Conclusion

This study showed that gifted students in fourth and fifth grades (10–11 years old) had a variety of stereotypical images of scientists and these images are more stereotypical in some respects and less stereotypical in others. The findings provide useful information for both science educators and the teachers of these students. In order to promote the image of scientists, teachers should employ a variety of activities in their lessons, including: visiting scientists who represent both social-related and science-related occupations, a scientist's visit in the classroom, presenting scientists' lives, organizing field trips that contain the works of scientists, giving details about scientists' work, working as a team in the classroom, and bringing more books to the classroom that are relevant stories of scientists. Each of these experiences would make a unique contribution to what perceptions students have of scientists.

It would be noteworthy to mention here that the media play an important role in shaping students' perceptions. Especially, the negative scientist characters, such a 'mad scientist' or a 'man in a lab coat' in cartoons and TV programs, may cause the formation of negative image of scientists. Such an image could prevent students from becoming a scientist and having a career associated with science (Finson et al., 1995). There is a need to highlight that scientists could work on social topics.

While these findings provide valuable information about the perceptions of gifted students, they also offer an overall image that gifted children have about scientists and what scientists do. Considering the findings of this study, there is a need to highlight that science is a part of our daily life. Further research should investigate gifted students' perceptions of scientists and what factors affect students' images through a variety of data collection tools, including the DAST, interviews, and Likert-type questionnaires. Moreover, in order to help students to build an inclusive image of scientists, there is a need to conduct experimental studies.

References


