

# Societal Perception of Multiple Intelligences

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## Abstract

Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences proposes that intelligence is not unitary but multiple. This study aims to understand the general perception of society regarding the multiple intelligences by assessing the perceived intelligence, earnings and respect level of various professions associated with the respective multiple intelligences. A survey was conducted using an online questionnaire with 123 participants above 18 years of age. Results show no significant correlation between intelligence, respect in society and earnings related to a profession. But, there is a significant difference in the mean rank between the different professions. Further, the implications of such differences on an individual child and the society in a broader view are discussed.

**Keywords:** Multiple Intelligence, Intelligent, Respect, Earning

## Introduction

Intelligence is one's ability to learn from experience and to adapt to, shape, and select environments. (Sternberg, 2012) Formal studies of intelligence date back to the early 20th century. (Sternberg, 1990) One such theory is the Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. Gardner has argued that intelligence is not unitary—that there is no “general intelligence” broadly construed—but rather that it is multiple. That is, there are “multiple intelligences”. (Gardner, 2006)

According to Howard Gardner's hypothesis of multiple intelligences, which was established in the late 1970s and early 1980s, people have eight or more substantially independent intelligences. Linguistic intelligence, logical-mathematical intelligence, spatial intelligence, musical intelligence, bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, naturalistic intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, and intrapersonal intelligence are among the eight identified intelligences (Gardner, 1999). Existential and pedagogic intelligence have been added later. In modern secular institutions, only two intelligences—linguistic and logical—have been recognised and assessed. It is helpful to think of that language-logic combination as “academic” or “scholarly intelligence.” (Davis.k 2011)

Table 1: Multiple Intelligences and a few career options

Intelligence	Career options (examples)
Linguistic (Language, verbal skills)	Poet, Journalist, Writer
Logical (Mathematical, analytical skills)	Scientist, Engineer, Auditor
Musical (Sense of rhythm, pitch)	Musician, Singer

Visual-Spatial (Visualize pictures)	Architect, Artist, Graphic designer
Bodily –Kinesthetic (Control in body movements)	Sportsperson, Dancer, Actor
Interpersonal (Social skills)	Counselor, Entrepreneur
Intrapersonal (Self- awareness)	Researcher, Philosopher
Naturalist (Connects to nature, living things)	Animal trainer, Ecologist
Existential (Reflects and answers deep questions)	Motivational speaker, Meditation instructor

This study aims to understand the general perception of society regarding the multiple intelligences by assessing the perceived intelligence level, earnings and respect level of various professions associated with the respective multiple intelligence. How these perceptions play a role in a child's life and how it impacts the society in large have been discussed.

### Methodology

A survey was conducted using an online questionnaire. 123 participants above 18 years of age participated in this survey and answered questions regarding various professions. Convenience sampling method was used. The sample consisted of varying age groups, gender, educational qualification and employment status. Statistical analysis was performed using percentage. Non- parametric tests used are Spearman correlation coefficient, Kruskal-Wallis H test and Mann Whitney test.

Professions listed in the questionnaire have been selected in such a way that there is atleast one profession for each area of multiple intelligence along with the most common professions. Professions like Military and Farmer are not included in the choices as the researcher believes that these are very noble professions and should not be brought under ranking criteria.

### Objective

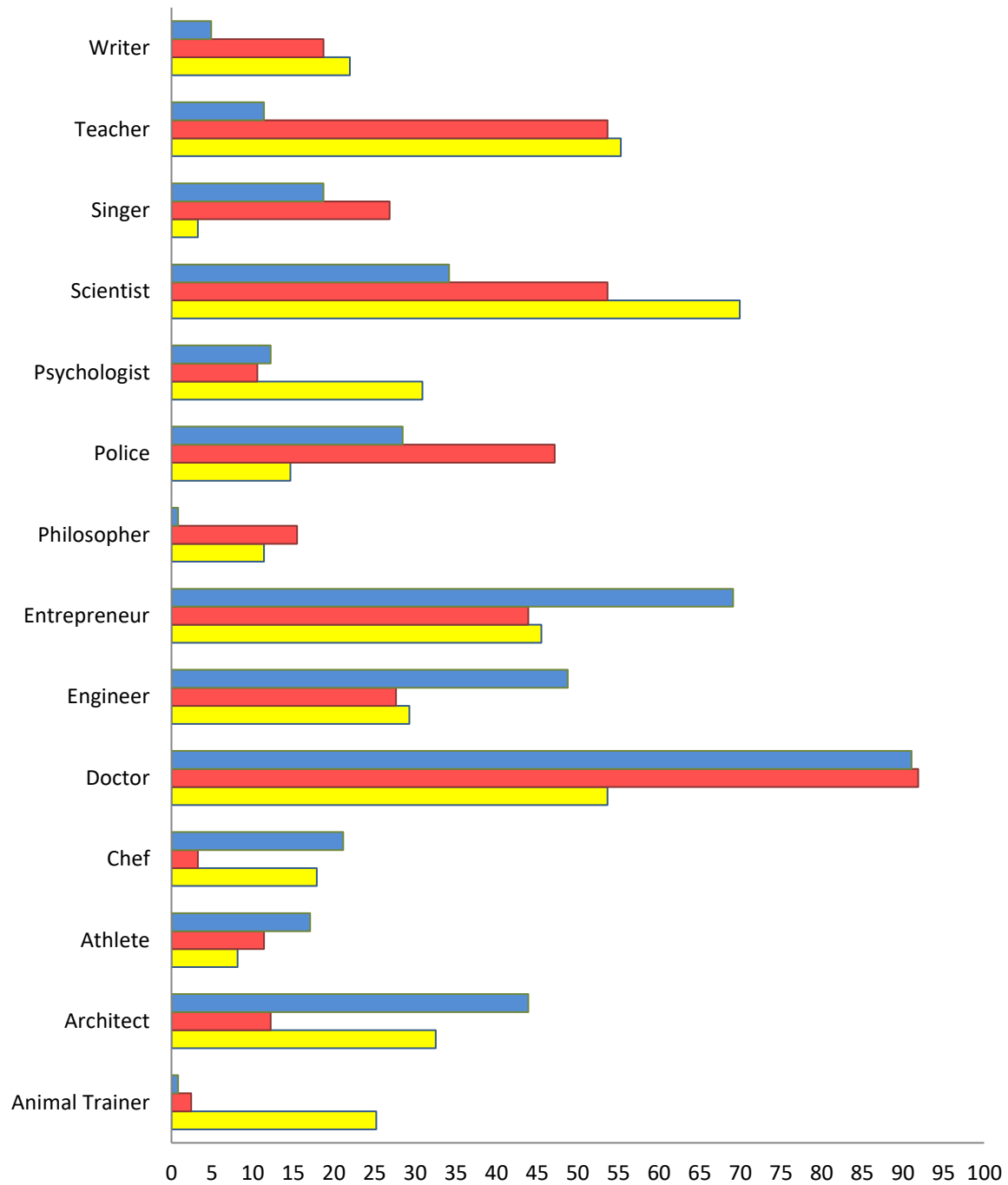
- To assess and understand the general perception of society regarding the intelligence, earnings and respect level of various professions
- To assess if there is any correlation between intelligence, respect and earnings of a profession

### Hypothesis

The following hypotheses are formulated:

1. There is no significant relationship between intelligence, respect and earnings of a profession.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean ranks of various professions on the basis of intelligence, respect and earnings.

## Result Analysis



### % OF RESPONDENTS

	Animal Trainer	Architect	Athlete	Chef	Doctor	Engineer	Entrepreneur	Philosopher	Police	Psychologist	Scientist	Singer	Teacher	Writer
<span style="color: blue;">■</span> Earning	0.81	43.9	17.07	21.14	91.06	48.78	69.11	0.81	28.46	12.2	34.15	18.7	11.38	4.88
<span style="color: red;">■</span> Respect in society	2.44	12.2	11.38	3.25	91.87	27.64	43.9	15.45	47.15	10.57	53.66	26.83	53.66	18.7
<span style="color: yellow;">■</span> Intelligence	25.2	32.52	8.13	17.89	53.66	29.27	45.53	11.38	14.63	30.89	69.92	3.25	55.28	21.95

Table 2: Spearman Correlation Coefficient

Parameters	Spearman correlation coefficient
Intelligence vs Respect	$r = 0.50165, p = 0.0676$
Respect vs Earning	$r = 0.51982, p = 0.05674$
Intelligence vs Earning	$r = 0.41584, p = 0.13919$

Based on Spearman coefficient, there is no significant correlation between intelligence, respect and earning. Hypothesis (1) gets accepted.

Table 3: Mean Rank Score of Profession

Profession	Intelligence	Respect	Earning	Mean rank score
Doctor	53.66	91.87 *	91.06 *	39.67
Scientist	69.92 *	53.66 *	34.15	35
Entrepreneur	45.53	43.9	69.11 *	33.83
Engineer	29.27	27.64	48.78	28
Teacher	55.28 *	53.66 *	11.38	28
Police	14.63	47.15	28.46	24
Architect	32.52	12.2	43.9	23.67
Psychologist	30.89	10.57	12.2	15.83
Singer	3.25	26.83	18.7	15.33
Writer	21.95	18.7	4.88	15.17
Chef	17.89	3.25	21.14	13.83
Athlete	8.13	11.38	17.07	11
Animal trainer	25.2	2.44	0.81	8.83
Philosopher	11.38	15.45	0.81	8.83

\* Top 2 values in each aspect

The Kruskal-Wallis H test indicated that there is a significant difference in the mean rank between the different groups,  $\chi^2(13) = 27.14, p = .012$ . Since the  $p$ -value  $< \alpha$ , null hypothesis (2) is rejected at 0.05 significance level.

The Kruskal-Wallis test identified that the mean ranks are not statistically equal but the multiple comparisons using post hoc Mann Whitney U test and Dunn’s test do not show enough evidence for a statistical difference between any pair of groups.

### Discussion

- There is no correlation between intelligence, respect in society and earning. It means that being intelligent doesn’t ensure more respect or earnings and vice versa.
- Doctors top the list in respect and earning though they are not considered as intelligent as scientist and teachers. This respect for doctors which is very much higher than other professions may be due to the respect and value we give to our own health and life.
- Scientist and teachers are considered more intelligent and respectful. But these are not considered as well paid professions. Such disparities may lead to these choices getting side-lined by other well paid professions.

- The professions which are rated as more intelligent like scientist, teacher, doctor involve scholarly intelligence or academic intelligence. Writer not being considered as intelligent is contradicting as this also involves the same academic intelligence.
- Every profession involves a different type of intelligence as understood from the multiple intelligences theory.
- We respect people from all professions possessing various intelligences – Examples include William Shakespeare (Linguistic), Albert Einstein (Logical), A.R. Rahman (Musical), Pablo Picasso (Visual), Sachin Tendulkar (Kinesthetic), Mahatma Gandhi (Interpersonal), Sigmund Freud (Intrapersonal), Charles Darwin (Naturalist), Buddha (Existential).
- Earnings vary based on various factors. For example, a private doctor may fix his consultation fee ranging from low to high. Teachers in government schools get paid more than private school teachers. Entrepreneurs may earn low to high income based on the scale of business, sector, etc.
- The top 5 professions with high mean rank score are related to academic intelligence thereby making academic intelligence seem like a most important intelligence to possess. It creates a disparity among various types of intelligences.

### **Implication of societal perceptions on a child**

During school years, academic intelligence is stressed a lot and other types of intelligences are considered as co-curricular activities. Presence of co-curricular intelligence is appreciated but absence is not considered as a problem. Child who is not good in singing (musical intelligence) or drawing (Spatial intelligence) is not labelled as a dull singer or slow art learner. But, in case of academic intelligence, presence is considered mandatory and absence of academic intelligence leads to getting labelled as a dull student or a slow learner. This is unfair and has its root in the society's perception of various professions and the corresponding intelligence areas.

These perceptions play a huge role in selection of career options. Parents have the highest influence on their child's ambition and future profession. As a parent wants everything to be great in the child's life, they take into consideration all the factors which have been considered in the survey. They want their child to be considered intelligent, to be respected in society and to have good earnings in future. Eventually they look out for the so called "top professions" which would give all three or even more aspects which they would personally regard as important.

But, what if the child doesn't make it to that list of professions? What if the child possesses a higher ability and talent in other areas of intelligence? Practically when it cannot happen, child will have to choose any other profession based on availability, interest, affordability etc. But these unrealistic ambitions and pressure in school years cannot be undone. Child's natural talents and abilities in areas other than academic intelligence would not have been nurtured properly thereby making the child lose out on all aspects.

Considering the above views, it would be best for the child to focus both in academics and in his/ her talents in other areas simultaneously. The child's natural talents and strengths must be identified and nurtured by the parents.

### **Implication of societal perceptions on the society**

Scoring good marks in biology doesn't ensure being a good doctor who is concerned about patients. Completing a degree in education doesn't ensure the presence of pedagogic intelligence and concern for

students. Having good financial resources doesn't make someone a good entrepreneur with good innovative ideas and interest in business. Studying a degree just because we are eligible to get an admission through good marks or the profession being in the latest trend or to fulfil parent's wish – all these are considerable when the child's abilities and interests are also aligned with the same. But, if it doesn't, then such professional choices may affect the child's happiness in future. He / she may not be able to perform his best in the chosen career and may not find it interesting or exciting. For the society in large, this may lead to people in top professions without a real interest or passion in doing it and loss of talented people in other professions where they might have their actual talent and would have performed well.

### Conclusion

According to a HSBC survey, Career of children is more important than their happiness in life for Indian parents. 48% of working people felt that their parents strongly influenced their career path and 40% felt pressured to follow their parent's career advice. (Career edition). Given that parents get to influence a child's career, it would be responsible of them to suggest well – informed choices considering major aspects like child's interest, ability and talents rather than the illusive perception of pride, respect, income and societal pressure. This would ensure a happy and satisfactory future which every child deserves. Every child is smart in its own way and our role is to identify and nurture the child's intelligence because as the saying goes "It's not how smart a child is.... It is how he / she is smart".

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