

Social and Emotional Challenges Faced by Gifted Students at Secondary Level in Pakistani School System

Durezainab Hussain

Abstract

This research aimed to shed light on the social and emotional hurdles experienced by gifted students in the secondary school system of Pakistan. A comprehensive literature review revealed that a lack of understanding of giftedness and a failure to acknowledge individual differences were primary factors behind these challenges. Pakistan lacked a standardized process for identifying gifted students, and many teachers lacked the necessary skills to address their unique needs. The inflexible curriculum failed to accommodate gifted students, while the absence of guidance and counseling programs in most schools exacerbated their struggles. Despite Pakistan's diverse and multilingual population, gifted education remained absent from formal educational policies. Research on giftedness in Pakistan, which officially commenced in 2002, suffered from a lack of systematic and empirical grounding. This research sought to provide insight into Pakistan's perspective on gifted education and the social-emotional difficulties faced by gifted students. This mixed-methods research involved gifted students, teachers, parents, coordinators from both private and public schools in Karachi, and professors from a University's Psychology Department. Convenience sampling was chosen for its speed and accessibility, resulting in 228 respondents. The study underscored the myriad social and emotional challenges faced by gifted students, many of whom remained unidentified and unsupported, leading to frustration, self-esteem issues, boredom, laziness, and underachievement.

Key Words

Difficulties, Challenges, Socio-emotional, Gifted Students

Introduction

Gifted, creative, and talented individuals possessed exceptional abilities. While high IQ had long defined giftedness, researchers, including Gardner (1993) and Sternberg

& Davidson (1986), expanded the concept. It included qualities like motivation, self-concept, and creativity (Siegler & Kotovsky, 1986). Renzulli's three-ring definition involved above-average ability, commitment, and creativity. Federal standards (Ross, 1993) emphasized intellectual, creative, and leadership skills. Contrary to stereotypes, Neihart et al. (2001) found high-ability students were well-adjusted. However, they could face social and emotional challenges. Positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Sheldon & King, 2001) could aid in nurturing their potential.

Before the 20th century, measuring intelligence had been challenging, but Alfred Binet's scale in the early 1900s had introduced the concept of mental age. It assessed children's abilities compared to their age peers. Over time, intelligence research had evolved, recognizing diverse intellectual capacities (Cattell, 1971; Guilford, 1959). The term "gifted" had expanded to include high IQ and creativity (Torrance, 1961; 1965; 1968). Recent research (Neihart et al., 2002) had shown that gifted students had generally been well-adjusted, but they could face specific challenges if their needs weren't met, including academic advancement, psychological responses like perfectionism, and dual identification. Social context had affected them, and some had hidden their talents to fit in, which had led to social isolation.

This research aimed to investigate the social and emotional difficulties faced by gifted students, including factors that had differentiated them from their peers. Challenges existed in teaching them separately due to their unique needs.

The main objectives of the research had been to identify emotional challenges faced by gifted students, identify social challenges faced by gifted students, raise awareness among parents to help their gifted children cope with these issues, suggest suitable teaching techniques for teachers to address these problems in regular classrooms, and recommend suitable environments from an administrative perspective to support gifted students facing socio-emotional challenges.

This study involved private and public schools in Karachi and included teachers, students, parents, coordinators, and professors from Karachi University's Psychology Department. Both quantitative and qualitative methodologies had been employed, with a population of 100 students, 50 teachers, 50 parents, 20 coordinators, and 3 professors. Data had been collected through questionnaires (open-ended and closed-ended) and had been analyzed using percentages and the Chi-square method.

This study had been crucial to identify the socio-emotional challenges faced by gifted students. Failing to address these challenges could have led to frustration, low self-esteem, underachievement, and more. Recognizing and supporting gifted students early had been vital to help them reach their full potential and avoid long-term negative effects on their well-being (Yeung et al., 2005; Diezmann et al., 2001; Berger, 2006).

Research Questions

- What were the social and emotional problems faced by the gifted students in the school?
- Did the classroom environment help overcome the socio-emotional problems among gifted students?
- What were the roles of the teachers, parents, and school administration in helping gifted children to overcome social and emotional problems?

Method

In this study, mixed methods research, as described by Creswell (2002), combined quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis within a single study. This approach was employed to comprehensively understand socio-emotional challenges faced by intellectually gifted students, involving input from gifted students, teachers, and parents. This approach enhanced result analysis and generalizability.

The population of interest consisted of intellectually gifted students, parents, and teachers from seven Karachi schools in which five were private schools and two were public schools.

Table 1

Criteria for selection of Research Site

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Schools of different social backgrounds• Public and private schools |
|--|

Research participants were selected through convenient sampling, based on the criteria given below.

Table 2

Criteria for selection of Research Participants

Categories of participants	Total Participants	Criteria for selection	Process for selection
Gifted students	100(Male & Female)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academically high achievers Secondary class students (5th,6th, 7th) 	Through principals' assistance
Teachers	50(Male & Female)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers of secondary classes Class teachers and teachers of major subjects 	Through principals' assistance
Parents	50 (Male & Female)	Parents of students participated in the study	Through the support of school administration and consent letter
Coordinators	25(Male & Female)	Coordinators of selected schools	Through principals' support
Professors	03(Female)	Professors of a university (psychology department)	Through personal reference
Total	228	Participants who fulfilled the criteria were involved in the study	

The researcher constructed two questionnaires: open and close ended. The close ended questionnaire was filled by the students who were academically high achievers in

their respective classes, their teachers and parents whereas the open-ended questionnaire was filled by the respective school coordinators and professors at psychology department Karachi university, encouraged the participants to write and reveal their perceptions and thoughts freely according to their own way.

The data collected by close ended questions were analyzed as separate items using percentage method and calculated with tabulated and graphical representation followed by narration of the result achieved. The qualitative data was analyzed by the responses of the respondents by selecting themes and driven by the main idea provided by coordinators and professors with respect to the questions asked.

Results:

Quantitative Findings:

The quantitative findings from this study revealed several significant points. Firstly, a majority of gifted students (55%) tend to be played nicely with others, and about 67% tend to be engaged in activities that benefit the group. Additionally, approximately 62% of students treated their friends the way they wish to be treated, while a significant portion (62%) of students exhibited kindness towards those who were different from them. Furthermore, 48% of students tried to cheer up their peers when they were feeling down, and an overwhelming 86% viewed themselves as good friends. On a contrasting note, around 57% of students attempted to apologize when they made a mistake, while 65% admitted to lying when they had done something wrong. Nonetheless, the majority (68%) of students strived to keep their promises, and most (53%) were willing to admit their mistakes. Notably, a high percentage (94%) of students consistently worked toward self-improvement, and the majority (83%) displayed perseverance until they attained success. Furthermore, a substantial number (68%) of students actively set goals for themselves, and most (78%) always gave their best effort to achieve their objectives. Additionally, around half of the students (51%) sometimes displayed patience when waiting in line, but more than half (53%) found it challenging to control their temper during arguments. Moreover, a majority (46%) only sometimes adhered to rules when unsupervised, and the same percentage (46%) occasionally chose to ignore students who tease them. Unexpectedly, 43% of students actually enjoyed exams or tests, while 63% occasionally struggled with test preparation, and 60% found it tedious. Importantly, an overwhelming 88% of students consistently spoke politely with teachers and other adults at school, with most (82%) unflinchingly obeyed their teachers and other adults. Furthermore, a majority (76%) consistently followed their directions, and about 57% always or sometimes listened without

interrupting. Likewise, most students (58%) always or sometimes adhered to school rules. However, only half of the students (50%) consistently spoke politely at home, while 90% always obeyed their parents, and a majority (76%) listened without interruption, but only 45% consistently followed rules at home.

Qualitative Findings:

Qualitative findings offer insights into the characteristics and challenges of gifted students. Gifted students are often described as having exceptional intelligence, imagination, and multitasking abilities. They exhibit responsible and alert behavior, exceptional speaking, questioning, and reasoning skills. However, they may face social challenges such as introversion, difficulty making friends, and clashes with peers. Emotional challenges include unrealistic goals, perfectionism, and impatience. To address these challenges, the study recommends strategies such as exposure, counseling, empathetic relationships, and support from teachers and parents. The role of school administration and parental support is highlighted as crucial in helping gifted students overcome social and emotional issues.

Discussion

Who Are Gifted Students?

Gifted students are often perceived by teachers as having innate intelligence, setting them apart from their peers. They exhibit unique characteristics such as vivid imaginations, ambitious dreams, and an ability to excel beyond their age group. Teachers believe gifted students possess multiple intelligences, excel in multitasking, actively engage in both curricular and co-curricular activities, and often stand out in the classroom.

Identification of Giftedness

Teachers identify gifted students by observing their responsible behavior, heightened alertness, exceptional speaking skills, outstanding questioning and reasoning abilities, and a propensity to ask numerous questions, particularly in subjects like science and math. These students display creativity, artistic talents, quick comprehension of topics, high IQ, strong concentration, and inquisitiveness, especially in areas of personal interest. They are often seen as self-disciplined, independent, adaptable, and adventurous individuals with good memory, advanced thinking, high values, and sound judgment.

Social Problems of Gifted Students

Gifted students may encounter social challenges, including introversion, difficulty in forming friendships leading to potential bullying, and clashes with peers due to their distinct way of thinking. They sometimes hold unrealistic expectations for themselves and can struggle with acceptance, feeling isolated due to their attitudes. Impatience and frustration stemming from their peers' behavior can make them hyper-sensitive and prone to getting hurt easily. Perfectionism can be a prevalent issue, as they strive for flawlessness, leading to exhaustion and lower self-esteem. Managing their time and high expectations can also lead to frustration.

Emotional Problems of Gifted Students

Emotional challenges arise when gifted students struggle to meet their ambitious goals. They may face resistance from their peers, who might challenge their exceptional abilities, leading to emotional distress. These students may have difficulty controlling their emotions, including anger, happiness, and anxiety. They strive for validation from others and can become upset and sensitive when not acknowledged. The behavior of peers can exacerbate their emotional responses. If they don't receive the necessary support or appreciation from teachers, they may become demotivated. Interpersonal relationships can also be a challenge for gifted students.

Ways to Overcome Social Emotional Issues of Gifted Students

To address these social and emotional issues, various strategies can be employed. These include providing exposure to diverse experiences, identifying individual needs, and addressing them through guidance and counseling, psychological tests, and personality assessments. Empathy, establishing healthy relationships, and encouraging free expression of thoughts and feelings are vital. Listening to their concerns, recognizing, and motivating their exceptional performance, using incentives like good marks, and offering opportunities for participation in discussions and activities within the school setting can be helpful.

Role of Administration and Parents

The support of both school administration and parents is critical in aiding gifted students in overcoming social and emotional challenges. While support may vary, some school administrations are highly supportive, offering scholarships and resources, particularly for academically gifted students. Parents often tend to support academically gifted children but may not extend the same level of support to other domains. A collaborative effort between school administration and parents is essential to foster holistic

development in gifted students and address their socio-emotional issues. Awareness sessions conducted by school administrations for teachers and parents can contribute to resolving these challenges effectively.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study underscores the significant social and emotional challenges faced by gifted students and the need to nurture their creativity and individuality rather than relying solely on standardized examinations in Pakistani education system. It emphasizes the importance of a flexible, student-centered curriculum and greater cooperation between schools and parents. The study also suggests that media and extracurricular activities can serve as valuable tools for nurturing the talents and interests of gifted students. Future research directions include investigating the impact of teacher training, the challenges within the examination system, underachievement in government schools, inhibitors to creativity, and curriculum suitability for gifted students. Additionally, research on the influence of home environments and parent-teacher cooperation is recommended.

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Appendices

Authority letter

Fatimiyah College



PERMISSION LETTER

Fatimiyah Education Network

Ms. **Durezainab Hussain** is a student of M.Ed. in Fatimiyah College of

Master's degree in education. She is conducting research on “**A study on Social and Emotional Challenges faced by the Gifted students at Secondary Level in Pakistan, Karachi**”, for the partial fulfilment of the master's degree in education from University of Karachi.

You are requested to permit her to administer questionnaires/ conduct interview/ access library for required material.

We shall be deeply grateful for your kind cooperation in this regard.

(Principal)

Fatimiyah College of Education

Owned & Managed by KPSIAJ

70-271, Britto Road, near Numaish, Karachi-74800. Tel: 021-32253713, 32221710, 32221711 Email: fc@fen.edu.pk

Invitation letter/Information sheet

For the Teachers/Parents/Students

Researcher: Durezainab Hussain

E-mail: durezainab.hussain@scholar.aku.edu

Supervisor: Dr. Farida Lodhi

Dear Participant,

My name is Durezainab. I am a student of the M.Ed. program at University of Karachi. I am doing research for the partial fulfillment of my degree program. The study title is **“Social and Emotional Challenges Faced by Gifted Students in Pakistani School System”**. The purpose of this study is to understand the social and emotional challenges faced by the gifted students (academically high achievers) to minimize/overcome these problems with the help of school authorities, parents, and teachers. With the help of open and close ended questionnaires, I will try to understand and analyse the causes of the challenges and understanding of teachers, students, and parents, The significance of the study is that it will help all the participants to reflect and understand the problems of gifted students, who are generally consider as toppers in their class without any challenges. The study might be able to pinpoint the causes of the social and emotional challenges among gifted students, which may lead to some minor or major changes in the education system and consequently. It may help to provide a novel contribution of knowledge for the stakeholders of education, to review and to apply it for efficacious teaching and learning with respect to gifted students. Moreover, it would be helpful for other schools of similar contexts to learn and take advantage from the experiences and practices of the understudy schools.

Participation of the individuals in this research will be solely on a voluntary basis. Participants have the right to step back whenever they want. Additionally, if they feel any threat or not like to answer any of my question, they have right not to answer. I promise that the information obtained will be kept confidential and used only for academic purposes. If you are interested to participant in this study, please sign-up consent/assent form below.

Consent Form for the Teachers/Parents/Coordinators

I the teacher/parent/coordinator of _____ school. I have read the information contained in the letter, I am voluntarily participating in the study of **“Social and Emotional Challenges Faced by Gifted Students in Pakistani School System”**, proposed by -Durezainab, student at University of Karachi. I am aware that confidentiality will be sustained regarding the provided information, and it will be used only for academic purposes. I am aware that my participation will be voluntary.

Research Participant’s Name: _____ Signature: _____

Researcher’s Name: _____ Date: _____

Consent Form for Parents for their Child's Participation

Consent Form for Parents

My Name is Durezainab. I am a student at University of Karachi. As part of my study, I am working on a research project, "**Social and Emotional Challenges Faced by Gifted Students in Pakistani School System**". For this purpose, your child will have to fill a questionnaire. I assure you that the questionnaire will be used for academic purposes only and the teachers or the school will not know the answer of your child in research. If you consent to your child's participation in this research project, then kindly sign this consent form and sent it to the class teacher through your child.

I agree with my child's participation in this research study,

YES

NO

Name of Child: _____

Signature of Parent: _____

Date: _____

© GSJ

Assent form for students

My Name is Durezainab. I am a student at University of Karachi. As part of my study, I am working on a research project, "**Social and Emotional Challenges Faced by Gifted Students in Pakistani School System**".

For this purpose, you have to fill a questionnaire. I assure you that the information will be used for the academic purposes only and the teachers or the school will not know about your answers in the research. If you agree to participate in this research project, then kindly sign this assent form and give it to your class teacher.

I agree to participate in this research study,

YES

NO

Name of the student: _____

Signature of student: _____

Date: _____

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QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENTS

Dear Participants

The research is being undertaken to understand the socio emotional challenges faced by gifted students, as the requirement of M.ED. Please carefully read each of the following statements and respond by ticking the response box that best reflects your opinion. Please be completely and honest in your responses. Take as long as you need. Please note that you may complete the questionnaire anonymously and that all individual responses will be treated confidentially.

NAME: ----- GENDER: -----

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION: MATRIC, INTERMEDIATE, GRADUATION, MASTER

MONTHLY INCOME: UNDER 15000, 15000-25000, 25000-35000, ABOVE 35000

QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR GIFTED CHILD

	Always	Sometimes	Rarely
1-Do the child play nicely with others?			
2-Do the child do things that are good for the group?			
3-Do the child treated her/his friends the way s/he like to be treated?			
4-Is the child nice to kids who are different from her/him?			
5-Do the child cheer up other kids if they (other kids) are feeling sad?			
6-Is the child a good friend?			
7-Do the child apologizes when s/he has done something wrong?	Always	Sometimes	Rarely
8-Do the child tell truth when s/he has done something wrong?			
9-Do the child keep promises?			
10-Do the child admits her/his mistakes?			
11-Do the child wants to make him/herself a better person?			

12-Do the child keep trying until succeed?			
13-Do the child set goals for him/herself (make plans for future)?			
14-Do the child try to do his/her best to achieve those goals?			
15-Do the child wait for his/her turn in line patiently?			
16-Do the child control his/her temper when s/hehas an argument with other kids?			
17-Do the child follows rules even when nobody is watching?			
18-Do the child ignores other students when they tease him/her?			
19-Do the child likes exams/tests?			
20-Do the child find it difficult to prepare for a test or exam?			
21-Do the child find it boring to prepare a test or exam?			
22-Do the child speaks politely with teachers and other adults at school?			
23-Do the child obeys teachers and other adult at school?			
24-Do the child follows the directions of teachers and other adults at school?			
25-Do the child listen (without interrupting) to teachers and other adult at school?	Always	Sometimes	Rarely
26-Do the child follows school rules?			
27-Do the child speaks politely at home?			
28-Do the child obeys his/her parents?			
29-Do the child listens (without interrupting) to his/her parents?			
30-Do the child follows rules at homes?			

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

Dear Participant,

The research is being conducted to observe “The Socio emotional challenges faced by gifted students” as the requirement of the Master degree of Education from Karachi University. Please carefully read each of the following statements and respond by ticking the response box that best reflects your opinion. Please be completely open and honest in your responses. Please note that you may complete the questionnaire anonymously and that all individual responses will be treated confidentially.

NAME: -----

CLASS: -----

AGE: -----

GENDER: -----

SCHOOL: -----

	Always	Sometimes	Rarely
1-Do you play nicely with others?			
2-Do you do things that are good for the group?			
3-Do you treat your friends the way you like to be treated?			
4-Are you nice to kids who are different from you?	Always	Sometimes	Rarely
5-Do you cheer up other kids if they are feeling sad?			
6-Are you a good friend?			
7-Do you apologize when you have done something wrong?			
8-Do you tell truth when you have done something wrong?			
9-Do you keep promises you make to others?			
10-Do you admit your mistakes?			
11-Do you want to make yourself a better person?			
12-Do you keep trying until you succeed?			
13-Do you set goals for yourself (make plans for future)?			

14-Do you try to do your best to achieve those goals?			
15-Do you wait for your turn in line patiently?			
16-Do you control your temper when you have an argument with other kids?			
17-Do you follow rules even when nobody is watching?			
18-Do you ignore other students when they tease you?			
19-Do you like exams/tests?			
20-Do you find it difficult to prepare for a test or exam?			
21-Do you find it boring to prepare a test or exam?			
22-Do you speak politely with your teachers and other adults at school?			
23-Do you obey your teacher and other adult at school?			
24-Do you follow the directions of your teachers and other adults at school?			
25-Do you listen (without interrupting) to your teacher and other adult at school?			
26-Do you follow school rules?			
27-Do you speak politely at home?			
28-Do you obey your parents			
29-Do you listen (without interrupting) to your parents?			
30-Do you follow rules at homes?			

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

Dear Participant,

The research is being conducted to observe “The Socio emotional challenges faced by gifted students” as the requirement of Master degree of Education from Karachi University. Your name will not be disclosed without your permission. The information provided by you will only be used in this research and will not be reproduced on any other platform. Your factual information will prove as a candlelight for future research. Feel free to provide any additional relevant information that may be helpful in this study.

Teaching experience: No experience-----, Less than 5 years-----, More than 5 years-----

More than 10 years: -----

Subject: -----

Gender: Male: -----, Female: -----

Teaching: Boys: -----, Girls: -----, Both-----

Qualification: Intermediate, Graduate, Masters

Professional qualification: -----

Name of school: -----

Classification of school: Public-----, Private-----

QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR GIFTED STUDENTS

	Always	Sometimes	Rarely
1-Do they play nicely with others?			
2-Do they do things that are good for the group?			
3-Do they treat their friends the way they like to be treated?			
4-Are they nice to kids who are different from them?			
5-Do they cheer up other kids if they (other kids) are feeling sad?			
6-Are they good friends?			
7-Do they apologize when they have done something wrong?			

8-Do they tell truth when they have done something wrong?			
9-Do they keep promises?			
10-Do they admit their mistakes?			
11-Do they try to make themselves a better person?			
12-Do they keep trying until succeed?			
13-Do they set goals for themselves (make plans for future)?			
14-Do they try to do their best to achieve those goals?			
15-Do they wait for their turn in line patiently?			
16-Do they control their temper when they have an argument with other kids?			
17-Do they follow rules even when nobody is watching?			
18-Do they ignore other students when they tease them?			
19-Do they like exams/tests?			
20-Do they find it difficult to prepare for a test or exam?			
21-Do they find it boring to prepare a test or exam?			
22-Do they speak politely with teachers and other adults at school?			
23-Do they obey teachers and other adult at school?			
24-Do they follow the directions of teachers and other adults at school?			

25-Do they listen (without interrupting) to teachers and other adult at school?			
26-Do they follow school rules?			
27-Do they speak politely at home?			
28-Do they obey their parents?			
29-Do they listen (without interrupting) to their parents?			
30-Do they follow rules at homes?			



QUESTIONNAIRE FOR School Coordinators and University Professors

Dear Participant,

The research is being conducted to observe “The Socio emotional challenges faced by gifted students” as the requirement of the Master Degree of Education from Karachi University. It is not compulsory to answer all the questions. Your name will not be disclosed without your permission. The information provided by you will only be used in this research and will not be reproduced on any other platform. Your factual information will prove as a candlelight for future research. Feel free to provide any additional relevant information that may be helpful in this study.

Teaching experience: No experience-----, Less than 5 years-----, More than 5 years-----

More than 10 years: -----

Subject: -----

Gender: Male: -----, Female: -----

Teaching: Boys: -----, Girls: -----, Both-----

Qualification: Intermediate, Graduate, Masters

Professional qualification: -----

Name of school: -----

Classification of school: Public-----, Private-----

Q1) In your opinion who are gifted students?

Ans)

Q2) How will you identify a gifted student?

Ans)

Q3) Gifted students face social problems? Do you agree or not? Kindly elaborate in either case.

Ans)

Q4) Gifted students face emotional problems? Do you agree or not? Kindly elaborate in either case.

Ans

Q5) How would you help your students in coping with these socio emotional issues? Kindly support your answer with an example?

Ans0

Q6) Do you get support from administration and the parents for showing your concern regarding socio emotional issues of gifted students? Kindly support your answer with an example?

Ans)