The Relationship between Leadership Skills and Emotional Intelligence in Gifted Middle Stage Students

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Abstract

This study aimed to identify the relationship between leadership behavior and emotional intelligence with other variables. A sample of 112 male and female gifted students was chosen from King Abdullah II for Excellence schools in Al-Karak governorate, Jordan. The students' characteristics were investigated using the scale of behavioral characteristics for the gifted (Renzuli, White, & Gallahan, 1992). Two scales were developed on leadership behavior skills and emotional intelligence. The results revealed that the level of leadership behavior skills and emotional intelligence was high and that these are related. Differences were found in the leadership behavior of the males, while for females there were differences in emotional intelligence and self-management. Males also showed differences in the areas of controlling emotions and managing relationships. The results also indicated that leadership behavior predicts 6% of emotional intelligence. The study recommends paying more attention to the leadership behavior skills of gifted students, as well as developing these students and focusing on the emotional intelligence of gifted students.

Key words: Emotional intelligence, leadership skills, and gifted student.

Introduction

The requirements of gifted students need special consideration due to their abilities compared with others, to enable these students to keep pace with developments throughout the world. As such, several studies have addressed the methods of detecting who is a gifted individual, while others have investigated characteristics such as the psychological and counseling needs of the gifted, or their cognitive structure, (Harrington, 2010) for example. Gifted students can exhibit certain emotional characteristics that distinguish them from other students, such as the ability to form social relationships, high expectations about themselves and others, and a desire to be accepted. These students are emotionally stable and less inclined to irritability, have diverse interests and a more positive realization of themselves, are persistent, hard-working, and motivated to innovate new methods of

study, and can think diversely and deeply. The most common characteristics of gifted students are hypersensitivity, a sense of justice, idealism, and perfectionism (Baska, 2009)

Chan study (2003) of the impact of a training program on developing the leadership skills of Hong Kong high school students found that the program effectively developed these skills, particularly social communication, emotional organization, and creating alternatives for problem-solving.

There are several types of leadership, such as accepting currently available methods to manage and lead resources (accepting what is available); challenging current methods of managing and leading resources; and, using mixed methods to manage and lead resources (coping with reality and seeking change for the better). One key dimension of leadership is knowing oneself; indeed, even when you start thinking about this factor it represents the first step in becoming a creative leader. Other dimensions include: knowing objectives and desires, since each of us has a certain goal; learning the art of group work, which enables the achievement of basic needs or goals through the help of others; and, the dimension of 'start work', which is related to sublimating the requirements of the self to be part of a team (Donna, 2002; Kaufman, Sternberg and Pretz, 2004).

There have been several studies on leadership skills. Al-lala and Al-lala (2013) addressed the role of gifted care centers in developing leadership in gifted students, finding that it is important to establish competition by providing novel support via non-conventional teaching materials to uncover leadership skills in standardized ways. In another study, Harara (2018) investigated the scale of effectiveness of talented students regarding styles of leadership. The scale consisted of seven dimensions and 80 items, covering: leadership basics, communication skills, problem-solving, time management, decision-making, planning and group work. The differences in all domains were in favor of the sampled gifted students.

Similarly, there have been a number of studies on emotional intelligence (EI), which is often closely related to mental health. EI can be achieved by understanding the feelings of others and the self, so that communication leads to the effective organization of emotions. Emotionally intelligent individuals are happy in their social activity since they can realize emotions accurately and use smart ways to organize their feelings, while progressing towards achieving important objectives. However, individuals with low levels of EI encounter problems concerning their ability to adapt and plan due to their inability to understand their own emotions, and consequently they manage their emotions inadequately. It is important to promote EI development opportunities for school students. This is based on the assumption that emotions are considered an effective domain or framework in relation to intelligence and that EI has an effect on personality while also playing a vital role a person's success and development in the domains of scientific life (Salovey & Mayer, 2000; Goleman, 2003).

Kelly & Moon (1998) suggested that possessing elements of EI is necessary for

success in policy, leadership, education and counseling. Cooper and Sowaf (1997) emphasize that individuals with high EI are healthier and more successful, can establish strong personal relationships, are more effective leaders, and achieve greater professional success compared to those with less. EI also facilitates the ability to deal effectively with the surrounding social conditions, including the ability to respond effectively to unexpected social situations. It is noteworthy that EI is considered a vital part of professional life as compared to general intelligence, which is viewed as the key to academic success. In this regard, Goleman, the American psychologist, suggested that academic intelligence plays less of a role in professional success and dealing with practical life problems as compared to EI (1998).

The importance of EI lies in its ability to help the individual control their feelings in accordance with their thinking, and this it plays a vital role in determining their desires and how they express themselves in an intelligent way; EI helps individuals make decisions based on their spiritual inclinations and logic, driving them towards their desired objectives. Also, practicing EI has positive effects on the social and practical life of individuals, and this is evident when individuals can understand other's intentions, make friendships, and express their emotions freely in a manner that helps them to achieve success (Punia and Sangwan, 2011).

Petrides & Fumham (2001) suggested that the most important dimensions of EI are represented by adaptability, self-actualization, realizing the emotions of the self and others, expressing and managing emotions, organizing emotions and personal relationships, self-esteem, and optimism. There are several perspectives on the concept of EI and its dimensions; however, the basic components of EI agreed upon by scholars, and which are addressed in this study, include emotional knowledge, emotional management, organization of emotions, empathy, and social communication.

Since EI and academic achievement are related to each other (Abo Samra, 2000), many researchers have emphasized the necessity of teaching EI in school curricula. It has also been suggested that IQ is not the only standard for success, as social intelligence and EI play an important role in an individual's success. In this regard, Swart (1996) suggested that EI is an important predictor of academic success. Other studies have revealed that general mood makes people's ideas more biased. For example, individuals can feel they are healthier and more able to think when they have a positive mood, but when their general mood is low, people are more inclined to feel ill and economically disadvantaged, are less able to think positively (Mayer & Salovey, 2000).

Several studies have suggested that the level of EI among gifted students is higher compared to normal students, where the gifted female students scored higher levels of EI as compared to their normal counterparts (Awamleh et al., 2013; Sharifi, 2014; Al-Momani et al., 2015). Zeidner et al. (2005) found that gifted students scored higher total marks compared to non-gifted students, and that the former also scored higher marks on the dimensions of understanding and managing emotions. The same study's

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results also revealed that the mean scores for the gifted students on all the dimensions of the EI scale and the total score were higher than the mean scores of the other students. Ghaffari et al. (2013) found a statistically significant relationship between creativity and EI in university students, but no statistically significant differences between male and female students concerning the impact of EI on creativity. The study recommended the necessity of improving creativity among students through training courses to promote the concept.

Goleman (2003) identified that gifted students are characterized by several attributes: high intelligence (over 130 IQ), early linguistic development, increased intellectual aspirations related to various hobbies and dispositions, greater ability to evaluate, think critically, learn and retain information, a strong ability to focus and maintain attention, accuracy and excessive care, above-average achievement, preference for autonomous learning, overseeing issues of adults, an early ability to read and use problem-solving skills, commitment to tasks, the ability to apply solutions to various issues and situations, and the ability to identify errors more easily and quickly.

As for developing and improving EI, Caruso et al. (2002) stated that most scholars and researchers of EI suggest that it differs from cognitive intelligence, since it can be promoted by practice, training and workshops. Salovey and Mayer (1990) found that EI is more related to the psychological capacity to understand and use emotional information, and that while part of this capacity is inherent, some is acquired by life experiences. This acquisition can be promoted and improved by training.

As for academic attainment, we note that the non-gifted students tend to have lower academic attainment, but gifted students are generally more exposed to this phenomenon (Rimm, 2003). Researchers take different perspectives on who is responsible for this: students, parents, or schools and teachers. Jordan (2010) suggests it could in fact be all three factors. Low academic achievement among gifted students could be attributed to low motivation, emotional disturbance between parents, a lack of stimulating educational activities, and a lack of basic teaching skills required to attain higher achievement (Haskett, 2002).

This review of the theoretical literature and previous studies found several which have addressed the variables of the current study; however, these variables have not been linked to gifted students studying at the upper basic stage in Al-Karak governorate.

The study problem

The greatest part of the development and advancement of countries is related to the potential and capabilities of gifted students. Therefore, it is necessary to monitor and promote their abilities as much as possible in the early stages of their education, when specialists can identify their potential characteristics, such as leadership patterns and EI. The importance of the current study lies in the researchers' interest in detecting the characteristics of gifted individuals, as well as pursuing any difference or development that may occur. For these reasons, we conducted a survey study to

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identify the most prominent aspects of EI in gifted students. The results of this survey study revealed that the characteristics of gifted students were varied. The students' daily activities were reviewed and it was found that some students practiced different leadership roles relating to certain leadership patterns, while others performed no leadership tasks. Given the lack of studies addressing the correlation between EI and leadership skills among gifted students in Al-Karak governorate, this study aimed to answer the following research question:

What is the relationship between the skills of leadership behavior and EI in gifted students studying at the upper basic stage?

The study's sub-questions are:

1) What are the most common dimensions of EI found in the gifted students in the upper basic stage?
2) Is there a correlation relationship (α=0.05) between the skills of leadership behavior and EI in the gifted students?
3) Are there statistically significant differences (α=0.05) in the skills of leadership behavior and EI attributed to the variable of gender?
4) What is the predictive power of the leadership behavior regarding EI in the gifted students in the upper basic stage?

Objectives

The current study aimed to identify the relationship between leadership skills and emotional Intelligence in gifted middle stage students, to detect the correlation between EI and leadership behavior skills in the gifted students and to investigate whether there are differences in the leadership behavior skills and EI attributed to gender and predictive power.

The importance of the study

The current study is important with regard to paying more attention to gifted individuals from the theoretical and applied perspectives. The study's theoretical importance lies in adding to the literature from the Arabic domain, since this study is one of a limited number to address gifted students, including the variables of EI and leadership behavior skills. From the applied perspective, it is expected that the current study will benefit those working in education, particularly in terms of detecting leadership behavior skills in gifted students, and the nature of their EI. The study's importance also stems from identifying the relationship between leadership behavior skills and EI in gifted students, as well as testing the validity of the scales developed to identify gifted students.

Conceptual and procedural terms

Leadership skills

These are defined as the skills that help individuals to accept diversity, as well as utilize all a person's potential to release creativity in a group of individuals to serve common objectives (Puccio et al., 2011). Leadership behavior skills are defined as the ability to direct others' behavior towards achieving common objectives in a new, authentic, and creative way. As a leader, an individual has the responsibility of leading their group to achieve planned objectives intelligently, authentically, and professionally (Sternberg, Kaufman, & Pretz, 2004). Leadership skills in this study

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are procedurally defined using a scale developed for the purpose.

Emotional intelligence

Salovey and Mayer (2000) define EI as the ability to understand others' emotions as well as one's own, to distinguish between these emotions, and to use them to guide thought and behavior. Bar-On et al. (2006) define EI as those personal and emotional abilities which affect the individual's total abilities to adapt to the requirements and stressors of life. In this study, EI is procedurally defined by the score obtained on the scale of EI developed for the purposes of the study.

Gifted students

McCoach et al. (2001) define gifted students as children with superior mental abilities who demonstrate an obvious contradiction between these abilities and their performance level in a certain academic domain, such as reading, calculating, spelling or writing. Their academic performance is basically low, even though it is expected to match their specific mental abilities. This contradiction is not attributed to a decline in educational opportunities or a certain health decline. Gifted students are procedurally defined as a group of students studying at a King Abdullah II School of Excellence.

Methodology

The study used a correlational descriptive approach due to its compatibility with the study's nature and objectives.

Participants

A total of 152 male and female gifted students were selected from the upper basic stage in grades eight, nine and ten. A sample of 72 male and female gifted students were then identified via the electronic application of the scales, which are described next. The remaining students were used to pilot the developed scales.

Instruments

The first scale developed was for the behavioral characteristics of the gifted students. This scale was developed by Renzuli, White, & Gallahan (1992). The scale identifies the characteristics of gifted students through their teachers, and consists of several sub-scales: learning, motivation, creativity, leadership characteristics, artistic characteristics, musical characteristics, drama characteristics, communication (accuracy), as well as written and verbal communication. The scale also includes a set of items that measure each dimension, rated on four choices: always, sometimes, rarely, or never. This scale was used to verify that the sample individuals have the characteristics of gifted students.

The second scale on leadership skills was developed by reviewing the literature and previous studies (Al-Boaineen & Al-Jasem, 2015; Ali, 2014; Abdul-Aal, 2005). The scale consisted of 14 items representing different leadership skills. In order to verify the psychometric characteristics of the scale, we used:

1) Apparent validity: apparent validity was verified by introducing it to eight arbitrators, who were asked to give their opinion about the nature of the items and the degree to which they matched leadership skills and the study's objectives. An agreement of 80 % between the arbitrators was adopted as the standard for deleting, adding, or

modifying items. Based on these opinions, three items were paraphrased;

2) The validity of the internal construct: the correlation coefficient was calculated for the scores of each item in the scale of leadership behavior skills used in the pilot study with 30 gifted students from the study population. The results revealed that the correlation coefficient between the items and the total degree ranged between **0.51– **0.87, indicating that the scale has an acceptable internal construct validity;

3) Cronbach's alpha: Cronbach's alpha was used to calculate reliability values for the individuals in the pilot, and the internal consistency coefficient was found to be 0.88;

4) Test/retest reliability: the reliability coefficient was verified using test/retest, whereby the study instrument was applied twice to 30 gifted students three weeks' apart. The reliability coefficient was calculated for the students' performance in the two tests, and was found to be **0.84.

Applying and scoring the leadership behavior skills scale

The scale consisted of 14 items rated using a 5-point Likert scale (always scored 5, often 4, sometimes 3, rarely 2, and never 1).

The interpretation of the scores of the scale of leadership behavior skills

A range was calculated to be able to judge the scale of leadership behavior skills,

using the following formula: (5-1/3 =1.33). This produced level ranges for leadership behavior skills of low 1–2.33, medium 2.34–2.67, and high 3.68–5.00.

The Emotional Intelligence (EI) scale

The researchers reviewed several EI scales (Al-Jabab, 2012; Elisa & Rashwan, 2006; Nassir, 2011). A 25-item scale of EI was developed for the current study for five dimensions, with five items for each dimension: empathy, emotions regulation, interpersonal relationship management, self-management, and adaptability. To verify the psychometric properties, the following methods were used:

1) Apparent validity: the apparent validity of the scale was verified by eight arbitrators specialized in psychological counseling, who were asked to give their opinion about the nature of the items and the degree to which they matched EI? and the study's objectives. Again, an agreement standard of 80 % was used when deciding to delete, add or modify items. Following this, five items were paraphrased;

2) The validity of the internal construct: the correlation coefficient was calculated for the score of each item in the scale of leadership behavior skills used in the pilot study with 30 gifted students from the study population. The correlation coefficient between the items and the total degree ranged between **0.55–**0.81, indicating that the scale has an acceptable internal construct validity;

3) Cronbach's alpha: Cronbach's alpha was used to calculate the reliability values for the individuals in the pilot

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study sample. The internal consistency coefficient was 0.90;

4) Test/retest reliability: the coefficient of reliability was verified using test/retest, and the study instrument was applied twice to 30 gifted students three weeks' apart. The reliability coefficient was calculated concerning the students' performance in the two tests, and was **0.89.

Applying and scoring the scale of EI skills
The scale consisted of 25 items and was rated a 5-point Likert scale in the same way as the leadership skills scale. The distribution of the items was as follows:

- Empathy: the ability to recognize the emotions of others and care about their feelings. A sympathetic person is characterized by the ability to realize people sympathetically, where empathy depends on self-awareness (items 5–10);

- Emotions regulation: the ability to achieve emotional balance and calm oneself by regulating emotions negatively or positively, in a balanced manner (items 6–10);

- Interpersonal relationship management: the ability to manage emotions and feelings and manage them for others in a humanitarian and respectful way; the person who has the ability to manage emotions is characterized by resilience and the ability to affect and attract others (items 11–15);

- Self-management: the ability to express emotions in an independent and strong way, in a manner that reflects trust, optimism and admiration for what someone is doing (items 16–20);

- Adaptability: the ability to respond and deal with varying, unfamiliar and unexpected conditions. It consists of two abilities: hard treatment and resilience (items 21–25).

The positive items were numbered 1–7, 10–16, 19–21, and 25, and negative items were 8–9, 17–18, 22, and 24.

A range for interpreting EI scores was calculated in the same way as for leadership skills.

The study's procedures

The study was conducted based on the following steps:

- Reviewing the literature and previous studies to have more information about the study topic in all its domains related to the skills of leadership behavior and EI;
- Previous scales were reviewed and the two scales of leadership behavior skills and EI were developed. The psychometric characteristics of the scales were verified to be compatible with the local environment and the study objectives;
- The scales were typed and distributed to the students via an electronic hyperlink due to the current Covid-19 pandemic;
- The study sample was chosen from the students of King Abdullah II Schools of Excellence in Al-Karak governorate;
- Data were analyzed, results were presented and discussed and suitable recommendations made.

Results

The first question concerned the level of leadership behavior skills of the gifted students of in the upper basic stage. To answer this question, means and standard deviations (SD) were calculated. The results revealed that the gifted students had

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high levels of leadership behavior skills, with a mean of 3.69 and a SD of 0.55. The total relative importance was 74%, with an estimated relative importance ranging between medium and high.

For the second question on the most common dimensions of EI among the gifted students in the upper basic stage, mean and SD scores are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Mean and SD scores for EI of the gifted students

Number	Dimension	Mean	SD	Level	Order
1	Interpersonal relationship management	4.05	0.78	High	1
2	Emotions regulation	3.92	1.03	High	2
3	Empathy	3.76	0.92	High	3
4	Adaptability	3.72	1.00	High	4
5	Self-management	3.23	1.39	High	5
6	Total EI score	3.74	0.46	High	

Table 1 shows that there was a high level of EI among the gifted students, with a mean of 3.74, a SD of 0.46, and a relative importance of 75%, while the estimation of relative importance ranged between medium and high. The dimensions were distributed across the medium and high levels, with the highest dimension being interpersonal relationship management.

For the third question on the correlation ($\alpha=0.05$) between the leadership behavior skills and EI of the gifted students, the Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated (Table 2).

Table 2: Pearson correlation coefficient for the relationship between leadership behavior skills and EI

The relationship between variables	Leadership behavior skills	Sig. level
Empathy	0.25**	0.007
Emotions regulations	0.12	0.19
Interpersonal relationship management	0.29**	0.00
Self-management	0.38**	0.00
Adaptability	0.65**	0.00
Total EI score	0.66**	0.00

Table 2 shows that there was a positive correlation between leadership behavior skills and EI, either in the dimensions (empathy, interpersonal relationship management, self-management, adaptability) or the total score, as the total correlation coefficient was 0.66. There was no relationship in the dimension of emotions regulation with the leadership behavior.

For the fourth question on the statistically significant differences ($\alpha=0.05$) in the skills of leadership behavior and EI attributed to gender, t-test scores were calculated to investigate the differences in the mean scores, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Mean t-test scores for the leadership behavior skills and EI according to gender

Variable	Gender	Number	Mean	SD	DF	T-value	Sig. level
Empathy	Male	49	3.59	0.54	102	1.57-	0.12
	Female	55	3.76	0.56			
Emotions regulations	Male	49	3.94	0.79	102	2.56	0.01
	Female	55	3.49	0.99			
Interpersonal relationship	Male	49	4.17	0.79	102	2.73	0.01

management	Female	55	3.64	1.19			
Self-management	Male	49	3.86	0.85	102	2.47-	0.02
	Female	55	4.24	0.70			
Adaptability	Male	49	3.44	1.37	102	1.19	0.24
	Female	55	3.12	1.41			
Total EI score	Male	49	3.73	1.00	102	0.04-	0.97
	Female	55	3.74	1.04			
Leadership behavior skills	Male	49	3.83	0.43	102	2.06	0.04
	Female	55	3.65	0.48			

Table 3 shows that there were differences between the students according to gender in some skills of leadership behavior (emotions regulation, interpersonal relationship management, self-management), EI, and the total degree of leadership behavior. The t-values were 2.56, 2.73, 2.47, 2.06, respectively, indicating that males and females differ in these variables, and the difference was in favor of the males for emotions regulation and interpersonal relationship management with regard to leadership behavior, but in favor of the females for self-management.

Regarding the fifth question, multiple regression analysis was conducted by the 'enter' method to identify the predictive power of the leadership behavior regarding EI among the gifted students in the upper basic stage, and the results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Variance analysis, multi correlation coefficient and determination coefficient for the multiple regression model between leadership behavior and EI

Variables	Regression coefficient	Standard error	Standard regression coefficient	t-value	Sig. level	multiple regression coefficient (R)	multiple regression coefficient (R)
Fixed	2.96	0.29		10.40	0.00	0.25	0.06
Leadership behavior	0.21	0.08	0.25	2.75	0.01		

Table 5 reveals that the multiple regression model between EI (y) and leadership behavior (x) can be expressed as: multiple regression model: $y = 2.96 + 2.75x$

Table 5 shows how the multiple regression coefficient (R) is equal to 0.25 and 0.06, which means that the leadership behavior accounts for 6% of the changes that occurred in the dependent variable (EI), while the other 94% can be attributed to other factors. It is notable that the regression coefficient was statistically significant, as the t-value was 2.75, which is statistically significant (0.01). This finding indicates that leadership behavior can predict EI in the gifted students.

Discussion

The results showed that the gifted students had leadership behavior skills and that

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they need more attention to retain these skills. It seems that the most common skills of the gifted students were motivation, planning, and problem-solving, and the least common in leadership behavior were management, team building, and decision making. This can be attributed to the fact that gifted individuals have self-knowledge, the desire to direct themselves, and the skills that help them direct their lives appropriately. This finding is in line with Al-lala and Al-lala (2013), who also found that gifted students have leadership behavior skills, and with Harara (2018) concerning the skills of communication, problem-solving, time management and decision making. The results revealed that the least common dimension was self-management. Since the students during adolescence are characterized by talent and superiority, they were able to adapt appropriately to new situations and changes, and this enabled them to have high EI. Gifted students can also establish strong personal relationships with others, since they can deal effectively with the social situations that take place around them. Gifted students may also need to develop their self-management skills due to the hormonal changes that take place during this period. This finding agrees with Al-Momani et al., 2015), who found that the level of EI among gifted students is higher than for non-gifted students. This finding also agrees with Goleman (2003), who suggested that gifted students are characterized by high levels of EI. Further, Salovey and Mayer (1990) suggested that gifted students have high levels of EI, and that EI is related to higher levels of leadership behavior, confirming the positive correlation relationship between

EI and leadership behavior skills among gifted students.

When students develop EI, they have a greater ability to manage themselves and adapt to new conditions; this helps students acquire leadership behavior skills, and vice versa. Indeed, students with more EI can regulate their emotions and manage their relationships. Families, particularly parents, have a prominent role to play in helping male children regulate emotions, manage relationships, and acquire leadership behavior, while girls, during adolescence, acquire more skills related to self-management. This finding contradicts that of Awamleh et al. (2013) and Ghaffari et al. (2013), as these studies found no differences attributed to gender in EI. The results of the current study suggested the importance of paying attention to leadership behavior since it affects EI attainment among gifted students. The researchers attribute this finding to the fact that when students have varied leadership behavior, relating to calmness, balance and wisdom in decision making, this affects their EI and gives them a greater ability to control their feelings. This, in turn, affects the students' acquisition of a healthier psychological state, in terms of being less anxious and vulnerable to psychological stressors and disorders. Having suitable leadership behavior affects students' ability to control themselves, and this protects them from the psychological disorders that may affect them later in life Based on the results, the study recommends the following:

- Paying more attention to the leadership behavior skills of gifted students, especially those skills they

gained to a medium degree, so that they can be developed;

- Improving the level of EI, particularly in relation to the self-management of the gifted students;

- Improving one variable, since this contributes to the improvement of the other variable;

- Focusing on the development of EI among males, since it is better among females;

- Improving the skills of leadership behavior among the gifted students, especially among females;

- Developing a counseling program to develop the skills of leadership behavior and EI among the gifted students;

- Conducting further studies to address the skills of leadership behavior and EI and linking this with other categories.

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