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Exploring the Characteristics of Gifted Pre-School Children: Teachers' Perceptions

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Abstract: Based on SDG4, which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, and based on the fact that education is the core of Palestinian values, the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education launched an inclusive education policy in order to integrate all students into the educational system, regardless of their talents, abilities and disabilities. Therefore, the Palestinian Government seeks to develop educational practices to adapt to the needs of all students, including gifted children. Consequently, the identification of gifted pre-school children in Palestine aims to better include them in the general education curriculum. The current study aims to investigate the characteristics of gifted children through the perceptions of the pre-school teachers in Palestine. A mixed-methods approach was adopted. The quantitative data were collected by the "Scale for Rating the Behavioral Characteristics of Gifted and Talented Students". The pre-school teachers in the sample were randomly selected, consisting of 450 female pre-school teachers. The qualitative data were collected by semi-structured interview, which 15 female pre-school teachers took part in. There was a significant difference in teachers' perceptions according to their academic qualifications, and according to whether gifted children need a particular curriculum or not, but there was no significant difference in teachers' perceptions according to their experiences. The final result shows that there were many positive perceptions regarding the characteristics of gifted children through qualitative data. Therefore, there was consistency between the qualitative and quantitative data of the study. This study emphasizes the significance of continuing to highlight the characteristics of gifted children and conducting more research to reveal them.

Keywords: characteristics; giftedness; gifted children; pre-school; perceptions; sustainability

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1. Introduction

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development consists of 17 goals, which are "integrated and indivisible and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social, and environmental". Education is articulated as a standalone goal (SDG4), and SDG4's 10 targets constitute the backbone of the Global Campaign for Education's policy, which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Education is a basic human right, and it should seek to promote mutual understanding, peace, and tolerance, as well as the full development of the human personality [1]. In Palestine, based on SDG4, the Palestinian Government strives to build and maintain its educational achievements, as well as improve the quality of school education and pre-school education [2].

Pre-school is a sensitive educational stage that helps children develop their personalities, desires, curiosity, and intelligence from birth to the age of five [3]. According to the theory of multiple intelligences [4], intelligence is the ability to solve a valuable problem. There are

nine aspects of intelligence: verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, visual-spatial, physical-kinesthetic, music, interpersonal-social, internal-self, naturalist, and, added years later, existential intelligence. Each individual has these aspects of intelligence but at different levels [5]. Intelligence and giftedness are likely to be labeled as the same concept [6].

Manning [7] presented giftedness as it is used to indicate high intellectual or academic ability. Giftedness manifests itself in early childhood. So, more obstacles that limit children's potential and skills can be overcome whenever their abilities are identified early. So, diagnosing gifted children is important because it provides appropriate educational opportunities and a rich environment to develop their talents [8]. In addition, the early recognition of children who have interests can help teachers detect their cognitive, social, and emotional skills, thus identifying them as gifted children with characteristics that exceed their ages [9].

According to Abo Hamza et al. [10], gifted children are individuals who have shown high-level academic performance compared to their peers of the same age group. Self-perception, as well as a number of other factors such as intelligence, creativity, and leadership ability, are also factors in giftedness [11]. Gifted children differ from normal children in various aspects, including effective skills, cognitive skills, social skills, willingness to learn, linguistic skills, personality skills, and mental skills. These variations emerge at a young age according to several studies, such as [12–14].

Experimental tests have shown that gifted children outperform typically normal children in terms of academic performance. Additionally, gifted children's characteristics are their distinctive ability to learn at accelerated speeds, use advanced terminology and vocabulary, analyze and debate, have a broad imagination, and find solutions to problems [15].

Teachers must possess a high level of knowledge, especially in the field of early childhood education, and this occupation focuses on many goals: academically, socially, emotionally, and physically preparing children in this age range, as well as protecting and caring for them. Thus, the role of pre-school teachers is to create a stimulating learning environment, encourage experimentation, guide and extend children's thinking, and be completely aware of children's needs [16].

However, few Palestinian studies focus on pre-school teachers' perceptions of the characteristics of gifted children, the importance of early identification of gifted children, and the characteristics of these children. As a result, this article aims to find out what pre-school teachers perceive as gifted children's characteristics.

1.1. Problem Statement

The Palestinian Government approved the implementation of the SDGs, also supporting the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals into national and cross-sectorial strategies. As a result, pre-school education should be compulsory and free so that children are ready for primary education [2].

Pre-school is considered an educational environment that forms the attitudes of gifted children towards teaching and learning, so kids in the early childhood period should not be alone. It is the place where gifted children are recognized and meet their needs [17]. To achieve this, the pre-school environment must provide challenges and opportunities to discover gifted children, their potential, realize their creativity and skills, and develop children's intrinsic motivation for learning.

The Palestinian Ministry of Education is responsible for pre-school education in Palestine and is developing a national strategic plan and curriculum for Palestinian kindergartens. Work on the plan is based on the fact that children are the most important part of Palestinian society, and that they should be able to enjoy all of their rights and meet all of their individual needs in a safe, stimulating, and accessible environment. This plan represents the interests of all actors and institutions working in the early childhood sector in Palestine, including ministries, national institutions, universities, and international organizations, through an education program that helps teachers to teach Palestinian students efficiently and prepare their own activities and materials as a part of the program [18].

An examination of the related literature reveals that there are limited studies in Palestine about pre-school education, pre-school children, gifted children in pre-school, pre-school teachers and their perceptions. Therefore, there is a need for such studies. In light of the above, the present research will be used to clarify the characteristics of gifted children from the point of view of pre-school teachers.

1.2. The Purpose of the Study

This study sought to explore the characteristics of gifted children from the perceptions of pre-school teachers according to their academic qualification and the number of years of experience. Thus, pre-school teachers will gain insight into the characteristics of gifted children and their educational needs. Based on teachers' perceptions, there will appear purposeful activities in teaching gifted children in their classrooms.

1.3. Significance of the Study

The Palestinian Government continues to work to create an appropriate environment for the Palestinian people to realize the Sustainable Development Goals. Between 2015 and 2016, enrollment in pre-school increased by 50.7%, reaching 56% [2]. So, gifted children need educational and environmental conditions that help them discover their talents in pre-school and define their own needs in all areas of education and development.

It is significant to offer training to in-service teachers to understand, identify, and know who gifted kids are, what they need, and how their needs can be met. Pre-school teachers will be able to recognize giftedness in young children and will be able to support the growth of these children's special abilities. It is crucial to enable teachers to diagnose gifted children and formulate clear methods to explore their characteristics in Palestine.

Pre-school teachers' perceptions of gifted children's characteristics contribute to future studies that aim to develop appropriate teacher training strategies for the education of gifted children. Therefore, if training is provided, pre-school teachers can recognize giftedness in children.

1.4. Research Questions

1. What are the characteristics of gifted children from the point of view of pre-school teachers?
2. Are there significant differences in teachers' perceptions of gifted children according to the teachers' academic qualifications?
3. Are there significant differences in the teachers' perceptions of gifted children according to the teachers' years of experience?
4. Are there significant differences in the teachers' perceptions about gifted children regarding whether gifted children need a special curriculum or not?

2. Literature Review

Aldosari [19] aimed to explore private and public pre-school teachers' perceptions and practices toward gifted children aged 3 to 6 in Riyadh, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. A quantitative study indicated that Saudi Arabian private and public pre-school teachers believe children who are gifted have a higher cognitive ability level than their classmates. Moreover, this study showed that significant similarities exist between private and public pre-school teachers' methods of supporting gifted children.

Papadopoulos [20] indicated that childhood is a crucial period in shaping children's identities. This study sample consisted of 108 gifted children aged 5–6 years from Greece and their pre-school teachers. The Pictorial Scale for Perceived Competence and Social Acceptance was used to assess the domain-specific self-concepts of the participants. In contrast, the children's teachers rated behavioral manifestations of self-esteem using the Behavioral Academic Self-Esteem Scale. The findings showed positive correlations among intelligence quotient, perceived scholastic competence, and global self-esteem, and gifted children need to take part in a comprehensive social-emotional learning curriculum in their schools.

According to Qosimovna [21], and based on a literature review, a pre-school child's personality is perceived as an evolving socio-cultural condition that requires continuous reinforcement and the development of potential and inclinations that manifest themselves profoundly at a given age and leave an imprint on the rest of their lives. Pre-school children's creative potential and natural qualities develop only as a result of targeted giftedness support, such as creating a creative and educational classroom environment and personal interactions aimed at developing a person's spiritual and creative qualities.

Bildiren et al. [12] aimed to explore pre-school teachers' perceptions about giftedness. This study was designed as a qualitative approach, and a semi-structured interview was conducted with 40 pre-school teachers who were working at private and public schools in Aydın, Turkey. Content analysis was used. The results indicated that the teachers mostly defined giftedness as superiority and excellence in performance, creativity, intelligence, and talent. Identifying giftedness in the pre-school period is considered important in terms of the academic development of kids. Gifted children show different characteristics compared to non-gifted children, such as cognitive performance, creativity, curiosity, communication skills, high energy, leadership, focusing, and motivation. Pre-school teachers state that gifted children have a high level of cognitive performance and creativity.

Based on a literature review, Kaya [13] clarified that the pre-school period involves critical developmental activities in the domains of cognitive, psychomotor, psychosocial and linguistic development; therefore, it is important to support gifted kids' development during pre-school because they differ from their peers in certain characteristics such as creativity, intelligence, commitment, imagination, and motivation. It is important to assess gifted children by using a variety of metrics comprehensively, including assessments, observations, rating scales, checklists, questionnaires, interviews, achievement tests, aptitude scales, rewards, and standardized intelligence tests. The early identification of gifted children will help parents and teachers to create appropriate learning environments and an efficient curriculum.

According to Gabriela [14], and based on a literature review, the identification and education of gifted children at an early age is a challenge and a priority objective of Romanian education. The challenge is to find a flexible curriculum and differentiated teaching strategies according to children's needs. Gifted children are extremely curious and venture into subjects not usually explored by children their age; they begin verbal contact early and have a vocabulary far beyond their years. These children are referred to as "precocious" in their language. These kids pick their words carefully and often use them. Their ability to learn quickly allows them to process and remember information for later use.

Bildiren [11] sought to examine whether the responses of the gifted, talented and normal children differ or not. The sample consisted of 54 gifted, 28 talented, and 46 normal children. Quantitative and qualitative approaches were used in this study. The results indicated that there is difference between the responses of gifted, talented and normal children about their interests. In addition, gifted children show different characteristics compared to typically developing children. For example, they are rapid learners with a depth of perception, a keen sense of observation, excellent memory, sophisticated language, good mathematical skills, sustained attention, and concentration.

Demirok [22] aimed to determine teachers' perceptions and opinions on gifted children; the sample consisted of 490 teachers in Cyprus. A quantitative approach was used, and the data were collected with two scales: the perception scale towards gifted students and the point of view scale towards the gifted. The findings showed that the teachers had positive opinions and perceptions concerning gifted children. Furthermore, there was a significant and positive relationship between teachers' perceptions and their views about gifted children.

3. Materials and Methods

The study is framed to explore gifted children's characteristics through the perceptions of pre-school teachers. Thus, we used a mixed approach to investigate the perceptions of pre-school teachers. A mixed-methods approach is an approach that mixes qualitative and

quantitative methods to gain a deep understanding and confirmation of outcomes; then, these results are generalized [23].

In this study, the researchers adopted an explanatory sequential design, which is a sequential approach, and it began with quantitative data collection and analysis, followed by qualitative data collection and analysis. Therefore, qualitative data are used to explain and clarify results from quantitative data analysis [24].

3.1. Participants

Ministries of education in many countries have worked to develop their educational policies, which would motivate the development of the educational system, such as the policy of the partial feminization of education, which has a positive impact on the educational process as a whole [25].

This is obvious in the Ministry of Education's efforts towards the partial feminization of the teaching staff in basic schools. The educational policies in Palestine have influenced the educational process, and there are two reasons for the expansion of the phenomenon of partial feminization: Firstly, the direct reason is related to what the Ministry of Education seek to achieve. Secondly, the indirect reason is imposed by the nature of life and its developments, such as the harmony between a female's nature and her job as a kindergarten teacher; in addition, the children during this period need a teacher who plays the role of mother. Therefore, females, by their nature, tend to work with children and give them love and affection [26]. As a result of this, the role of females in education extends beyond the role of the traditional teacher in providing educational experiences from the curriculum to the student; rather, it is related to her responsibilities as a mother and educator. In addition to this, the numbers of students enrolled in institutions of higher education in the humanities in Palestine indicate that there is a large gap between the numbers of males and females, as the proportion of females' orientation towards the humanities is greater than the proportion of males [25].

The population of this study included all the pre-school teachers in the directorates of education in all cities and villages of Palestine. Consequently, the sample for the quantitative approach consisted of 475 female pre-school teachers from public schools. This sample of female pre-school teachers was randomly selected, and all of the participants had not received any training in identifying gifted children during their studies, so the teachers' perceptions about gifted children and their characteristics are based on their personal knowledge and interests in gifted children. A total of 25 questionnaires were excluded from the sample because of some stereotyping answers. Therefore, the final sample consisted of 450 female pre-school teachers. In addition, the sample for the qualitative approach consisted of 15 female pre-school teachers. (Please see Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1. Demographic information regarding the sample of the quantitative approach.

Variables	Domain	Frequency	Percent
Academic Qualification	Bachelor	373	83%
	Master	77	17%
Years of Experience	Less than 3	160	36%
	From 3 to 6	134	30%
	More than 6	156	34%
Number of Gifted Children	Less than 5	240	53%
	The number is 5	108	24%
	More than 5	102	23%
Need a Special Curriculum	Yes	379	84%
	No	71	16%

Table 2. Demographic information regarding the sample of the qualitative approach.

Variables	Domain	Frequency	Percent
Academic Qualification	Bachelor	7	47%
	Master	8	53%
Years of Experience	From 3 to 6	5	33%
	More than 6	10	67%

3.2. Data Tools

To achieve the aims of this research, we used two tools. The first one is the "Scale for Rating the Behavioral Characteristics of Gifted and Talented Students". This was developed by Demirok and Ozcan [27], and it consists of two parts: demographic information and teachers' perceptions. The demographic information is related to the academic qualifications and years of experience of the participants. This scale is composed of 33 items and five factors. The factors are: willingness to learn, which includes nine items; expression characteristics, which has eight items; personality characteristics, which includes six items; learning characteristics, which includes six items; and mental characteristics, which includes four items. (Please see Table 3).

Table 3. The dimensions that were assessed in the questionnaire.

Dimensions	Items	Domain
Willingness to Learn	9	Q1–Q9
Expression Characteristics	8	Q10–Q17
Personality Characteristics	6	Q18–Q23
Learning Characteristics	6	Q24–Q29
Mental Characteristics	4	Q30–Q33

The study used a 5-point Likert scale graded as: (1) strongly disagree; (2) disagree; (3) neither agree nor disagree; (4) agree; and (5) strongly agree. In the present study, the overall internal reliability coefficient of the scale (Cronbach's α coefficient) was calculated as 0.868. In contrast, Cronbach's (α) coefficients for the five sub-factors were calculated as the willingness to learn (0.836), expression characteristics (0.765), personality characteristics (0.702), learning characteristics (0.718), and mental characteristics (0.743).

The validity of the questionnaire was verified by calculating the (Pearson) correlation coefficient (r) between the score of each item and the total score of the domain to which it belongs. Table 4 shows the positive correlation coefficients and a statistical function, which indicate the validity of the internal consistency between each item of the questionnaire. So, the correlation values for the questionnaire items ranged between 0.820 and 0.548, which is within the accepted standard.

Table 4. The dimensions that were assessed in the questionnaire.

Willingness to Learn		Expression		Personality		Learning		Mental	
Q	r	Q	r	Q	r	Q	r	Q	r
Q1	0.705 **	Q10	0.634 **	Q18	0.570 **	Q24	0.565 **	Q30	0.713 **
Q2	0.753 **	Q11	0.567 **	Q19	0.676 **	Q25	0.548 **	Q31	0.785 **
Q3	0.606 **	Q12	0.492 **	Q20	0.688 **	Q26	0.735 **	Q32	0.820 **
Q4	0.655 **	Q13	0.493 **	Q21	0.506 **	Q27	0.753 **	Q33	0.703 **
Q5	0.582 **	Q14	0.616 **	Q22	0.704 **	Q28	0.678 **		
Q6	0.660 **	Q15	0.706 **	Q23	0.648 **	Q29	0.615 **		
Q7	0.772 **	Q16	0.753 **						
Q8	0.720 **	Q17	0.696 **						
Q9	0.566 **								

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The second tool is semi-structured interview questions, which were designed by us and developed based on literature reviews such as those of Tezcan [17] and Yazıcı et al. [28]. Lastly, the interview consisted of 3 questions related to the first research question, which is: What are the characteristics of gifted children from the point of view of pre-school teachers? This was considered regardless of the academic qualifications and years of experience of pre-school teachers and was reviewed in accordance with early childhood experts. The following are the interview questions:

1. How do you define a gifted child?
2. Can you name some adjectives related to gifted children?
3. What is the most obvious characteristic by which gifted children are identified?

3.3. Data Collection

Permission was granted by the Ethics Committee in Near East University and the Director-General of the Center for Educational Research and Development (CERD) in the Ministry of Education in Palestine. After this, quantitative and qualitative data were collected, and the sample was randomly selected. The questionnaire was designed electronically due to the coronavirus, which affected the freedom and ease of movement, restricting access to teachers. Therefore, we had to use technology, Google Forms, to facilitate distribution to female pre-school teachers. The Google Form received responses from 28 March 2021 to 21 May 2021, so the final sample consisted of 450 female pre-school teachers.

Afterwards, qualitative data were collected by conducting semi-structured interviews with 15 female pre-school teachers. The interview was conducted online via the Facebook application. The participants were invited before they were interviewed, and were also informed of the purpose of this study, and that their personal data will be kept confidential. After this, the participants approved. All of the interviews were audio recorded to ensure that all the information was obtained; the interview went well, and the duration of interviews ranged between 15 and 20 min.

3.4. Data Analysis

SPSS 24 version was used to analyze the quantitative data that were used; validity and reliability analyses were used. Reliability analysis allows studying the properties of items that compose the scale through the use of Cronbach α internal consistency coefficients. Validity analysis enables statistical analysis, such as correlation coefficients (Pearson), to verify the relevance of the questions. The responses illustrating teachers' perceptions were assessed by frequency and percentages through the use of descriptive statistics. Additionally, means, standard deviations, an independent *t*-test, and one-way ANOVA were used to analyze the quantitative data.

Content analysis was conducted to analyze the qualitative data that were obtained from the interviews. Content analysis is a reference source that includes a description and explanation of the data [29]. To analyze the data, teachers' responses were reviewed to identify the most significant terms, and these terms were highlighted in different colors as potential codes; then, the emergent codes were grouped into themes and subthemes. For the credibility of the study, the peer-review method was employed. Two rounds of peer review were applied: the first round resulted in the identification of 9 themes and 28 subthemes (categories), and in the second round of peer review, the closely related themes were merged, and likewise for subthemes (categories). This round saw agreement on 7 main themes and 24 subthemes (categories). Themes were arranged, and then the findings were defined and discussed. In addition, to enhance credibility, the teachers' responses were taken verbatim.

4. Results

After descriptive statistics were used to analyze the quantitative data, the questions of the study were answered as follows:

Research Question #1: *What are the characteristics of gifted children from the point of view of pre-school teachers?*

The results of the analysis show that the means for the questionnaire items ranged between 3.86 and 4.90; the standard deviations were between 0.294 and 0.760. (Please see Table 5).

Table 5. The mean and standard deviations for the questionnaire items.

Item	Mean	SD	Item	Mean	SD	Item	Mean	SD
Q1	4.89	0.306	Q12	4.28	0.689	Q23	4.38	0.487
Q2	4.90	0.294	Q13	4.75	0.495	Q24	4.28	0.678
Q3	4.80	0.397	Q14	4.00	0.760	Q25	3.86	0.605
Q4	4.79	0.403	Q15	4.65	0.564	Q26	4.50	0.578
Q5	4.77	0.416	Q16	4.34	0.643	Q27	4.46	0.589
Q6	4.79	0.403	Q17	4.65	0.552	Q28	4.51	0.574
Q7	4.88	0.325	Q18	4.46	0.498	Q29	4.27	0.663
Q8	4.88	0.322	Q19	4.62	0.485	Q30	4.27	0.714
Q9	4.88	0.320	Q20	4.42	0.495	Q31	4.52	0.589
Q10	4.52	0.619	Q21	4.14	0.351	Q32	4.40	0.612
Q11	4.65	0.554	Q22	4.64	0.479	Q33	4.63	0.575

The findings of the analysis indicate that the teachers' perceptions were at a high level in five factors of the characteristics of gifted children. The five factors are: willingness to learn (M = 4.84, SD = 0.235), expression characteristics (M = 4.48, SD = 0.378), personality characteristics (M = 4.44, SD = 0.297), learning characteristics (M = 4.31, SD = 0.397), and mental characteristics (M = 4.45, SD = 0.469). So, each factor had a mean of more than 3.5. While the teachers' perceptions in all factors in the scale yielded M = 4.54 and SD = 0.232, the teachers have positive, high perceptions regarding gifted children. (Please see Table 6).

Table 6. The mean and standard deviations for the questionnaire factors.

Dimensions	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level
Willingness to Learn	4.84	0.235	High
Expression Characteristics	4.48	0.378	High
Personality Characteristics	4.44	0.297	High
Learning Characteristics	4.31	0.397	High
Mental Characteristics	4.45	0.469	High
Total	4.54	0.232	High

Research Question #2: *Are there significant differences in the teachers' perceptions about gifted children according to teachers' academic qualifications?*

We answered this question to determine teachers' perceptions of gifted children according to educational qualifications, and we used an independent samples *t*-test.

As shown by Table 7, the mean score for the perceptions of teachers who have a bachelor's degree regarding gifted children related to willingness to learn was M = 4.84 (SD = 0.238), which is close to the mean score for the perceptions of teachers who have a master's degree (M = 4.85, SD = 0.216). Additionally, the mean score for the perceptions of teachers with a bachelor's degree about gifted children, which are related to expression characteristics, was M = 4.48 (SD = 0.394), which is lower than the mean score for the perceptions of teachers with a master's degree (M = 4.50, SD = 0.292). The mean score for the perceptions of teachers with a bachelor's degree concerning personality characteristics was M = 4.46 (SD = 0.297), which is higher than the mean score for the perceptions of teachers with a master's degree (M = 4.37, SD = 0.290). Additionally, the mean score for the perceptions of teachers with a bachelor's degree related to learning characteristics was M = 4.33 (SD = 0.388), which is higher than the mean score for the perceptions of

teachers with a master's degree (M = 4.23, SD = 0.430). Finally, the mean score for the perceptions of teachers with a bachelor's degree concerning mental characteristics was M = 4.46 (SD = 0.476), which is higher than the mean score for the perceptions of teachers with a master's degree (M = 4.41, SD = 0.437).

Table 7. Results of the *t*-test of perceptions of pre-school teachers according to their academic qualifications.

Dimensions	Academic Qualification	*n*	Mean	SD	*t*-Value	df	*p*	Explanation
Willingness to Learn	Bachelor	373	4.84	0.238	−0.193	448	0.847	$p > 0.05$ Insignificant
	Master	77	4.85	0.216				
Expression Characteristics	Bachelor	373	4.48	0.394	−0.589	448	0.557	$p > 0.05$ Insignificant
	Master	77	4.50	0.292				
Personality Characteristics	Bachelor	373	4.46	0.297	2.293	448	0.022 *	$p < 0.05$ Significant
	Master	77	4.37	0.290				
Learning Characteristics	Bachelor	373	4.33	0.388	2.100	448	0.036 *	$p < 0.05$ Significant
	Master	77	4.23	0.430				
Mental Characteristics	Bachelor	373	4.46	0.476	0.865	448	0.387	$p > 0.05$ Insignificant
	Master	77	4.41	0.437				

* *p* is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

These findings indicate significant differences in teachers' perceptions according to academic qualifications in the factors of personality characteristics and learning characteristics in favor of bachelor's degree holders. At the same time, there is no significant difference in the factors of expression characteristics, mental characteristics, and willingness to learn.

Research Question #3: *Are there significant differences in the teachers' perceptions about gifted children according to teachers' years of experience?*

We used a one-way ANOVA to recognize if there are significant differences in the teachers' perceptions of gifted children according to their years of experience.

As shown by Table 8, the number of years of teachers' experience ranges between less than three years, from 3 to 6 years, and more than six years. There is no significant difference observed between the number of years of teachers' experience and their perceptions about gifted children. In the five factors, regarding willingness to learn ($F(2;447) = 0.069$, $p > 0.05$), the factor of expression characteristics was $F(2;447) = 0.313$ ($p > 0.05$), the factor of personality characteristics was $F(2;447) = 0.665$ ($p > 0.05$), the factor of learning characteristics was $F(2;447) = 1.051$ ($p > 0.05$). In addition, the factor of mental characteristics was $F(2;447) = 0.199$ ($p > 0.05$). In light of the above findings, the results revealed that the teachers' perceptions towards gifted children were positive, and the number of years of teachers' experience does not significantly affect their perceptions towards gifted children.

Research Question #4: *Are there significant differences in the teachers' perceptions about gifted children regarding whether gifted children need a special curriculum or not?*

We used an independent samples *t*-test to identify if there are significant differences in teachers' perceptions of gifted children regarding whether gifted children need a special curriculum or not.

As shown by Table 9, the mean score of the teachers who said that gifted children need a special curriculum (yes), which related to the factors of willingness to learn, was M = 4.84 (SD = 0.241), which is lower than the mean score of the teachers who said that gifted children do not need a special curriculum (no) (M = 4.87, SD = 0.193). Additionally, the mean score of the teachers who said yes, which is related to the factors of expression characteristics, was M = 4.50 (SD = 0.374), which is higher than the mean score of the teachers who saidno (M = 4.36, SD = 0.380).

Table 8. One-way ANOVA of the perceptions of pre-school teachers according to their years of experience.

Dimensions	Domains	*n*	Mean	SD	F	*p*	Explanation
Willingness to Learn	Less than 3 years	160	4.85	0.232	0.069	0.933	$p > 0.05$ Insignificant
	From 3 to 6 years	134	4.84	0.225			
	More than 6 years	156	4.84	0.246			
Expression Characteristics	Less than 3 years	160	4.50	0.386	0.313	0.731	$p > 0.05$ Insignificant
	From 3 to 6 years	134	4.48	0.369			
	More than 6 years	156	4.46	0.379			
Personality Characteristics	Less than 3 years	160	4.46	0.306	0.665	0.515	$p > 0.05$ Insignificant
	From 3 to 6 years	134	4.45	0.302			
	More than 6 years	156	4.42	0.284			
Learning Characteristics	Less than 3 years	160	4.30	0.414	1.051	0.351	$p > 0.05$ Insignificant
	From 3 to 6 years	134	4.35	0.418			
	More than 6 years	156	4.29	0.357			
Mental Characteristics	Less than 3 years	160	4.43	0.502	0.199	0.820	$p > 0.05$ Insignificant
	From 3 to 6 years	134	4.47	0.425			
	More than 6 years	156	4.46	0.472			

Table 9. Results of a *t*-test of perceptions of pre-school teachers according to need a curriculum.

Dimensions	Need Curriculum	*n*	Mean	SD	*t*-Value	df	*p*	Explanation
Willingness to Learn	Yes	379	4.84	0.241	1.349	114.958	0.180	$p > 0.05$ Insignificant
	No	71	4.87	0.193				
Expression Characteristics	Yes	379	4.50	0.374	3.017	448	0.003 *	$p < 0.05$ Significant
	No	71	4.36	0.380				
Personality Characteristics	Yes	379	4.46	0.297	2.363	448	0.019 *	$p < 0.05$ Significant
	No	71	4.37	0.284				
Learning Characteristics	Yes	379	4.33	0.396	1.871	448	0.062	$p > 0.05$ Insignificant
	No	71	4.23	0.394				
Mental Characteristics	Yes	379	4.48	0.464	2.422	448	0.016 *	$p < 0.05$ Significant
	No	71	4.33	0.483				

* p is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Additionally, the mean score of the teachers who said yes, which related to the factors of personality characteristics, was M = 4.46 (SD = 0.297), which is higher than the mean score of the teachers who said no (M = 4.37, SD = 0.284). Additionally, the mean score of the teachers who said yes, which related to the factors of learning characteristics was M = 4.33 (SD = 0.396), which is higher than the mean score of the teachers who said no (M = 4.23, SD = 0.394).

Finally, the mean score of the teachers who said yes, which related to the factors of mental characteristics, was M = 4.48 (SD = 0.464), which is higher than the mean score of the teachers' perceptions who said no (M = 4.33, SD = 0.483).

The findings indicate significant differences in teachers' perceptions according to whether gifted children need a special curriculum or not in the factors of expression characteristics, personality characteristics, and mental characteristics in favor of those who say that the gifted children need a special curriculum (Yes). At the same time, there is no significant difference in the factors of learning characteristics and willingness to learn.

The explanatory sequential was used in following up the quantitative results with qualitative data. Thus, the qualitative data were used in the subsequent interpretation and clarification of the results from the quantitative data analysis. The data obtained from the interview form were determined. Additionally, the themes and subthemes (categories) were determined and then analyzed using frequency distributions and percentages.

As shown in Table 10, the findings revealed that for the teachers who were aware about the characteristics of gifted children, their responses were categorized as: characteristics of

cognitive—22%; mental—35%; social—8%; creative—11%; psychomotor—3%; personal—13%; and linguistic—8%. Some of the interviewers focused on mental characteristics.

Table 10. The characteristics of gifted children from the point of view of pre-school teachers.

Themes	Subthemes (Categories)	Frequency	Percentage
Cognitive Characteristics Total = 23	1. Curiosity	7	22%
	2. Ask questions	7	
	3. Rapid learning ability	9	
Mental Characteristics Total = 37	1. Excellent memory	7	35%
	2. Able to concentrate deeply	8	
	3. Keen powers of observation	11	
	4. Academically superior	3	
	5. Able to play complex games	5	
	6. Able to connect ideas together	3	
Social Characteristics Total = 8	1. Make social relationships	2	8%
	2. Friends sharing	5	
	3. Interested in social issues	1	
Creative Characteristics Total = 12	1. Unusual imagination.	3	11%
	2. Able to solve problems	4	
	3. Creative energy	5	
Psychomotor Characteristics Total = 3	1. High degree of energy	3	3%
Personal Characteristics Total = 14	1. Calmness	2	13%
	2. Self-reliance	3	
	3. Self-confidence	1	
	4. Leadership	6	
	5. Flexibility	2	
Linguistic Characteristics Total = 9	1. Use long and complex sentences	2	8%
	2. Processing a large amount of vocabulary	4	
	3. Fluency of expression	3	

T1: "Their mind stores and remembers information, they have a good memory. They are observing the somethings and someones carefully, able to concentrate deeply without getting bored".

T3: "Their mental skills are high-level. They have strong memory, and ability to concentrate deeply. They are playing complex and challenging games. They are able to rapid learning".

T14: "They have excellent memory, outstanding academic performance, and keen powers of observation".

T6: "They have a quick intuition, strong memory. They prefer to play the creativity and innovation games".

There are those who focused on linguistic characteristics:

T7: "They have a rapid learning, fluency of expression, a large amount of vocabulary, complex sentences".

While others emphasized on cognitive characteristics:

T2: "The ability to learn the reading and writing early. They able to make good judgments and quick decisions. They have a curiosity and love of knowledge and discovery".

Some of the interviewers combined two characteristics such as:

Mental and cognitive characteristics:

T11: "They have a curiosity, intelligence, strong memory and observation. They able to ask many questions".

Cognitive and personal characteristics:

T12: "They are calm, self-reliant. They have ability to share their friends, ask many questions and learn early".

T15: "They have leadership skills, love of curiosity and discovery, more information than their peers, flexibility".

Creative and personal characteristics:

T9: "They tend to discuss and dialogue with their friends and ask many questions. They are interested in social issues, able to solving problems beacuse are quick-witted".

There are those who combined more over two characteristics:

T5: "They are able to rapid learning without needing alot of training courses, they prefer the complex games. Able to connect ideas together quickly, they are very curious. They have a fluency of expression, because they have a large amount of vocabulary and use long and complex sentences".

T4: "They have linguistic skills, intelligence and good memory. They tend to be self-reliant when carrying out activities, and prefer the using puzzle games to be creative. They have a high concentration".

T8: "They have a strong memory, a wide imagination, an ability to find relationships between ideas. Early language acquisition, leadership skills, make social relationships, friends sharing, physical skills".

T10: "They have a self-confidence, curiosity, creativity, innovation and strength of observation. They have an ability to communicate, share theirfriends"

T13: "They have creativity, innovation, sensation, flexibility, leadership skills, communication skills, imaginative expression. They are enthusiastic about unique interests and topics. They have an ability to discover and shape new ways".

5. Discussion and Conclusions

The early years of a child's life, also known as early childhood, are extremely important and impact all aspects of the child's growth and development [3]. Based on SDG4, which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, ensuring a good and inclusive education is the eighth national priority in the National Policy Agenda 2017–2022. Therefore, the Palestinian Government seeks to improve early childhood education and improve attendance and retention rates for both sexes [2]. This is desired in order to achieve development and sustainability in their education, including gifted children [30].

As a result, UNESCO advocates for a shift in education systems to allow for necessary changes in the learning and teaching paradigm with a view to facilitate the integration of Education for Sustainable Development [31].

In general, intelligence tests are used to identify gifted children, but experts are still seeking to develop methods and tools for identifying giftedness [32]. As for this study, gifted children were identified through the perceptions of pre-school teachers.

Therefore, to achieve the purpose of this study, the "Scale for Rating the Behavioral Characteristics of Gifted and Talented Students" and the semi-structured interview questions were used. There is a list of gifted children's characteristics and behaviors, such as advanced memory, perception, vocabulary, investigation and interest, emotional maturation, social development, creativity, and abstract thinking, which are all advanced stages of development. In addition, when compared to their average-performing peers, gifted children are more confident and positive with themselves in pre-school environments [33]. Furthermore, the sensitivity of emotions, the child's ability to play with unusual things, teamwork, sensitivity to challenges, and early regard with moral issues, kindness, academic performance, and perfectionism are all potential characteristics of gifted pre-school children [34].

The analysis considering the first question shows that the teachers' perceptions was at a high level in five factors of the characteristics of gifted children. Therefore, the present study focuses on the teachers' perceptions of gifted children and reveals and analyzes their characteristics. So, the teachers' responses that involve the characteristics of gifted children can be categorized as factors, such as the factors of willingness to learn, expression characteristics, personality characteristics, learning characteristics, and mental characteristics. These factors are consistent with the results of previous studies, such as [28]. This reached similar findings

by revealing that the teachers' perceptions of gifted children were positive concerning the characteristics of gifted children; the study of Tezcan [17] also assessed the perceptions of pre-school teachers towards gifted children and their characteristics. Therefore, there is a high level of awareness of teachers with regard to the characteristics of gifted children.

The analysis considering the second question showed a significant difference in teachers' perceptions of academic qualifications in the factors of personality characteristics and learning characteristics in favor of bachelor's degree holders. Although, at the same time, there is no significant difference in the factors of expression characteristics, mental characteristics, and willingness to learn. It can be interpreted that the teachers who have BA degrees have positive perceptions compared to teachers who have MA degrees regarding gifted children.

The analysis considering the third question found that the teachers' perceptions towards gifted children were positive. The number of years of teachers' experience does not significantly affect their perceptions of gifted children. In contrast to the study of Polyzopoulou et al. [35], which aimed to identify teachers' attitudes regarding gifted children's education in Greek educational settings and examined factors that affect teachers' perceptions, this study indicates that teachers' attitudes regarding gifted children's education are affected by the teachers' experience variable. It can be interpreted that teachers who have experience have positive perceptions of gifted children's educational characteristics.

The analysis considering the fourth question indicates significant differences in teachers' perceptions of whether gifted children need a special curriculum or not in the factors of expression characteristics, personality characteristics, and mental characteristics in favor of who says the gifted children need a special curriculum (yes). At the same time, there is no significant difference in the factors of learning and willingness to learn, which were consistent with Tezcan's [17] study, who said there should be special education and schools for gifted children. Therefore, teachers should educate gifted children in a different way to peers.

The majority of teachers (35%) stated that gifted children have mental characteristics that include: an excellent memory, ability to concentrate deeply, keen powers of observation, academic superiority, ability to play complex games and the ability to connect ideas together. Children who have mental characteristics that will lead to good cognitive characteristics, such as rapid learning ability, curiosity and need to ask questions, were the most common, with a percentage of 22%, which is consistent with [36]. Thus, the cognitive and mental characteristics will reflect on the child's personality and personal characteristics, such as calmness, self-reliance, self-confidence, leadership, and flexibility, and the percentage was 13%.

Accordingly, these characteristics will affect the creativity and innovation of children, and they will have creative characteristics such as an unusual imagination, ability to solve problems, and creative energy, and the percentage was 11%. Moreover, the linguistic or expression characteristics (8%) include: use of long and complex sentences, processing a large amount of vocabulary, and fluency of expression. In addition, social characteristics (8%) included: making social relationships, sharing friends, and interest in social issues.

There is consistency between the qualitative and quantitative data of the study. While the mean of teachers' perceptions with regard to the characteristics of gifted children in the quantitative scale were more than (3.5), there were many positive perceptions regarding the characteristics of gifted children in the qualitative data.

Education is a core factor in Palestinian values, and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education has finished in its development of school curricula for grades 1–12. It has also launched a guide for pre-school educators and is opening kindergartens in public schools, especially in marginalized areas, to increase enrollment rates for children in pre-school education. The identification of gifted pre-school children in Palestine aims to better include them in the general education curriculum; so, in 2014, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education launched an inclusive education policy in order to integrate all students in the educational system, regardless of their talents, abilities and disabilities [2].

In sum, the Government seeks to achieve its vision of ensuring quality and inclusive education for all by aligning education with all needs, skills and abilities of students,

including gifted children. It also seeks to further promote the integration of all students into the educational system, regardless of all individual differences.

6. Recommendations

The Palestinian Government endorsed the Sustainable Development Goals, and gave a declaration of its will to go forward in its efforts to achieve the SDGs; therefore the Government will improve pre-school education in order to fulfill its aim of ensuring quality and inclusive education for all UNESCO [37]. Thus, attention will be drawn to an important issue, which is gifted children's characteristics, and highlight the importance of knowledge of the characteristics of gifted children:

1. There should be more training programs and courses offered to teachers by the Ministry of Education and universities regarding gifted children and their characteristics. This has been confirmed through the Sustainable Development Goals, and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education has released a guide for teachers of pre-school and is opening kindergartens in public primary schools.
2. Teachers' awareness and understanding of gifted children should be increased by developing educational policies and programs related to gifted individuals, and courses in pedagogy and strategies must be provided, with the goal of making gifted education sustainable. Therefore, sustainability will be integrated into schools, classrooms, disciplines, and so on.
3. Future research should involve more participants to provide more accurate and generalized findings to allow for comparisons and give a more profound view.
4. This study can be expanded by using another sample as well as teachers, such as gifted children and their parents, and shed light on appropriate strategies to improve the environment of gifted children.

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