

Psychological and Academic Problems Encountering Female Talented Participants at Saudi Universities: Northern Border University as a Case Study

Dr. Hanan Mubarak Al Qahtani
Northern Border University, Saudi Arabia

Dr. Subheyya Abu Hatab
Northern Border University, Saudi Arabia

Abstract

The objective of this study is to investigate the psychological and academic issues encountered by female talented students at Computer Sciences and Community College at NBU- Rafha' Branch. This is an attempt to suggest suitable solutions to the psychological problems (i.e., alienation, superficiality, fluctuations in morale and academic ones (i.e., boredom and insufficient educational resources). The population of the study consists of (60) students whereas the instrument is a questionnaire. The results of the study indicate that alienation, superficiality, fluctuations in morale (low vs. high) show high effect on students' performances; however, boredom, insufficient educational resources meet the students' needs. The study concludes that there are lack of workshops, field trips, high ambition and low productivity among the students due to the persisting problems.

Keywords: psychological, academic, talented, alienation, fluctuations, boredom.

Introduction

The focus on talented students started officially in 1969 in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia when the cabinet of ministers approved the educational policy document in the kingdom. In it, the document stated the importance of considering the needs of talented students in the Saudi educational institutions. However, the real attention focused on talented female students in 1997 at the time "Talented and Gifted Female Students Care" program was launched and put into action in the second semester of the academic year 1998. Believing in the importance of this students population and the need for meeting their needs, the educational policy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia issued a document in 1390 Hijri in which there is a need to identify talented students to care and provide them with the necessary means and tools to develop their talents within public school environment by developing special education programs for them (Al Sorour,2014)

As students encountered environmental problems and frustrations, they may lose the talent aptitude; to shed light on some of the problems and clarify ways to control and manage them; the researchers draw the attention of educators to provide the optimal educational environment, improve services and develop teachers' skills while interacting with talented students. It is due to the fact that they need a help to invest their potentials which are of great importance in performance. Lack of psychological care for high achieving students shown by not creating an optimal environment that may maintain talented students' well- being may also lead to tarnish their potentials.

In the literature, Abu Zaitoun (2014) examined the nature of the differences between talented students with high emotional intelligent levels and those ones with low emotional intelligent; to get good result, a sample of (350) students have been selected randomly from King Abdulla II Schools for Excellence. The study aimed to account for the variance in emotional intelligence level by using the scores obtained on the counseling needs estimation checklist. The results indicated that there was a statistical and significant difference at the value of ($\alpha=0.05$) in favor of the talented students with low emotional intelligent levels. At the time, the study showed a negative statistically significant correlation between emotional intelligence score and counseling needs. However, the social relationships domain and physical needs domain accounted for (0.17%) of the total variance in both emotional intelligence.

Al Aseeri (2014) conducted a study to investigate the most prevalent problems facing gifted students from their teachers in light of some demographic variables, namely, gender, qualification and teaching experience. The sample of the study included (111) gifted teachers and gifted male and female students at Aseer District in the academic year (2012/ 2013). For data collection, a questionnaire containing (4) domains was developed including self, family, school and social problems. Validity and reliability for the instrument were obtained. Results of the study found moderate level of self, family, school and social problems from gifted teacher' perception.

However, there were no statistical and significant differences found in gifted students, teachers' genders, qualifications and teaching experiences.

Al Ghamdi (2014) attempted to identify levels of relationship among female gifted students at Al Baha Region- KSA in so far as social and academic adjustment are concerned. The random sample was (89) and out of 41 students who were at seventh graders and 48 were first secondary school grade. For data collection, social adjustment and academic scales were administrated to the sample students. The results of the study indicated that level of social adjustment among female gifted students at KSA was moderate for both seventh and first secondary school grade. The means scores for the first secondary school grade students was (M=3.47-69.4%). It was also found that the level of academic adjustment among female gifted students at KSA was moderate for both seventh and first secondary school grade.

Al Hattab (2014) examined the effect of coping problems among a sample of gifted students on their class attention during classes. The sample of the study consisted of (30) male and female gifted students selected from some of the Jordanian public schools. The sampled subjects were assigned into two groups based on their school counseling records. The first group of the study consisted of (15) male and female gifted students reporting coping problems while the second group totaled (15) male and female students with no history of coping problems. To achieve the aim of the study, the elimination for visual attention scale was employed which is one of the instruments that require the subject examined to focus his/ her attention for a specific time period to identify the required response. This instrument was adapted to the Arab culture by Blass (2014) examined the relationship between social and emotional problems experiences by gifted students and their underachievement. The study used the descriptive analytical design based on a comprehensive review of previous published articles in some of the psychological and educational databases. Results of the study indicated that most previous studied reported has a negative statistically significant correlation between the prevalence of social and emotional problems among gifted students from one hand and level of underachievement from another. Results of the study reported that emotional and social problems experienced by gifted student result from environmental factors such family pressures, school and community.

Rollin and Cross (2014) attempted to identify the psychological changes among American gifted students selected from one residential institution for gifted students. The sample of the study consisted of (40) gifted students selected using simple random sampling. To achieve the objective of the study, the Youth Psychological Outcomes Scale was employed for data collection from the sampled subjects. Results of the study found that the most significant changes among gifted students were psychological changes, self - experiences, academic adjustments, social adjustments and social comparisons. The gifted students experience certain academic and behavioral changes to adapt with the various school challenges.

Jarwan (2015) classified gifted and talented students problems to three major categories: (i) cognitive problems such as the inadequacy of instructional curriculum in meeting the needs of this population, talented and gifted students underachievement (ii) emotional problems such as oversensitivity, emotional intensity and perfectionism and (iii) career problems such as career decision making difficulties, determining career goals difficulties and the desire to change majors.

In short, most of previous studies reported different problems which were experienced by gifted students. Nonetheless, these studies agreed on the fact that gifted students are exposed to psychological stress resulting from the psychological, academic and social problems that they encounter in their life course (Renzulli, 2000).

Problem of the Study

The gifted and talented female students encounter in the university study- as it is true for average students- to several behavioral, social, academic, health and psychological problems. The university pays much effort on providing health, educational, psychological, career counseling and social services for this students' population. The burden of identifying giftedness and talent among the female gifted and talented students lies on the shoulders of the university, particularly, while attempting their field of giftedness and talent. As the researcher sensed the need for determining the problems encountered by female gifted and talented students in the university as to develop appropriate strategies to address them as the university can provide effective strategies to address their needs and also meet their needs to ensure the best social, cognitive and psychological development. The study is an attempt to identify the most prevalent psychological (i.e., alienation, superficiality, fluctuations in morale) and academic problems (i.e., boredom and insufficient educational resources.) encountered by female gifted and talented students and suggest some strategies to address them.

Objectives and Questions of the Study

The objectives of the study are attempts to find strategies to overcome the problems faced the talented female students of the sample; therefore, the following questions are posited.

What are the most prevalent psychological problems that encounter the sample from their point of view?

What are the most prevalent academic problems that encounter the sample from their point of view?

Methods of Study

Sample of Study

The sample of study consists of (60) female gifted students from the community college, pharmacy, computer sciences female students at NBU at Saudi Arabia- Rafhaa branch for the academic year 2014/2015.

Instrument of the Study

The instrument of the study is a questionnaire measuring psychological and academic problems that encounter the sample. The questionnaire consists of the final format of (34) items and the scores are registered up to 4 point as per Likert scale.

Validity of the Instrument

To test the validity of using internal consistency for the questionnaire domains, Pearson coefficients are calculated to measure the relationship between the individual items of the questionnaire and the total score on each of the items' domain and to obtain the correlations between the individual domains and the total instrument.

Results and Discussion

To achieve the objectives of the study, SPSS statistical software is used for data analysis.

Means, standard deviations are used to identify the responses of subjects on each of the instrument items.

Pearson Correlations are calculated to check the internal consistency of the instrument.

Cronbach alpha is calculated to test the reliability of the instrument.

First: Results pertaining to the first question of the study stating "What are the most prevalent psychological problems encountered by female gifted and talented students at Northern Borders University at Saudi Arabia from their perceptions?"

To answer the question, namely, (what are the most prevalent psychological problems that encounter the sample from their point of view?), means and standard deviations are calculated in Table (1).

Table (1):Psychological problems: Items of Means and Standard Deviations

No.	Problem	M	SD's
1	I worry when thinking about my future after graduation.	1.98	1.032
2	The university does not appreciate my giftedness and high achieving.	1.88	1.073
3	I feel that I am not psychologically comfortable in the university.	1.78	1.032
4	I feel ungifted.	1.59	0.989
5	My family is ignorant with respect the meaning of giftedness and the importance of its development.	1.46	1.061
6	My family does not pay attention to the psychological problems I experience.	1.42	1.065
7	I find it difficult to express my opinions and feelings.	1.62	1.128
8	I don't feel motivated to finish the projects and	1.49	1.156

	activities assigned to me.		
9	I feel very bored when being at the university.	2.73	1.078
10	My ideas are not taken seriously by the educators and university administration.	2.38	0.945
11	I find it very difficult to adapt with the social situations.	1.38	1.135
12	It's hard for me to make new friendships with my colleagues.	2.55	1.021
13	Some educators are annoyed by the question I ask in class.	1.32	1.032
14	I don't receive the suitable support I need.	1.25	0.951
15	I feel alienated and superficial	3.59	0.975
16	I am easily irritated.	2.61	1.04
17	My morale swings between high and low.	3.41	1.116

Table (1) shows the means and standard deviations responses of the sample. It is obvious that the item (15) stating " I feel alienated and superficial" receives the highest mean (M=3.59) while the item (17) stating "My morale swings between high and low" has the lowest mean (M=3.41). This result indicates that the participants experience such problems with high levels. As for the item (9) stating " I feel very bored when being at the university" scores the means of (2.73). Item (16) stating "I am easily irritated" had a means of (2.03). Item (12) "It's hard for me to make new friendships with my colleagues" scores the means of (2.61). Item (10) stating " My ideas are not taken seriously by the educators and university administration" has the means of (2.38). These scores indicate that female gifted students experience these problems with moderate levels. As for the remaining items, the means scores in the range of (1.25) and (1.98) that indicates the low levels of these problems among the sample.

To sum up, the results related to the problems of alienation, superficiality feelings and fluctuations in morale (high vs. low) are classified the first in the listed psychological problems experienced by gifted female students. These results are consistent with the results of the relevant literature that is examining the same psychological problems faced the gifted students. As contrasted to the current sample, it experiences oversensitivity towards criticism and this may explains the fact that the female gifted students are sensitive in nature and may focus on criticism that make him/ her feel alienated and superficial. Furthermore, the sample's motivation and morale among report have sometimes low levels and in other situations high levels. This is due to the fact that the variations of the responses are visible at both the university and the community levels. Some of the society members understand the talented students' abilities and support them; thus, this fact raises their self-confidence and promotes their morale. Other society members do not understand the gifted students' abilities; therefore, they show frustrating responses towards them; the responses make them feel frustrated and disappointed. As for the academic issue,

namely, boredom the results show that the participants exaggerate in remembering their mistakes; they hold high burdens and tensions in various social situations. With respect to their abilities to establish friendships with other colleagues, gifted students lack the necessary social skills that may help them socially interact with other students. Not taking the sample's ideas into consideration, the university educators and administration have been ranked the second prevalent problem in aggravation to the population of the study; this result is consistent with the sentimental psychological state of the gifted student experiencing frustration in the university which is visible in their feeling of boredom, anger, neurotic and may have not the necessary ability to control them. Sometimes, the participants avoid showing their giftedness and talent to be able to adapt with their average peers to be socially accepted by them. This fact is explained if someone is confident when average students do not understand the nature of giftedness and has negative attitudes towards gifted ones. As for the psychological problems relating to family and future anxiety, previous literature confirmed that family is the most important social support resource for gifted students, and it can understand them. Future anxiety is not a significant problem for gifted students as per the previous studies. They confirmed that the gifted students report high levels of self-confidence and self esteem and they believe in their personal abilities. This result is also consistent with the previous studies investigating the psychological problems among gifted students as they reported several of them; they include frustration and lack of trust in others; such problems are significantly related to low morale levels and oversensitivity by others as they feel unconfident in some social situations.

Second: Results pertaining to the second question, namely, «What are the most prevalent academic problems that encounter the sample from their point of view? are shown in the applications of the means and standard deviation for female gifted students are shown in (Table 2).

Table (2):Academic problems domain: Items' Means and Standard Deviations

No.	Problem	M	SD's
1	The university is inappropriate scientific environment for gifted and high achieving students.	1.83	1.11
2	There are no educational resources for gifted students.	3.53	0.952
3	Low levels of using instructional and learning technology	1.43	0.96
4	Lack of instructional aides for gifted students.	3.47	0.714
5	Absence of field trips for gifted students.	3.23	0.813
6	The works and projects presented by gifted students are not handled suitably.	1.23	0.633
7	The instructional situations created in university do not motivate creativity.	2.21	0.806

8	Educators do not encourage scientific fiction ideas while learning scientific topics.	2.81	1.102
9	Educators in the university lack the necessary competencies.	1.17	0.842
10	Lack of resources and references relating to the learning material.	2.35	0.961
11	Lack of electronic resources and databases.	1.29	0.905
12	The tests employed in the university assess only memorization abilities.	1.74	1.188
13	Teaching courses is only theoretical.	2.63	1.117
14	Lack of encouragement for scientific research.	1.68	1.125
15	Lack of seminars and workshops to enable expressing personal ideas.	3.35	1.1
16	I feel bored of the traditional instructional curricula used for instruction in the university.	3.73	1.12
17	I am very ambitious but suffer from low productivity in academic work.	3.19	1.231

Table (2) shows the academic problems domain by applying the means and standard deviations. Item (16) stating " I feel bored of the traditional instructional curricula used for instruction in the university" reports the highest means (M=3.73); while, the item (2) stating " There are no educational resources for gifted students" and item (4) stating " Lack of instructional aides for gifted students" report the of means of (3.47). The item (15) stating " Lack of seminars and workshops to enable expressing personal ideas" scores the means of (3.35); while, the item (5) stating "Absence of field trips for gifted students" scores the means of (M=3.23). The item (17) stating " I am very ambitious but suffer from low productivity in academic work" has the means of (M=3.19). These scores confirms that participants experience academic problems with high levels. As for the item (8) stating " Educators do not encourage scientific fiction ideas while learning scientific topics", the means is (M=2.81); however, the item (13) stating" Teaching courses is only theoretical", has the means of (2.63). The item (10) stating " Lack of resources and references relating to the learning material" has the means of (2.35). As for the item (7) stating " The instructional situations created in university do not motivate creativity", it scores the means of (2.21). These results indicate that gifted female students experience moderate levels of academic problems. It can also be noted that scored means for the remaining items range between (1.83) and (1.17). This variation shows that students experience the academic problems in the items with low levels.

To sum up; the problems related to gifted students in so far as boredom, lack of learning resources, lack of instructional aides, low levels of seminars and workshops, lack of field trips, high levels of ambition and low academic work

productivity are regarded the most prevalent and significant academic problems. However, problems related to low encouragement by the educators to suggest scientific fiction ideas for the gifted female student while studying scientific topics in class by using theoretical instructional methods, to lack of adequate resources related to the course content, and to lack of encouragement by the university educators in the learning situation for creativity and innovation are regarded less effective problems reported by the gifted female students. These results are consistent with the previous studies indicating the inability of traditional curriculum in meeting gifted students needs which lead to their boredom in the average class. This may lead to some tension in the relationship between the gifted student and the educator who, in turn, they do not fully understand the characteristics of the sample students; this tension leads to maladjustment of the sample; this result is confirmed in the current study.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the abovementioned conclusions, the researchers recommend the followings:

- To develop and design special programs targeting gifted female students and to create extended educational activities able to meet their needs.
- To organize workshops and educational programs for educators; the workshops and the educational programs must address the social, psychological and academic characteristics in addition to the gifted students' needs that must be fully handled in the learning situations.
- To pay more attention to the curricula that are employed in the instructions of the gifted students and to provide adequate databases that are able to meet their needs.

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