

UNIVERSITATEA BABEȘ-BOLYAI CLUJ-NAPOCA

FACULTATEA DE PSIHOLOGIE SI STIINTE ALE EDUCATIEI

**Identification of Educational Opportunities and
Concerns of Arab Palestinian Gifted Girls
Study Case: East Jerusalem**

TEZĂ DE DOCTORAT

DOCTORAND: Fatima Elyan

COORDONATOR: Prof. Univ. Dr. Vasile Chis

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Table of Contents	2
List of Tables	6
List of Charts	6
Acronyms	8
Acknowledgment	9
ABSTRACT	10
INTRODUCTION	13
A. Problem Statement	13
B. Socio-Political Background of East Jerusalem	20
B.1 Socio-political Context	20
B.2 Political and Legal Status of Jerusalemites	22
C. Status of Women in the Arab world, Israel and East Jerusalem	29
C.1 Status of Women in the Arab society	29
C.2 Status of Palestinian Women in Israel	32
C.3. Status of Palestinian Women in East Jerusalem	37
D. Education Realities for Palestinians in East Jerusalem	41
D.1 Education System for Palestinian Jerusalemites	41
D.2 Gifted Education of Palestinians in Israel	45
CHAPTER I:	
THEORETICAL FOUNDATION OF THE RESEARCH	52

I.1 Girls and Giftedness: Concepts and Critical Definitions	52
I.1.1 Concept of Giftedness	52
I.1.2 Critical Definitions of Giftedness and the Reality of Gifted Girls	58
I.2 Exploration and Recognition of Gifted Girls	71
I.3 Obstacles Hindering Emergence of Gifted Girls	73
I.4 Gifted Girls in Minority Groups	80
I.5 Gifted Girls and Critical Pedagogy Theory	83
I.6 Gifted Girls and Feminist Theory	88
1.6.1 Identity Development	88
I.7 Gifted Girls and Socio-Cultural Theory	93
I.8 Gifted and Girls Potentiality Theory	101
CHAPTER II:	106
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	
II.1 Research Hypothesis	106
II.2 Fundamental Research Questions	107
II.3 Research Participation and Population description	108
II.4 Conceptual and Methodological Research Framework	110
II.4.1 Qualitative Research Theory	110
II.4.2 Feminist Theory	113
II.4.3 Grounded Theory	114

II.5 Qualitative Research Tools	115
II.5.1 Pilot Study	115
II.5.2 In-depth Interviews	117
II.5.3 Research Diary	121
II.5.4 Focus Groups	122
II.6 Validity and Reliability of the Findings	123
II.7 Data Analysis and Writing Process	124
II. 8 Research Ethics	126
CHAPTER III:	127
RESERCH DATA AND ANALYSIS	
III.1 Pilot Study and Four Emerging Themes	129
III.2 Applying the Four Themes to Main Qualitative Data: In-Depth Interview	140
III.2.1 Theme 1: Feeling and Being Gifted	141
III.2.2 Theme 2: Feeling and Being Different	145
III.2.3 Theme 3: Being Limited in Options and Freedom (School, Family, Society)	150
III.2.4 Theme 4: The Drive to Make Change and Break Out from 'Destiny'	168
III.3 Interviews with Key Educational Stakeholders	175
III.4 Focus Group as a Synthesizing Reflection about Giftedness	180
III.5 Discussing the Findings in Light of the Literature	183
III.5.1 General Review of the Findings	184
III.5.2 Linking Specific Themes to Relevant Literature	192
III.5.2.1 Linking Theme 1 with Literature Review	192

III.5.2.2 Linking Theme 2 with Literature Review	193
III.5.2.3 Linking Theme 3 with Literature Review	194
III.5.2.4 Linking Theme 4 with Literature Review	195
CHAPTER IV:	198
CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	
IV.1 Specific Conclusions and Policy Recommendations	198
IV.1.1 Specific Conclusions	198
IV.1.2 Policy Recommendations	199
IV.2 Emerging New Concept of Giftedness	201
IV.3 Originality and Contribution of the Research	203
IV.4 Research Limitations	204
BIBLIOGRAPHY	205
APPENDICES	230
LIST OF TABLES	Page
Table 1: Number of students participating in gifted programs in Arab sector in 2007/8 school year	46
Table 2: Four Themes emerging from Pilot Study	137
Table 3: Theme 1 and Related Categories	141
Table 4: Theme 2 and Related Categories	145

Table 5:	Theme 3 and Related Categories	152
Table 6:	Theme 4 and Related Categories	170
Table 7:	Summary of Themes	196

LIST OF CHARTS

		Page
Chart 1	Sociological Characteristics of East Jerusalem (Yair & Alayan, 2009)	20
Chart 2	Main Characteristics of Women in: Arab world, Israel and East Jerusalem	40
Chart 3	The Dual Structure of the East Jerusalem School System	43
Chart 4	Evolution of Definitions of Giftedness	57
Chart 5	Critical Understanding of Giftedness and Reality of Females	71
Chart 6	Obstacles and Problems Hindering Emergence of Gifted Girls (Reis, 2002a).	75
Chart 7	Factors Help Women to Believe in Themselves (Reis Model)	79
Chart 8	Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs	104
Chart 9	Summarizing of Relevant Theories to Contextualize Gifted Girls	105
Chart 10	The Data Analysis Process	129
Chart 11	A New Emerging Concept of Giftedness in Conflict Areas	201

APPENDICES

		Page
Appendix 1:	Transcript of Three Interviews with the Applied Interview Questionnaire	229
Appendix 2:	Excerpts from the Personal Research Diary	243
Appendix 3:	Hebrew University East Jerusalem Arab Gifted Girls Project	250

Outline

Appendix 4:	Letter to Parents Requesting Interview Permission	264
Appendix 5:	Explanation of Research Purpose to Parents	265
Appendix 6:	Israeli Ministry of Education Endorsement to Pursue PhD topic	267

ACRONYMS

<i>ID</i>	Identification Card
<i>PNA</i>	Palestinian National Authority
<i>PASSIA</i>	The Palestinian Academic Society of International Affairs
<i>PCBS</i>	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
<i>OPT</i>	Occupied Palestinian Territory
<i>UN</i>	United Nation
<i>UN OCHA</i>	United Nation Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

Key Words

Palestinian gifted girls	fetelor arabe cu abilități înalte/supradotate din Palestina
East Jerusalem	Ierusalimul de Est
Arab Woman	femeilor în societatea arabă
Giftedness	supradotare
Educational opportunities	Educaționale oportunităților
Critical Pedagogy Theory	teoria pedagogiei critice
Feminist Theory	teoria feministă
Socio-Cultural Theory	teoria socio-culturală
Potentiality Theory	teoria potențialului
Grounded Theory	Teoria întemeiată empiric
Qualitative Research	cercetării calitative

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore the experience and the concerns of Palestinian gifted girls in East Jerusalem. This study focuses on talented Palestinian girls in East Jerusalem, who live in difficult political, economic, social, and educational circumstances. These girls are ignored on multiple levels with their giftedness not being identified or encouraged due to a complete lack of systematic research or policy support and educational opportunities.

Some of the existing literature is based on quantitative research methods with no reference to Palestinian girls who live in East Jerusalem. For effective policy development and supportive educational interventions it is important to add literature to the field that exposes the reality, experience and views of the gifted Palestinian girls themselves.

Qualitative research methods have been utilized for this study, especially the use of grounded theory and narrative case studies. Twenty research participants were selected and interviewed in their homes in East Jerusalem over the period of one year. Two of these girls were selected for the pilot study, which enabled the author to enter the field and to identify issues related to these girls. Also, one teacher and one mother were interviewed in order to provide confirming data throughout the study. The data of the interviews, the research journal, and the girls' diaries were coded and analyzed by using grounded theory techniques.

The major findings of this study show that these girls live between the expectations of family, school and community; for these girls it was the first time that they were able to express their own stories and unique concerns regarding the meaning of being

gifted and being different from others in the family, school, and society. Their stories highlight the paradox between their personal dreams and acting as a normal girl in a traditional society. The research revealed that the most important challenges facing the girls are the socially constructed responsibilities and the fact of having different roles (i.e.: being a daughter, a good wife, a special mother, a member of a ‘minority’, while facing the daily life) which are imposed by their social and economic conditions from the beginning of their presence in school and even before. These girls expressed their determination to change their reality with an emphasis on not forgetting themselves. They manifest a sense of alienation and reflection of their reality. The majority of girls perceive their school experience as ‘bad’ or ‘the most difficult thing’, which means that they weren’t satisfied about the school system and in particular one major element, the high school graduation exam (i.e.: *tawjihee*¹), teacher behavior as well as the method of assessing *distinguished* girls. Most of the girls expressed that the school was an undesirable place to develop their talents, especially due to the lack of extra-curricular activities. The testimonies of the girls in this study provide examples of being a confined girl by living in East Jerusalem as a “limited space”. Despite the family’s fundamental role in growth and education, several girls in this study indicated that their families are still thinking traditionally, which limit their ambitions and their ability for change.

The research revealed four major themes and related categories capturing the reality and perception of female giftedness in East Jerusalem. The themes range from *feeling and being different and gifted* (themes 1 and 2) to *being limited in options and freedom* (theme 3) to *the drive to make change and break out from destiny* (theme 4).

¹ Tawjihee refers to the secondary general education exam held at the end of 12th grade and used as a major factor for university admission and subject choice.

The implication of these findings are that gifted Palestinian girls do have a strong determination and sense of who they are, but live between the Separation Walls of their families, schools, society, and the constraining political context of East Jerusalem. Public policy makers, schools, counselors, teachers and parents must work on identifying and supporting the talents of these girls.