, males had an advantage being placed in the mid-high positive rank ( $z = 5.41$ ), compared to females which were placed in the mid-low positive rank ( $z = 2.64$ ).

Regarding graphic originality, females showed a significant advantage over males; on one part, males were located in the mid-high negative rank ( $z = -5.55$ ) and female in the mid-low positive side ( $z = 4.16$ ). This marked difference showed how females could express ideas considered as unusual, giving sense to them when drawing, on the opposite side, males in the present work were more constrained and conventional when expressing their ideas in a graphical way, which hampered their performance in this aspect. These results contrast with most studies which did not find significant differences among males and females (Duarte Briceño, 1994, 1997, 2001; Duarte Briceño, Samperio Barrientos & Sanchez Febles, 1996; Duarte Briceño & Fernández Nevarez, 1997, as cited in Sosa Correa & Duarte Briceño, 2004).

Finally, regarding the age of participants, there were no significant differences. This is probably because students were in the same school grade and lived nearby the school, in other words, they shared experiences and events due to the geographical location and because they took classes together even if they were not the same age.

The results of the present study state a basis to propose an intervention model for 6<sup>th</sup> grade students which fosters and nurtures the creative personality, since it can provide students a different way sense to a solution and ways to face various events and scenarios in their academic and personal development and provide them with meaningful and useful tools for them to create a better future for them and their alike.

One limitation in the investigation was reflected in the interaction effects of the selection bias and the experimental variable, since the selection was not probabilistic but directed and obeyed only to the research needs. There was also a limitation regarding the conclusions, since it was not possible to extrapolate them to the population; this means the results cannot be generalized beyond certain characteristics in common such as age, intelligence, socio-economic situation, geography, etc. With all of this into consideration, the following conclusions were:

- a) According to the creative personality general profile, the participants obtained their highest scoring in verbal flexibility, and their lowest scoring in verbal fluency.
- b) According to the significant differences by gender, males obtained their highest scoring in verbal fluency and verbal creativity, and their lowest scoring in graphic originality.

- c) According to the significant differences by gender, females obtained their highest scoring in graphic originality and their lowest scoring in verbal flexibility and verbal creativity.
- d) There were no significant differences in none of the creativity indicators among the participants' age.

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