



The Influence of Empathy on Academic Achievement among Gifted Students in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

This research examines the influence of empathy towards academic achievement among gifted students in Saudi Arabia. The discussion in the study is based on the theoretical framework of the emotional intelligence Theory Goleman's (1995), the Mayer and Salovey Model (1995) and achievement motivation Theory. These theories are appropriate for the study because they allow the reader to understand how academic achievement is significantly influenced by empathy among gifted students in Saudi Arabia. The study will be significant to teachers of gifted students, educational planners, government, international agencies such as UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP, etc.

Keywords: Influence, Empathy, Academic Achievement, Gifted Students

Introduction

The emotional intelligence and academic achievement of gifted students in Saudi Arabia has become an increasing source of concern within the Saudi Education Sector (Alqefari, 2010). This concern was due to the significant role played by education in national development. Making appropriate provision for gifted and talented students is important to the development of any functioning society (Alqefari, 2010). In addition, the academic achievements of Saudi Arabian gifted students do not meet up to expectations, and this has affected societal development, correspondingly, the major challenge faced by the Saudi general education system is improving the quality of education so that the graduates of the system have skills and knowledge that match the demands of the labor market (Aljughaiman & Grigorenko, 2013; Prokop, 2003). The country requires intelligent and creative individuals who are capable of creating new inventions and opening new horizons to advance technological and scientific sectors. They must also remain competitive in the fast-paced developing world. Recently, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has focused on the important role of this special group.

The influence of emotional intelligence on academic achievement is further supported by experimental research. Blackwell, Trzesniewski, and Dweck, (2007) mentioned that as gifted children develop; they begin to form beliefs about the way intelligence may function in themselves and others. Gifted children's belief about intelligence may include assumptions about the definition of being smart and whether intelligence is based on effort, innate ability, or based on knowledge that could expand or remain constant. Blackwell et al. (2007), further observed that when students were introduced to the theory of intelligence, they form unique interpretations of and responses to academic situations, particularly in the face of challenges. These differing mindsets influence what reasons students attribute to their academic failures, how positively they perceive effort, the types of goals they set for themselves, their reactions to challenges and failures, and their overall academic achievement. Aronson, Fried, and Good (2002), taught an incremental theory to college students and compared them with two control groups: the no-treatment group and the group that was taught a version of the multiple intelligences model of ability (Gardner, 1983). Compared with the no-treatment control groups, the grades of the students in the incremental theory training group were higher, which subsequently influenced their Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) scores. In another study, Good, Aronson, and Inzlicht (2003), reported that an incremental theory intervention led to significant improvement in the achievement test scores of the adolescents in the incremental theory training group compared with those of the control group.

Background of the Study

Gifted students face emotional issues as other non-gifted students; however, the former (gifted students) may suffer from a heightened self-awareness compared to the later (non-gifted students). In addition, gifted students may be excessively critical of what they can do and achieve. Therefore, these same students may have low self-esteem or low perception of their abilities, which can lead to underachievement because they may fear failure (Diaz, 1998).

Research on gifted students and issues related to their studies revealed several personality factors, while emotional intelligence issues are considered to be reasons that have consistently emerged as contributing factors that lead many of the gifted students to not realize their potential. Although not all gifted children experience the same issues, researchers identified a combination of the following contributing reasons: dilemmas about abilities and talents, personal decisions about family, ambivalence of parents and teachers toward developing high levels of potential, and decisions about duty and caring (putting the needs of others first) as opposed to nurturing personal, religious, and social issues (Reis, 2002).

The importance of emotional intelligence is gradually being acknowledged, and the number of studies made in this field is increasing. This research studies the emotional intelligence levels of gifted students and the difference in such levels based on the students' gender.

Halıçınarlı and Bender (2006), examined the relationship between gender and intelligence at three different universities. They found that emotional intelligence as a significant relationship with gender. Personal emotional intelligence, interpersonal emotional intelligence, and adaptability emotional intelligence scores displayed significant differences, and the scores of female students are higher than those of male students. No significant relationship exists among stress management, mood emotional intelligence scores, and gender. Through a study conducted on medical

students, Austin et al. (2005) found that emotional intelligence of female students was significantly higher than that of male students.

Harrod and Scheer (2005), measured the emotional intelligence of 200 youngsters between the ages of 16 and 19 years. They compared the intelligence scores with the demographic qualities (age, gender, household income, education level of parents, and place of residence) of the individuals, and found that a positive relationship exists between the levels of emotional intelligence and gender, positive relationship also exists between educational levels of parents and household income. They also found that emotional intelligence scores of women have significant differences with those of men. Women have higher levels of emotional intelligence. No significant difference exists between emotional intelligence score and age, place of residence and household income. The important difference is confirmed to be based on emotional intelligence for educational status of the family. In other words, the level of emotional intelligence improves with the increased level of education. In conclusion, the studies revealed that demographic qualities are also associated with emotional intelligence (Yelkikalan et al., 2012).

Problem Statement

According to Bondagjy (2000), an estimate of the percentage of gifted students in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is 2%; there are about four million students in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the number of those who are gifted may be around 80,000. Functional specialized program can only provide half of the actual number (King Abdul Aziz and his Companions" Foundation for the Gifted [KACFG] Journal, 1999).

Moreover, the numbers identified becomes wider and this causes concern, as postulated by Bondagjy, (2000) where he states that the program can only covered half of that number, which comes down to around 40,000 students number of gifted students which is expected to increase at a rate of 5%, the same rate of increase in the population. Bondagjy, (2000) further adds that the present foundation cannot cater for the increasing numbers of gifted students in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia. According to him, the number of gifted students in the Saudi Arabia would appear to be more than 200,000, if 5% of the gifted student's population is identified. The same report was given by the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia (SOME, 2007) which indicated that the number of gifted students who receive the benefit of the specialist programs in Saudi Arabian schools is much less than this number. In this case the emotional intelligence of some gifted students academic achievement will not be met up by the programs of Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia.

A rigorous study indicated that the current curricula for gifted students in intermediate schools are designed to address many important issues regarding the development of the aspects of intelligence among gifted students. Therefore, the emotional intelligence skills of the intermediate school students, which have been observed to be a major determinant of academic achievement, must be developed and enhanced to interrupt the trend of poor academic achievement among them. A student may recover from physical pain or injury, but may never recover from the terror and degradation of his emotional state (Kahtani, 2013). Although the education of gifted and talented individuals has been intensively researched worldwide, little has been written about the education of the same population in Saudi Arabia and throughout the Arab countries. The status of the education of gifted individuals is still vague and unclear even for educators themselves (Obaidli & Ali, 2006).

New initiatives tailored to the Saudi environment are urgently needed. These initiatives are must aim to improve academic achievement of gifted students and identify the factors that influence this. This need was stressed by several Saudi researchers (Kahtani, 2013). Most available studies have focused on different aspects of the problem. However, such research inquiries may have information gaps that do not match the Saudi environment. Therefore, the current research aims to address this research gap. The intelligent and creative individuals were categorized based on the test given by the Saudi Ministry of Education. These individuals were placed in special schools located in Jeddah (Ministry of Education, 2013). Saudi researchers, such as Algamdi (2007), affirmed that the concerned parties should focus on gifted students and monitor their academic achievement level. In addition, authorities should create scientific educational mechanisms to sustain the development of gifted students, including the detection of any factors that may hinder their performance.

Objectives of the Study

1. To investigate the influence of empathy on academic achievement among gifted students.
2. To describe the concept of empathy among gifted students in Saudi Arabia
3. To provide suggestions from the teachers that could be adopted to improve empathy among gifted students in Saudi Arabia.

Research Questions

1. Is there any significant influence of empathy on academic achievement among gifted students?
2. How can the concept of empathy be described among gifted students in Saudi Arabia?
3. What are the suggestions from the teachers that could be adopted to improve empathy among gifted students in Saudi Arabia?

Research Hypotheses

Ho1. There is no significant influence of empathy on academic achievement among gifted students.

Literature Review

Empathy and Academic Achievement of Gifted Students

Cooper (2010), defined empathy as the most powerful aspect for the development of learning relationships and achievement of gifted students; empathy is often communicated nonverbally through facial expressions and body language (Wang, 2014). Previous researches explained empathy and its relationship with gifted students. Bakar et al,

(2014), studied the relationship between domains of empathy and leadership skills among gifted and talented students. The author asserted that the world has seen many gifted and talented individuals whose ideas transcend their own life span. These ideas leave profound marks in many spheres of life, ranging from the sciences to economics, fine arts to health, and spirituality to leadership. The study examines domains of empathy (understanding others, helping others, developing others potential, service orientation, leveraging diversity, political awareness, and caring) which are important in leadership development among gifted and talented students in Malaysia (n=240). The study used a survey method and data was collected using an instrument called Malaysian Emotional Quotient Inventory (MEQI). Findings from the study show that all domains of empathy correlate positively with leadership skills with the r values for all correlations are from 0.253 to 0.788 ($p < 0.01$). The study found that empathy domains have the strong correlation with leadership skills are political awareness, followed by leveraging diversity, developing other's potential, caring and helping others. Also findings from the study showed that the r value for service orientation is low. One of the implications of the study was on counseling services in developing leadership skills among gifted and talented students.

Ishak el al, (2014), conducted study on dimensions of social skills and their relationship with empathy among gifted and talented students in Malaysia. The study examines six dimensions of social skills (the ability to influence others, to manage conflict, leadership, and ability to be a catalyst for change, to bond with others, to work collaboratively, to work as a team and to communicate effectively) and their relationship with empathy among gifted and talented students in Malaysia. Two hundred and forty (male = 81, female = 159) 15-year old gifted and talented students participated in the study. These students were identified as gifted and talented by the Malaysian National Gifted Centre and at present are studying at the Centre as full time high school students. Data was collected using Malaysian Emotional Quotient Inventory (MEQI) developed by the researchers. A survey method was used and data was collected during a school holiday program that they have participated. Findings from the study show that all dimensions of social skills correlate positively with empathy ($p < 0.00$, $n = 240$) and the r values are more than 0.60. The study also discusses the findings in relation to counseling provision for the gifted and talented.

Mendaglio (2014), investigated Dabrowski's perspective on intelligence and responds to the question: To what is intelligence subservient? The finding revealed that emotional intelligence empathy and social skills practice can help gifted student in their academic achievement.

The studies on emotional differences Jenaabadi (2014) between male and female genders asserted that female's emotional reactions were better than males. In the same vein, Besharat.et.al (2006), states emotional intelligence of female students higher than that in male students. According to (Goleman, 1995), emotional intelligence has been universally highlighted as critical factor to human success. Emotional intelligence of a person mainly depends on the aspects which are very important for the successful and effectual socialization of an individual (Kar et.al 2014). It has been highly inclined by culture of the society where the individual belongs to (Berrocal et al. 2005). When education is getting expanded with a high level existence of competition for the students to excel in their career, the role of emotional intelligence becomes relevant and necessary (Kar et.al 2014). As a result, students are puzzled to organize their emotions to confront the academic challenges. Numerous studies stated that emotional intelligence can have a major impact on several elements of everyday life (Stys & Brown, 2004). Study conducted by Palmer, Donaldson, and Stough (2002), concluded that EI was a predictor of life satisfaction. Moreover, people with high emotional intelligence show signs of healthier psychological adaptation (Stys & Brown, 2004). According to Brackett, Mayer, & Warner (cited in Stys & Brown, 2004), when the level of emotional intelligence of an individual is high, he/she is likely to possess various characteristics such as positive interactions with peers and family, attending to health and appearance. According to Mayer, Caruso, and Salovey (1999), higher parental warmth and attachment is highly correlating to higher emotional intelligence. On the other hand, higher emotional intelligence reports positive interpersonal relationship of an individual (Stys & Brown, 2004).

In a study conducted by Thomas (2013), Emotional Intelligence and coping behavior of gifted and normal students have been assessed. A sample of 500 higher secondary students was used as the sample to examine gender based emotional intelligence and coping behavior of students gender differences can be seen in Emotional Intelligence and Coping Behavior among gifted and normal students. Sharifi and sharifi (2014), compared emotional intelligence and humor in gifted and non-gifted Students (60 students each) in Iran. The study concluded that there is a significant difference between emotional intelligence and humor.

Theoretical Background

In this study, two theories were discussed namely Emotional Intelligence Theory of Goleman, 1995, Mayer and Salovey (1990), for emotional intelligence of gifted students and Achievement motivation theory of McClelland (1958), for academic achievement of gifted students in Saudi Arabia. These theories are more appropriate to be used in this study because they are closely related to the issue of gifted students. The relationship between Goleman and Mayer and Salovey's theories is seen in the their contribution to the concept of emotional intelligence where they first of all defined emotional intelligence (EI) as the ability to monitor one's own and other people's emotions, to discriminate between different emotions and label them appropriately, and to use emotional information to guide thinking and behavior (Coleman, Andrew, 2008).

Daniel Goleman defined emotional intelligence as "understanding one's own feelings, and understanding others feelings and regulates emotion in a way to enhance living. According to Golemans model emotional intelligence exists and it is a means for personal and professional success. The productivity of an individual is depended on the type of emotional intelligence he possessed. As a result, emotionally intelligent individuals tend to perform well and stay outstanding irrespective of the area they are into. Moreover, the theory claims that sound academic performance with high emotional intelligence would drive an individual to cherish in his life.

On the other hand, Achievement Motivation Theory is one of a number of psychological theories concerning what makes people do what they do. Managers who wish to get the most out of their employees need the knowledge of this theory (Singh, 2011). The Achievement Motivation Theory evolved from work of McClelland which began in the 1940s.

In 1958 McClelland described human motives in the *Methods of Measuring Human Motivation* and identified other human motives related to the achievement motive and later focused his attention on only need for Achievement, the need for Affiliation, and the need for Power. In essence, McClelland's theory postulates that people are motivated in varying degrees by their need for Achievement need for Power, and need for Affiliation and that these needs are acquired, or learned, during an individual's lifetime (Daft, 2008; Lussier & Achua, 2007).

In other words, most people possess and will exhibit a combination of three needs. Understanding the logic of the emotional intelligence on academic achievement among gifted students indicated that the latter is directly relevant to the dependent variable, which is the former. The Emotional intelligence theory and Achievement motivation theory are also relevant to the independent variables which are self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills. These independent variables affect the dependent variables which is academic achievement. Goleman theory of emotional intelligence in this study is directly related to the independent variables are conceptualized as five variables namely; self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills by taking care of the emotional intelligence and academic achievement among gifted students which is the main objective of the study. The achievement theory which is concerned with the need for achievement, the need for Affiliation, and the need for Power is also directly related to the dependent variable as well as the independent variables of the study.

Methodology

The mix of quantitative and qualitative research design was adopted for this study. The study sought to determine the gender difference and emotional intelligence elements among gifted students in Saudi Arabia reasons. The main population of this study consisted of all 396 intermediate gifted (male and female) students enrolled in Al- Faisaliah and the school of 128th. The findings in this paper are drawn from a research study on the influence of emotional intelligence towards academic achievement among gifted students in Saudi Arabia. Data were collected from the gifted students in Saudi Arabia through questionnaires and interview. A purposive sampling procedure was adopted in selecting the gifted students, on the basis of their status that is all gifted students in Al-Faisaliah school and the school of 128th data. The estimated number of the main population stands at 396 gifted students. The sample size for this study was 150 gifted students. The total selected sample size for the qualitative study was 30 gifted students, which included 5 Males and 5 females from each class. The sample size for qualitative study was selected from the sample size of the qualitative study, in other words the 30 gifted students that were interviewed were selected from the 150 gifted students already selected for quantitative study.

However, a total of 10 teachers have been chosen for the interview, as they are the only teachers who are full time teachers to teach the first, second and third class of gifted students with whom the study was conducted and available in the time of conducting the study that is January 2015. The selected teachers interviewed have a direct contact with the gifted students; therefore, the researcher has intentionally planned to interview them. The teachers were all male comprised of Master degree (MA) and Bachelor degree (BA) holders. It is worth mentioning that the teachers were only asked to give suggestions that could be adopted to improve emotional intelligence among gifted students in Saudi Arabia.

Table 3. 1

Distribution of the population

Class	Males	Females	Total
First class	71	62	133
Second class	66	68	134
Third class	69	60	129
Total	206	190	396

Source: Al Faisaliah School and the school of 128th data.

Table 3. 2

Distribution of quantitative study respondents according to class grade and gender

Class	Males	Females	Total
First class	27	23	50
Second class	25	26	51
Third class	26	23	49
Total	78	72	150

Source: Al Faisaliah School and the school of 128th data.

Table 3. 3

Distribution of qualitative study respondents according to class grade and gender

Class	Male	Female	Total
First class	5	5	10
Second class	5	5	10
Third class	5	5	10
Total	15	15	30

Findings

The study used both quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis. The quantitative study investigated the influence of empathy on academic achievement among gifted students in Saudi Arabia. The qualitative study investigated how empathy can be described among gifted students in Saudi Arabia and the suggestions that could be adopted to improve empathy among gifted students in Saudi Arabia.

Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive statistics of the five types of emotional intelligence are shown in Table 4.5 below. The results reveal that South Arabian gifted students have high emotional intelligence. Among the five types of emotional intelligence, empathy has the highest level (mean = 3.941, standard deviation = 0.653), followed by motivation (mean = 3.937, standard deviation = 0.611), self-regulations (mean = 3.897, standard deviation = 0.559), self-awareness (mean = 3.718, standard deviation = 0.662), and social skills (mean = 3.532, standard deviation = 0.607).

Table 4. 1

Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Self-Awareness	3.718	.662
Self-Regulations	3.897	.559
Motivation	3.937	.611
Empathy	3.941	.653
Social Skills	3.532	.607

Note: All variables used a 5-point Likert scale with (1= strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree)

The table shows that correlation coefficients among emotional intelligence variables range between 0.154-0.493. This indicates that all the coefficients are in the moderate level and no one of them is considered high (0.75 or above) (Hair et al., 2010; Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). Therefore, multicollinearity does not appear to be a problem in this study. As depicted in Table 4.6 all variables were significantly correlated with dependent variable ($p < 0.01$) which indicate that all the five factors of emotional intelligence are significantly correlated with the academic achievement. All the coefficient values are positive which meets the hypotheses requirement.

Table 4. 2

Pearson Correlation Coefficients

Variables	SA	SR	M	E	SS	AA
Self-Awareness (SA)	.000					
Self-Regulations (SR)	.342**	.000				
Motivation (M)	.300**	.493**	.000			
Empathy (E)	.458**	.334**	.336**	.000		
Social Skills (SS)	.369**	.242**	.154	.408**	.000	
Academic Achievement (AA)	.402**	.492**	.432**	.562**	.309**	.000

Note: ** $p < 0.01$

Research Question 1: Is there any significant influence of empathy on academic achievement among gifted students?

Ho1. There is no significant influence of empathy on academic achievement among gifted students.

The results of the multiple regression analysis between emotional intelligence and academic achievement among gifted students are presented in Table 4.7. The R^2 was 0.446 indicating that 44.6 percent of the variation of academic achievement can be explained by emotional intelligence of students. The result show self-regulation ($\beta = 0.256$, $p < 0.01$), motivation ($\beta = 0.150$, $p < 0.05$), and empathy ($\beta = 0.371$, $p < 0.001$) were positively effect on academic achievement whereas self-awareness ($\beta = 0.084$, $p > 0.05$) and social skills ($\beta = 0.041$, $p > 0.05$) have no significant effect academic achievement of gifted student in Saudi Arabia. Thus Ho1b, Ho1c, and Ho1d were supported and Ho1a and Ho1e were not supported.

Table 4. 3

Multiple Regressions

Hypothesis	Variables	Standardize Beta	Decision
Ho1a	Self-Awareness	0.084	Rejected
Ho1b	Self-Regulation	0.256**	Accepted
Ho1c	Motivation	0.150*	Accepted
Ho1d	Empathy	0.371***	Accepted
Ho1e	Social Skill	0.041	Rejected
F value		23.167***	
R^2		0.446	
Adjusted R^2		0.427	

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

Qualitative Results

The study used both quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis. The quantitative study investigated the significant influence of empathy on academic achievement among gifted students. The qualitative study investigated how empathy can be described among gifted students in Saudi Arabia and the suggestions that could be adopted to improve empathy among gifted students in Saudi Arabia.

Research Question 2: How can the concept of empathy be described among gifted students in Saudi Arabia?

For this question, 30 gifted students were interviewed orally, in the light of how they described empathy among gifted students in Saudi Arabia. The gifted students described empathy among gifted students in Saudi Arabia according to their own opinions; the gifted students were quoted verbatim during the interview. Below are some of the transcripts of the interviews to answer research question 2:

The views of the respondents on the concept of empathy also varied when they were asked; whether they like spending time with others, in order to solve their problem. They responded in the following statements:

"I consider making friendships as an important thing." (R21)

"I easily make friends with others." (R25)

"I love my friends." (R23)

"I see things through the perspective of others to be difficult." (R6)

"I feel nice to others." (R11)

"I am a useful person." (R27)

"I enjoy spending time with other people." (R13)

Analysis of the interview conducted with thirty gifted students from the centre of gifted students Jeddah Saudi Arabia gave a great insight into the importance of description of self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, social skills among gifted students in Saudi Arabia. In this section, the responses of the respondents were summarized under different themes.

Identified Themes for Qualitative Study

In the following sections the researcher revealed the opinion of each participant in line with the research question number four (2) and question number five (3) of the study. Specific themes were identified as emergent from the interview data collected. Each theme also contained some sub themes based on which the discussion will be done in respect of each major theme. Relevant concepts or subjects occurring at least twice were assigned as categories and were then coded. Therefore the section elaborates on each theme and concludes with thought from the participants directed to gifted students' opinions to describe empathy and suggestions that could be adopted to improve emotional intelligence among gifted students in Saudi Arabia. Below are some of the major themes derived from the responses of the gifted students which were put in a tabular form and finally explained one after the other.

1. Feeling of Self-Confidence
2. Self Control
3. Self Initiative
4. Human Relation
5. Sharing the feelings of others

Table 4. 4

Themes identified from the interview data collected from Gifted Students.

Themes	Sub-themes
Feeling of Self-Confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Speaking about one's feelings . Expressing one's feelings toward others to be easy . Having a natural smile.
Self Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Controlling one's anger is not easy . Getting angry easily . Requesting help from friends during exams period if need arises
Self Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Interest in performing new tasks . Interest in accomplishing work for others . Initiate work without being asked
Human Relation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Making friendships as an important thing . Loving one's friends . Spending time with others
Sharing the feelings of others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Sharing with others during their private conversations . Convincing others of one's point of view . Solving problems when a dispute occurs among group members

Research Question 3: What are the suggestions from the teachers that could be adopted to improve empathy among gifted students in Saudi Arabia?

For this question, 10 teachers of gifted students were interviewed orally, in the light of the suggestions that could be adopted to improve emotional intelligence among gifted students in Saudi Arabia in the aspect of empathy. The teachers provided some suggestions that could be adopted to improve empathy among gifted students in Saudi Arabia; The teachers were quoted verbatim during the interview. Below are some of the transcripts of the interviews to answer research question 3:

Interviewees were asked about the suggestions that could be adopted to improve emotional intelligence in the aspect of empathy among gifted students in Saudi Arabia. Their responses are as follows:

"The weak nature of the first year of studies makes it the most important decisions in the formulation of perseverance; education institutions such as school for talented desire not only to recruit students, but to keep them. (R4)

"Education institutions such as schools of gifted should invest energy and resources in the planning and implementation of new initiatives to guide students, which aims to facilitate academic and social success for students." (R7)

"You can enter emotional intelligence skills as a preventative strategy to enhance students' emotionally healthy, because emotional intelligence increases the" sensitivity to the feelings of others, self-control and awareness of the consequences of behavior ". (R6)

"Emotionally intelligent students are more sympathetic and are able to effectively manage moods. Depression, stress, loneliness, anger, and delinquency, drug abuse, impulsivity, and aggressive behaviors are common among students with weak emotional health." (R5)

Analysis of the interview conducted with teachers of gifted students from the centre of gifted students Jeddah Saudi Arabia gave a great insight into the importance of the suggestions that could be adopted to improve emotional intelligence among gifted students in Saudi Arabia. In this section, the responses of the respondents were summarized under the following themes:

- (a) Teach the teachers emotional intelligence skills,
- (b) Incorporating emotional intelligence into the curricula,
- (c) Provide emotional intelligence training to gifted students,
- (d) Incorporate religious perspectives of emotional intelligence into spiritual formation curricula.

Table 4. 5

Themes identified from the interview data collected from Gifted Students.

Themes	Subthemes
Teach the teachers emotional intelligence skills,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Teachers should be emotionally literate . Teachers should teach with self-awareness and optimism . Emotionally intelligent teachers should be caring and deeply empathetic
Incorporating emotional intelligence into the curricula	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Controlling one's anger is not easy . Getting angry easily . Requesting help from friends during exams period if need arises
Provide emotional intelligence training to first-year students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Interest in performing new tasks . Interest in accomplishing work for others .Initiate work without being asked
Incorporate religious perspectives of emotional intelligence into spiritual formation curricula.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Making friendships as an important thing . Loving one's friends .Spending time with others

Discussions

The study revealed that, there is a positive influence of empathy on academic achievement among gifted students. It was shown in the data analysis and interpretation that empathy ($\beta = 0.371$, $p < 0.001$) have positive effect on academic achievement of gifted student in Saudi Arabia. Empathy is the most powerful aspect for the development of learning relationships and achievement of gifted students (Cooper, 2010). Empathy is often communicated nonverbally through facial expressions and body language (Wang, 2014). The findings revealed that academic achievement among gifted students was positively influenced by their empathy, previous researches explained empathy and its relationship with gifted students as in support of the present study. Bakar et al, (2014), studied the relationship between domains of empathy and leadership skills among gifted and talented students. The author asserted that the world has seen many gifted and talented individuals whose ideas transcend their own life span. These ideas leave profound marks in many spheres of life, ranging from the sciences to economics, fine arts to health, and spirituality to leadership. Their study examines domains of empathy (understanding others, helping others, developing others potential, service orientation, leveraging diversity, political awareness, and caring) which are important in leadership development among gifted and talented students in Malaysia. Findings from the study show that all domains of empathy correlate positively with leadership skills. The study found that empathy domains have the strong correlation with leadership skills are political awareness, followed by leveraging diversity, developing other's potential, caring and helping others. Also findings from the study showed that the r value for service orientation is low. One of the implications of the study was on counseling services in developing leadership skills among gifted and talented students.

The finding of this study is like that of Ishak el al, (2014), conducted study on dimensions of social skills and their relationship with empathy among gifted and talented students in Malaysia. The study examines six dimensions of social skills (the ability to influence others, to manage conflict, leadership, and ability to be a catalyst for change, to bond with others, to work collaboratively, to work as a team and to communicate effectively) and their relationship with empathy among gifted and talented students in Malaysia. Findings from the study show that all dimensions of social skills correlate positively with empathy. The study also discusses the findings in relation to counseling provision for the gifted and talented. The findings of the present study corroborate Mendaglio (2014), who investigated Dabrowski's perspective on intelligence and responds to the question: To what is intelligence subservient? The finding revealed that emotional intelligence empathy and social skills practice can help gifted student in their academic achievement.

Self confidence is the difference between feeling unstoppable and feeling scared out of one's wits. Perception of oneself has an enormous impact on how others perceive him. Perception is reality the more self confidence one has, the more likely it is he'll succeed. Feelings of self-confidence were explicitly mentioned by respondent 9 (R9) during the interview although many of the factors affecting self confidence are beyond one's control, there are a number of things one can consciously do to build self confidence.

Self-control is the ability to control one's emotions, behavior, and desires in the face of external demands in order to function in society. In psychology it is sometimes called self-regulation. Self-control is essential in behavior to achieve goals and to avoid impulses or emotions that could prove to be negative. In behavior analysis self-control represents the locus of two conflicting contingencies of reinforcement, which then make a controlling response reinforcing when it causes changes in the controlled response. Self control is the central issue or theme that emerged from the interview responses. Almost all the respondents mentioned something related to self control in their responses either negatively or positively.

The term Self Initiative is usually used to describe someone who is driven to get the job done. Someone who has self initiative and drive doesn't need someone to stand over them to make sure they get their job done. They just need to know what you need and they will find a way to get it done. These people are highly motivated to be successful. In fact, they will normally work best with little or no direct supervision. Self initiative is another theme emerged from the

interview responses and it was specifically mentioned by respondent 6 where he said: *"I initiate work without being asked"*. (R6), this indicated that he is self initiative and can create things on his own.

Human relationship is a relation between people; relationship is often used where relation would serve, as in 'the relationship between inflation and unemployment', but the preferred usage of 'relationship' is for human relations or states of relatedness; "the relationship between mothers and their children. Analysis of the interview conducted with thirty gifted students from the centre of gifted students Jeddah Saudi Arabia gave a great insight into the importance of human relation. The opinions of the respondents are almost similar in their aims to have relations others more especially friends. Other respondents consider making friendships as an important thing as mentioned by R21, making friends easily with others as mentioned by R25 loving friends as said by R23.

Sharing the feelings of others have several positive mental and physical health related outcomes, such as relieving tension caused by the buildup of everyday stressors, as well as the trauma of major life difficulties. Expressing emotions also reduces the likelihood of acquiring stress-related problems such as muscle aches and tension headaches. Some psychologists believe that the most important aspect of life is feeling connected to another person and one way to enhance closeness is through sharing feelings. By disclosing ourselves sharing our inner ideas, concerns and emotions with family members, partners or close friends we come to know ourselves better. When we express ourselves, our thoughts and feelings often become clearer and take on an even fuller meaning in several ways. Sharing the feelings of others was pointed out by respondent 26 (R26) where he was quoted saying *"I can share with others during their private conversations"*. (R26). Under this theme, other respondents mentioned some opinions that are closely related to the opinion of R26 which is one of the main themes of the interview responses.

During the interview majority of the respondents suggested that the teachers should be taught emotional intelligence skills to be able to impart the skills to the students. R3 suggested that teachers should have self-awareness and be emotionally literate and understand that emotion is embedded in their teaching. R5 was of the view that teachers should teach with self-awareness and optimism and believe that they can make a difference in the lives of their students, and they should attribute positive qualities to learners.

Almost all the respondents suggested the incorporation of emotional intelligence into the curricula, by putting more emphasis to the relationship between emotions and classroom management as mentioned by R2. R8 suggested that there is a need for the ability to identify and regulate (control) student's emotions by the teachers because they are capable of experiencing a wide array of emotions such as anger, frustration, anxiety, and happiness in one class period if the concept of emotional intelligence is incorporated into the curriculum.

Providing emotional intelligence training to gifted students might be a valuable strategy, an equally viable option for teachers is to blend lessons on feelings and relationships with other topics already taught as mentioned by R3 during the interview.

Incorporating religious perspectives of emotional intelligence into spiritual formation curricula was the opinion of almost all the respondents during the interview. Other respondents directly related the concept of emotional intelligence to religion as mentioned by R8 where he said that "Emotions are a gift from God." R2 suggested that it is necessary for both gifted students and their teachers as believers to manage their emotional lives according to God's design.

From the theoretical point of view, the study established concrete connection and mutual relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement of gifted students in Saudi Arabia in the aspect of empathy through the emotional intelligence Theory Goleman's (1995) which confirmed that academic, personal, and professional success cannot be fulfilled if the person does not acquire emotional and social skills, the Mayer and Salovey Model (1995) which hypothesized a new type of intelligence based on individual differences to treat emotional information more especially in relation to gifted students and achievement motivation Theory which postulates that people are motivated in varying degrees by their need for achievement, need for power and need for affiliation, and that these needs are acquired or learned during one's lifetime.

Recommendations

There is a need to develop and establish a philosophy of emotional intelligence and academic achievement through Saudi Arabia Ministry of Education. Relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement of gifted students has many known benefits for Saudi Arabian Education system, as well as for teachers, students and Ministry of Education in general; Ministry of Education should therefore enhance and facilities programmes that encourage public as well as private schools involvement in the issue of emotional intelligence and academic achievement. The issue of feeling of self-confidence, self control, self initiative, human relation and sharing the feelings of others should be inculcated in the mind of gifted student in particular and all students of Saudi Arabia in general. Ministry of Education should improve emotional intelligence among gifted students in Saudi Arabia by teaching the teachers emotional intelligence skills, incorporating emotional intelligence into the curricula, providing emotional intelligence training to gifted students, incorporating religious perspectives of emotional intelligence into spiritual formation curricula. Useful policies to the gifted students should also be created by encouraging gifted students to develop their skills. Saudi Arabian government through its public schools should improve the quality of life of the gifted and non- gifted students contribute towards addressing their social and emotional problems that are mainly related to academic achievement.

The quality of public schools should be enhanced and expand to include other program to allow the members of the community become more engaged in gifted and non-gifted student's education. Furthermore, Saudi Arabian public universities through Ministry of High Education should offer courses for teachers on the importance of conducting programmes for gifted students, and effective teaching methods that can be used by teachers in teaching the gifted students some aspects of emotional intelligence. Indeed, emotional intelligence issue is a new in the academic achievement among gifted students in Saudi Arabian and Saudi education system, and both management of the ministry and teachers of gifted students do not yet know their roles regarding this new trend. Hence, it is necessary to provide both management and teachers of gifted students with orientation and training.

Summary and Conclusion

This exploratory study attempted to shed light on the influence of empathy on academic achievement among gifted students in Saudi Arabia. The findings of this study explore the influence of empathy on academic achievement among gifted students in Saudi Arabia which is a meaningful change in Saudi education system in general. The descriptive statistics of the five types of emotional intelligence are shown in the earlier section of this study. The results reveal that Saudi Arabian gifted students have high emotional intelligence. Among the five types of emotional intelligence, empathy has the highest level (mean = 3.941, standard deviation = 0.653), followed by motivation (mean = 3.937, standard deviation = 0.611), self-regulations (mean = 3.897, standard deviation = 0.559), self-awareness (mean = 3.718, standard deviation = 0.662), and social skills (mean = 3.532, standard deviation = 0.607). All variables of the study were significantly correlated with dependent variables ($p < 0.01$) which indicate that all the five elements of emotional intelligence are significantly correlated with the academic achievement. All the coefficient values are positive which meets the hypotheses requirement. The findings showed that self-regulation, motivation and empathy have positive effect on academic achievement whereas self-awareness and social skills have no significant effect on academic achievement of gifted student in Saudi Arabia. The findings statistically concluded that, there is a positive influence of empathy on academic achievement among gifted students. During the analysis and interpretation of the responses gathered from gifted students and their teachers manual qualitative data analysis was used to provide suggestions that could be adopted to improve emotional intelligence among gifted students in Saudi Arabia. The findings of the qualitative investigation were put under different themes.

Analysis of the interview conducted with 10 teachers and 30 gifted students gave a great insight into the feeling of self-confidence, self control, self initiative, human relation and sharing the feelings of others, teaching the teachers emotional intelligence skills, incorporating emotional intelligence into the curricula, providing emotional intelligence training to gifted students, incorporating religious perspectives of emotional intelligence into spiritual formation curricula.

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