

Preferred Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Characteristics of Instructors From Gifted Students Perspectives

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Abstract

The main aim of this study is to investigate the specific social, emotional and behavioral characteristics that the gifted students prefer to have their instructors' during the first university year at Al Balqa Applied University. Study *sample consisted* of (60) gifted students (Male and female). A validated scale was developed to measure instructors' characteristics. Results revealed that the means for the social characteristics were the highest, followed by the emotional characteristics, and then behavioral characteristics. The results also showed that there were statistical significance differences in emotional, social and behavioral characteristics according to the teacher's gender. While female teachers were more interested in the emotional dimensions, male instructors were interested in social and behavioral characteristics. Further, there were significant differences in the subscales according to specialization in favor of Humanities Colleges.

Key words: Social characteristics; Emotional characteristics; Behavioral characteristics; Gifted students

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INTRODUCTION

At present, university level education comprises is of great importance as a priority and concern for decision makers, not only in the academic and educational fields, but also in the economic and political fields. Recently, universities are being paid more attention than any other time before considering the important and vital roles these institutions have the people and communities of life styles. These significant roles are due to the fact that universities are the centers of experience and knowledge, which are the effective instrument needed to cope with the accelerated changes that are happening in our lives in which knowledge is not the only desired outcome but focusing on how to invest this knowledge in the future careers for the students, thus, universities are required to correspond effectively to the needs of the communities by spreading the scientific and technical knowledge through their effective educational curricula and to focus on the modern teaching techniques such as scientific discussions to reach a level of better understanding, analyses, critique and inference. This clearly shows the significant role universities have in building generations that are capable of thinking outside the box and implement new technologies away from traditional ways of thinking to reach a level of inventing new authentic and modern ideas. Many educators agreed that helping students, whether gifted or not, to solve their academic and social lives problems by using effective and productive thinking is one of the most important objectives of the in class learning and teaching processes in order to successfully achieve the desired outcomes of these processes (Rusbult & Lange, 2003).

A huge part of this process depends on the university level teachers and educators; where the teacher is considered to be one of the major role players that affect the students either positively or negatively, that has

provoked the researchers to conduct studies concerned with the appropriate characteristics the teacher of the talented students must have in order to achieve an effective educational process. Most of these studies have proved that there is a strong positive relation between the teachers' personal characteristics and their educational career success. Lacking these personal characteristics may complicate the in class learning and teaching process as it will only depend on giving information, on the other hand, when the teachers possess certain personal characteristics this may enrich the in class teaching and learning process to reach the desired effective level of education.

Effectiveness in class teaching process for average students is not easy, so, the process that includes gifted students will be harder. This category, which is defined by the researchers as "the students that have complicated characteristics that enable them to achieve high accomplishments with the skills and careers they excel" and also was defined by the concerned governmental organizations as gifted students, needs to follow multiple certain teaching strategies that enhance, direct and invest their mental and knowledge potentials to achieve personal creativity and excellence in many fields. Arnold (2006) reported that students tend to get bored of the regular in class teaching processes as these systems do not provide them with suitable educational privileges that encourage them to proceed with their achievements. He also stated that gifted students have not faced any educational situation in which they were enthusiastic to learn and compete with each other, with the exception of one student who was enrolled in an extracurricular educational activity outside his school, but within this activity, the students were not defined as gifted or creative.

Considering that the teachers' personal characteristics are the major career success factor, the researchers were provoked to study these characteristics. Each career includes various psychological stresses, but the teaching process is considered one of the hardest careers as it relies on the teacher himself. The teacher is the one who educates and affects the students' behaviors, so, studying his personal characteristics has been the core of many studies concerned with evaluating the effect these characteristics have on the teacher's career success considering that this teacher has a great influence in forming the future generations during the different educational levels and the effect posed by his personal characteristics (Esfandiari & Wittrok, 1999).

The teachers' personal characteristics considered one of the most important factors affecting the teachers' own effectiveness during their engagement with the students during in class and out of class processes at schools (Sanders & Rivers, 1996). This fact has triggered the concerned entities worldwide to set educational regulations regarding qualifying the teachers by all dimensions before enrolling them in the educational

process. This has urged the researchers to conduct studies to answer the following questions: what makes a successful teacher? What are the criteria to evaluate a teacher's performance? Do the teacher's personal characteristics affect the students' performance in the class? All of these questions have a direct relation to the teachers' personal characteristics, the teachers' performance and the student's academic performance as proven by the previous studies (Yeh, 2006). These facts have made the teachers' personal characteristics a core element for researchers when studying the educational processes at schools in general.

Many previous studies have proven that it is essential for the gifted students' teachers to have certain personal characteristics in order to ensure their career success (Siegle et al., 2014), Davis and Rimm (1998) reported that gifted students' teachers must be gifted themselves, while, Mills (2003) stated that the effective gifted students' teachers tend to use the same methods that gifted students possess such as main ideas, concepts, flexibility and analytical methods. Hargrove (2005) also argued that gifted students' teachers must continuously ask themselves what methods they are using while teaching these students. Scott (2008) emphasized that gifted students' teachers must have exceptional talents and tendency to teach the gifted students and he also raised an important argument whether the gifted students' teachers must be experts in their field of work or not.

Shavinina (2009) stated that gifted students' teachers need to present a role model for other teachers. While Renzulli (2005) stressed on that gifted students' teachers must possess wide experience in order to effectively teach this category. Chan (2001) stated that gifted students' teachers need to have special characteristics such as, unprompted teaching techniques, ease of acceptance by the gifted students, creativity and keeping updated with the new teaching techniques and knowledge.

Working with gifted students requires recruiting teachers with exceptional personal characteristics to adapt while dealing with this special category of students. These teachers are obliged to have the knowledge and experience that enable them to satisfy the students' need for knowledge, their mental, psychological and emotional needs; therefore, these teachers must be able to enhance the gifted students' knowledge. These requirements emphasize the importance of employing suitable teachers for the educational process.

Rosemarin (2014) reported that gifted students' teachers must have a distinguished character so that the gifted students will accept them and accordingly accept their educational techniques and teaching strategies to achieve the desired goals of the educational process. Horsley (2010) pointed that the most important characteristics a gifted students' teacher must have are his expectations for the students' future academic

accomplishments, adequate experience and knowledge about the national exams for these students will make. In terms of personal characteristics he stated that the teacher must be enthusiastic for education and possess an emotional and intelligent character, he also must be capable of making the educational process interesting with the knowledge on how to provoke students to achieve better academic records continuously and to also affect their behaviors positively.

Tischler and Vialle (2009) assured that the personal characteristics of a gifted students' teacher as documented by the gifted students themselves are; his complete knowledge of the material, his experience in the educational strategies, his ability to understand the students' problems, his ability to explain the material clearly. While the personal characteristics were; his ability to help students at all times, cooperative, dedicated, respectful, his willingness to treat the students as adults, fair, respects the students' opinions and treats them as his friends.

Johnsen and Van Tassel- Baska (2007) reported that teacher's gifted students' must have specific characteristics such as consideration of the students' personal differences and using appropriate teaching strategies according to the students' needs.

Chan (2001) reported that in order to obtain effective in class teaching process, teachers' personal characteristics must not be neglected while training the teachers to teach the gifted students, as also proven by Vialle and Quigley (2002) who stated that gifted students' teachers personal characteristics are more important than their mental characteristics as they assure achieving an effective in class teaching process.

1. PROBLEM STATEMENT

As previously mentioned and proven by literature and based on the gifted students' own opinions, gifted students' teachers ought to present specific personal characteristics in order to achieve an effective educational process that meets the students' personal and educational expectations. The problem of this study lies in its focus on determining the gifted students' teachers social, emotional and behavioral personal characteristics favored by the gifted students themselves at Al Balqa Applied University Center. Followed by assessing the effects of these characteristics demonstrate on the students' overall academic performance. This study will also analyze how these characteristics differ depending on the teacher's gender and academic specialization in order to answer the following questions:

- (a) According to the gifted students' opinions, what are the best social, emotional and behavioral personal characteristics that a gifted students' teacher must have?
- (b) Do these personal characteristics differ according to the teacher's gender?

- (c) Do these personal characteristics differ according to the teacher's academic specialization?
- (d) How do these characteristics affect the gifted students' overall academic performance?

2. METHODOLOGY

The researchers utilized mixed methods, the first three questions were tested quantitatively and the last was analyzed qualitatively.

The study samples included all the gifted students enrolled at Al Balqa Applied University Center for the academic year 2015/2016. The sample included (120) gifted students from both genders (males and females). The students classified as gifted according to the deanship of students' affairs at Al Balqa Applied University. Then, a sample of (60) students (50% of the whole sample) was chosen by using organized simple random sampling method.

An instrument assessing the gifted students' teachers' social, emotional and behavioral personal characteristics favored by the gifted students developed as follows:

- (20) Gifted students who are enrolled in the first university level year at Al Balqa Applied University were interviewed. The interview questions included information about the social, emotional and behavioral personal characteristics they prefer in their teachers. A feature repetition value of (0.7) was the limit at which a certain characteristic is to be chosen according to the gifted student's own opinions.

- The favored personal characteristics were categorized by the researchers as personal features according to their nature.

- Certain items were written by the researchers explaining each feature of the study.

- (33) Items were written depending on the preliminary study sample; simple and understood phrasing style was used in which the instrument items were categorized into three main dimensions. These dimensions include the social, emotional and behavioral personal characteristics where each dimension included (11) sub items.

- The proposed instrument reviewed by (10) certified reviewers from different Jordanian universities in fields of Educational Psychology, Measurement and Evaluation and special education. This did in order to insure that this instrument is suitable for the study objectives, the items are clear, correct phrasing, determining whether a certain item has a positive or a negative orientation and to revise the relation between each dimension and its sub items. As a result of this process, some items modified and rephrased.

- Flat repatriation of the internal consistency of each dimension by applying it on a sample of (20) male and female students. Flat repatriation values for each dimension regarding the favored teachers' personal

characteristics ranged from (0.613-0.841) while by applying the Cronbach's Alpha method the values ranged from (0.730-0.763).

- The instrument applied on the whole study samples including (60) male and female students and the results quantitatively analyzed. The researchers used semi-structured interviews with (15) male and female students, therefore (6) codified interviews were also conducted during (6) separate meetings through period of (3) weeks.

3. RESULTS

Applying the proposed instrument has resulted with the following outcomes:

To answer the first question that states that "According to the gifted students' opinions, what are the best social, emotional and behavioral personal characteristics that a gifted students' teacher must have?"; mean and standard deviation calculations were used as listed in Tables 1-3.

Table 1
Mean, Standard Deviation and Relative Importance Values for the Emotional Personal Characteristics Dimension in Descending Order Depending on the Item Mean Value for (11) Items

Level	Relative importance	Std. deviation	Mean	Item	Item rank	Item number
High	0.89	0.69	4.49	Emotions are one of the factors that give a meaning to their life	1	10
High	0.85	0.69	4.26	Capable of managing the students' emotional Reactions	2	3
High	0.85	0.73	4.25	Optimistic in general	3	9
High	0.84	0.68	4.20	Capable of delivering their emotions to others without speaking	4	7
High	0.83	0.69	4.19	Capable of managing the students' emotions in an efficient way	5	4
High	0.83	0.72	4.18	Joyful, funny and have sense of humor while teaching	6	6
High	0.83	0.72	4.15	Respects students' feelings at all times	7	11
High	0.81	0.84	4.09	Capable of knowing my emotional reactions and others emotional reactions	8	2
High	0.79	0.86	3.95	I feel that teachers are emotionally balanced	9	1
High	0.77	1.64	3.85	They do not allow negative feelings affect them	10	5
Moderate	0.68	0.60	3.40	Have negative feelings toward others	11	8
High	0.82	0.54	4.10			Weighted mean

Table 1 shows that mean values for the preferred personal emotional characteristics for the gifted students' teacher range from (3.40-4.49). The relative importance values ranged from (68%-89%) where the mean value of the item "Emotions are one of the factors that give a meaning to their life" was the highest

(4.49) and the lowest mean value was for the item "Have negative feelings toward others" with a value of (3.4).

Regarding the preferred social personal characteristics, Table 2 shows the values ordered by the mean value for each item.

Table 2
Mean, Standard Deviation and Relative Importance Values for the Social Personal Characteristics Dimension in Descending Order Depending on the Item Mean Value for (11) Items

Level	Relative importance	Std. deviation	Mean	Item	Item rank	Item number
High	0.90	0.51	4.54	Not shy when socializing and speaking with others	1	2
High	0.89	0.50	4.48	Continuously interacting with students	2	1
High	0.88	0.49	4.41	Capable of managing the class room	3	7
High	0.88	0.49	4.40	Accepts criticism from students	4	8
High	0.87	0.48	4.37	Self-confident	5	6
High	0.87	0.48	4.36	Blend easily with students	6	10
High	0.87	0.48	4.36	Answers the students' questions in the class room	7	4

To be continued

Continued

Level	Relative importance	Std. deviation	Mean	Item	Item rank	Item number
High	0.86	0.47	4.32	Possess excellent communication skills	8	5
High	0.86	0.46	4.30	Enjoy continuous communication with the students	9	11
High	0.85	1.36	4.29	Possess pleasant character	10	9
High	0.81	0.24	4.06	Capable of making friendship with other teachers	11	3
High	0.87	0.30	4.33	Weighted mean		

Table 2 shows that the mean values for the preferred personal social characteristics for the gifted students' teacher range from (4.06-4.54). The relative importance values ranged from (81%-91%) where the mean value of the item "Not shy when socializing and speaking with

others" was the highest (4.54) and the lowest mean value was for the item " Capable of making friendship with other teachers " with a value of (4.06).Concerning the preferred behavioral personal characteristics; Table 3 shows the values ordered by the mean value for each item.

Table 3
Mean, Standard Deviation and Relative Importance Values for the Behavioral Personal Characteristics Dimension in Descending Order Depending on the Item Mean Value for (11) Items

Level	Relative importance	Std. deviation	Mean	Item	Item rank	Item number
High	0.82	0.77	4.12	Commit to their schedules and appointments with students	1	7
High	0.81	0.80	4.09	Care about others agonies	2	2
High	0.81	0.77	4.09	Behave wisely towards the different educational situations	3	10
High	0.80	0.79	4.01	Capable of taking responsibility before Students	4	9
High	0.77	0.91	3.88	Admit their mistakes before students	5	4
High	0.76	0.66	3.81	Try to solve students' problems quietly	6	3
High	0.76	0.66	3.81	Their external behavior is similar to their true personality.	7	11
High	0.75	0.68	3.76	Considered as role models for their students in terms of behavior	8	5
High	0.74	0.59	3.72	Separate their own problems from their educational performance	9	6
High	0.73	0.65	3.67	Dedicated when teaching the course	10	8
Moderate	0.72	0.65	3.64	Tend to help others	11	1
High	0.77	0.418	3.86	Weighted mean		

Table 3 shows that the mean values for the preferred personal behavioral characteristics for the gifted students' teacher range from (3.64-4.12). The relative importance values ranged from (72%-82%) where the mean value of the item "Commit to their schedules and appointments with students" was the highest (4.12) and the lowest mean value was for the item "Tend to help others" with a value of (3.64).

From the above mentioned results in (Tables 1-3), it is proven that the highest calculated mean values were

the social characteristics dimension. The emotional characteristics dimension was the second and the lowest values were noted to be the behavioral characteristic dimension.

In order to answer the second question which states, "do these personal characteristics differ according to the teacher's gender?" *T*-Test method applied for the independent samples; the three dimensions analyzed in terms of teacher's gender as listed in Table 4 below.

Table 4
T-Test Results for the Differences Between the Preferred Personal Social, Emotional and Behavioral Characteristics in Terms of the Teacher's Gender

Level of statistical significance	T value	Mean	Dimension	Teacher's gender
0.003	3.56	4.01	Emotional characteristics	Male
		4.45		Female
0.031	3.22	4.22	Social characteristics	Male
		3.95		Female
0.022	3.11	4.11	Behavioral characteristics	Male
		3.96		Female
0.066	2.12	4.11	Total	Male
		4.03		Female

Table 4 indicates that there are statistical significance differences at the significance level of ($\alpha = 0.05$) between the preferred personal social, emotional and behavioral characteristics depending on the teacher's gender. The female gender was significant for the emotional characteristics dimension while the male gender was significant for the social and behavioral characteristics dimensions. On the other hand, there were no significant statistical differences for the overall result for the three dimensions of the scale depending on the teacher's gender.

Question 3 which states that "Do these personal characteristics differ according to the teacher's academic specialization?" this question was answered by applying the T- Test for the independent samples for each dimension in terms of the teacher's academic specialization as listed in Table 5.

Table 5
T-Test Results for the Differences Between the Preferred Personal Social, Emotional and Behavioral Characteristics in Terms of the Teacher's Academic Specialization

Level of statistical significance	T value	Mean	Dimension	Teacher's academic specialization
0.000	4.26	3.90	Emotional characteristics	Scientific
		4.20		Humanitarian
0.001	3.02	4.10	Social characteristics	Scientific
		4.33		Humanitarian
0.002	3.90	4.02	Behavioral characteristics	Scientific
		4.26		Humanitarian
0.066	3.86	4.02	Total	Scientific
		4.27		Humanitarian

Table 5 proves that there are statistical significance differences at the significance level of ($\alpha = 0.05$) between the preferred personal social, emotional and behavioral characteristics depending on the teacher's academic specialization where humanitarian specializations were significant for all of the three dimensions.

In order to answer the fourth question which states that "how do these characteristics affect the gifted students' overall academic performance?" (16) Male and female students were interviewed and also codified interviews were conducted in which an open answer question was presented. This question is related to the effect of the teachers' personal social, behavioral and emotional characteristics on the students' overall academic performance. The interview sessions were recorded to be used in the analysis process in order to obtain coherent and reasonable results. The researchers followed the following procedure during the interview sessions:

- An adequate place was prepared; suitable for students with the availability of all of the needed stationary in which the students were separated into four groups. Each group was responsible for electing a group representative.
- The main question was addressed stating, "How do these characteristics affect the gifted students' overall academic performance?"
- Each group presented their answer and then the four groups discussed each answer.
- The researchers were keen to assure directing the conversation towards the main subject and to assure that each group summarizes what was agreed upon while addressing the secondary questions.
- The researchers monitored the four sessions after they recorded in order to come out with the main points that agreed upon by the four groups.

The gifted students' answers were classified as primary and secondary axes by applying the method of content analysis; precise analysis of the interviews revealed that it is possible to classify the effect of the personal emotional, social and behavioral characteristics into four main categories from which sub-categories may arise as follows:

(a) Personal emotional characteristics and the academic performance

Gifted students implies that the teachers' personal emotional characteristics are one the most important factors affecting the students' overall academic performance as these characteristics are directly related to the teachers' mood which can be reflected either positively or negatively on the students' performance especially during the exams. The students in four groups emphasized that temper and calm moods are important while being in an educational process. One student said that "I cannot comprehend a lecture or answer an exam while being in an emotionally uncomfortable atmosphere;

I prefer to have a lecture in a quiet environment". Another student stated, "The teacher who considers my emotional needs is the best teacher as far as I am concerned". The researchers summarized the sub-categories for the emotional characteristics that pose positive effects on students' academic performance into the following 4 sub-categories:

- Teachers' sense of humor while teaching.
- Serenity.
- Overall good mood.
- Appreciating students' negative feelings.

(b) Personal social characteristics and the academic performance

The researchers observed that gifted students tend to register courses with teachers who have good social sense; easy to socialize with students, share concerns with students and good listeners. Many students expressed their relief toward the teacher that they can always communicate with. One student said that "I wish all the courses I attend are being taught by a certain teacher; he gives me self-confidence and always urges me to study". Through the students' discussion of this dimension, the researchers noticed that they focused on the importance of continuous students' engagement as this encourages them to pay more efforts in studying and reduces their anxiety concerning the exams. This was summarized by the researchers into the following four categories:

- Continuous engagement of students in the class.
- Possessing high social sense.
- Tend to solve the different problems that the students may encounter.
- Easy to talk to.

(c) Personal behavioral characteristics and the academic performance

During the interview sessions, the gifted students focused on the teachers' behavior during lectures in general and during exams in specific. Many students agreed that the teacher who presents the course with devotion is the best teacher with emphasizing the importance of his capability to take responsibility during the educational process. "Teachers' behaviors have enormous effect on my performance during exams," a student said, while another student said: "During my daily life, I try to behave as my teacher, he is sophisticated, and I even don't care about the grade I get as long as I am enrolled in his class". The researchers summarized the preferred personal behavioral characteristics in four points as follows:

- Simulation
- Role model
- Responsible
- Wise

The researchers also noticed that the social dimension is one of the most important dimensions that affect the

students' academic performance through the focused interview sessions due to the fact that students focused immensely on this dimension and its effects on the students' psychological behavior during the educational process.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study were coherent quantitatively and qualitatively. They showed that gifted students prefer the social characteristics that affect the students' academic performance. The researchers also noticed that gifted students during the university level prefer teachers who care more about the social dimensions as these dimensions provide students with an overall relief feeling during the educational process. The researchers attribute this to the Jordanian community nature, which focuses on the successful communication with the others, which in turn is reflected on the gifted students' during the first year of university level education. Teachers who consider the students' social and emotional needs are better than other teachers are in general. In addition, a result was that gifted students prefer a role model teacher as they seek to simulate his behavior in their daily lives as proven by (Shavinina's, 2009).

Personal emotional characteristics came second in terms of what gifted students prefer; accepting and understanding a student's emotional reactions is one of the most important things that both gifted and average students seek to have their teachers. The researchers believe that emotional dimension comprises a huge importance in positive effect on a student's overall behavior; as long as emotions are part of the student's character, this will positively affect the students' university academic performance.

Even though behavioral dimensions are significantly affecting gifted students, they were classified in the third place in this study. The researcher's attributes this result to the fact that gifted students focused more on the social and emotional characteristics during the educational process. The researchers consider that gifted students will perform better on an academic level as long as their social and emotional preferences are met as also previously proven by several studies.

The results of this study also highlighted that there are statistical significance differences between personal emotional, social and behavioral characteristics favored by the gifted students depending on the teachers' gender. The results showed that, for the emotional dimensions, female teachers dominated reflecting the fact that female teachers pay more attention to this dimension than male teachers. Regarding social and behavioral personal characteristics, male teachers dominated which in turn proves that male teachers focus on these two dimensions during the educational process. This all combined reflects the normal image of the Jordanian culture, which

encourages male teachers to socialize more than female teachers.

The results of this study also shed the light on the fact that teachers who are specialized in humanitarian fields care more about their social, emotional and behavioral personal characteristics than teachers who are specialized in scientific fields. This is attributed to the nature of the courses in humanitarian and scientific fields and the load that students and teachers endure in the scientific educational process.

CONCLUSION

The primary aims of the current study were to investigate the specific social, emotional and behavioral preferences that the gifted students prefer to have in their teachers at Al Balqa Applied University. This has involved a variety of activities; we reviewed the relevant literature, developed a scale, conducted semi-structured interviews, and statistically tested the scale. We have shown above the procedure of developing the scale.

Content validity was evidenced in the scale. Cronbach's Alpha method used to evaluate the stability of the scale, and it was concluded that the scale demonstrated good reliability. Piloting the scale suggests that it is easy to administer instrument and understandable, so it is expected to have high response rate.

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