

**Stigma in the Classroom: an investigation into the area of
Stigmatized Students at Private Schools in the United Arab
Emirates (UAE)**

By

Nourhan Mahmoud Hasiba

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Dissertation tutor:

Dr. Eman Gaad

Institute of Education

The British University in Dubai

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Dedication

For my mother, Nawal who believed in the wealth of education and knowledge. For my husband Rasheed Al-Zorba, who has helped at every turn, made a supportive and comfortable home environment available as well as his frequent support and encouragement to continue my high education. For my two sons, Adnan and Ezzuddine, and my daughter Areen for their patience and support to pursue higher aspirations. This achievement is for them.

Abstract

Despite years of reform efforts in the field of education concerning the development of learning environment according to the international standards, as claimed by Dr. Haneef ((Minister of the UAE's Ministry of Education) at a conference which was held in May 2006, academic under-achievement associated with stigmatization in minority groups of students remains a challenge for the public and private schools in

the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The present study explored stigma phenomenon in the classrooms at six private schools in two emirates in the UAE. The researcher investigated such phenomenon, its reasons and whether certain factors like gender play a role in the labelling process as well as its effects on students' lives and education. She also explored the possibility of a relation between having a learning difficulty and being stigmatized. The study relied on qualitative methods such as interviews, observations, gathering documentary evidence and one quantitative method like questionnaires. Analysis of data revealed that certain groups of students are stigmatized due to both their under-achievement level and behavioural problems. On analysis, it was also found that boys are more likely to be stigmatized than girls in the classroom. The results indicated that the main stigma reasons are due to undiagnosed learning difficulty, family domestic troubles and/or behavioural challenges. To meet the needs of such students and improve the academic services which are provided for them, a set of various recommendations were suggested for future practices.

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1

Introduction

1.1 Background

In the United Arab Emirates (UAE) society, the expectation of a student at any school as well as one of the national goals of the UAE education system is to master the curriculum objectives, academic skills (reading, writing, arithmetic) and pass the Mid and End of year Examinations. Consequently, that student will be then upgraded into the higher class for the following year. This is in line with Gaad et al., (2006) who pointed out that ‘to achieve the curriculum planning produced and accredited by the Ministry of Education is amongst the vision goals of the UAE’.

As an experienced teacher and academic advisor, I always thought that those students who fail to achieve curriculum objectives; academic skills and pass examinations are stigmatized or labelled inside the classrooms of many schools in the UAE including my previous and current private school.

A range of research studies focused on those under-achievers and the reasons that lie behind their failure to access into the general school curriculum as well as the effects of such under-achievement on their self-concept and social adjustment. For instance, research findings that were provided by Sanchez and Roda (2000), and the National Research Council (1998) demonstrated that “students’ under-achievement and failure may due to their weak memory, difficulties acquiring and demonstrating knowledge, understanding and remembering academic content”. This is in parallel with Valas’s (1999) research results which revealed that “low-achieving students suffer from unfavorable self-perceptions and poor social adjustment”.

In the context of the UAE education field and schools, the investigation of reasons why students have under-achievement that results in their failure on academic subjects are not a priority for either their teachers or school management in private

schools. Instead, many schools' principals adopt a policy that aims at promoting that group of students to the next grade level if they do not experience a severe learning disability and behavioural problems, or otherwise, they exclude them from their schools.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Due to the researcher's background as a teacher who worked in the field of education for thirteen years and later as an academic advisor at three Emirati private schools for eight years for all pupils of different ages, following up their progress and academic achievement in different levels from first grade till eleventh grade. The researcher noticed that there is a phenomenon of frequent labelling to a certain group of students with labels 'mainly' by their teachers, administrators and peers in all schools she worked at. Such labels like dumb, lazy, hopeless case, failure and naughty.

This stigma phenomenon and the factors that lie behind it are still untreated and unresolved throughout the UAE's different schools. However, this particular issue raised much of the researcher's interest in those stigmatized students and created a kind of curiosity to discover: the typical stigmatized student, reasons that lie behind that stigma, the impact of labelling on a student's self-concept and attainment level, whether or not there is a relation between stigmas and learning difficulties. It is precisely this stigma in the classrooms of the UAE's private schools that this research investigates.

1.3 Aims of the Study

In view of the lack of studies across the UAE that look into the problem of stigma within the field of education, and due to students' disruptive and antisocial behaviour in different schools associated with low-achievement level as well as their considerable repetition rate which is evidenced by Badri's (1998) research findings that 'there is an acute attrition rate in UAE's schools'. The general aims of this research are as follows:

- To identify who is the stigmatized student at a private school culture in the UAE.
- To investigate the reasons that lie behind stigmas inside the classroom and whether certain factors like gender play a role.
- To examine the relationship between having a learning difficulty and being stigmatized.
- To examine the effect of stigma on the lives and education of those who are stigmatized.
- To offer a set of recommendations which are related to such phenomenon in order to help improve the educational services which are provided to those stigmatized students.

1.4 Research Questions

Springing from the aims, this study has the following research questions:

- (i) Who is stigmatized among students at a private school culture in the UAE?
- (ii) What are the reasons that lie behind stigmas inside the classroom, and whether certain factors like gender play a role?
- (iii) What is the relationship between having a learning difficulty and being stigmatized?
- (iv) What are the effects of stigma on the lives and education of such stigmatized students?
- (v) What are recommendations that could help improve the educational services which are provided to the stigmatized students in the Emirati schools?

1.5 Rational and Significance of the Study

This research is presented with the intention of changing teachers' and peoples' attitudes, beliefs and views of stigmatized pupils in order to understand that the problem is not located in the student himself/herself but rather in the societal response to such stigma. Sayce (2000) argues that 'the focus should move from the receiver of stigma to the people or factors causing the stigma'.

In fact, classrooms in different private schools all over the UAE comprise pupils with a range of backgrounds, languages, needs, strengths and weaknesses. However, teacher's response to this diversity can follow a continuum from stigmatization to seeing strength in differences. Recognizing both how labelling formed and how it contributes to attribution errors and stereotypes can help teachers work against those models of interaction to form ones based on individual qualities rather than labels which have adverse effects on a student. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to discover the typical stigmatized student and reasons that lie behind such stigma in order to provide research based recommendations to help those who are stigmatized to improve their achievement and build positive social relationships through the investigation of the research questions that are mentioned above.

Furthermore, due to the fact that the researcher has seen many stigmatized students deteriorated academically and socially over the years during her long term experience in some Emarati private schools till day, she thinks that there might be an undiagnosed learning difficulty associated with behavioural problems that lie behind those low-achievers' struggle. This is in accordance with Poyser's (2004) claim that 'most stigma coming from under- achievement as well as failing years might due to a hidden learning difficulty'.

1.6 United Arab Emirates Context

UAE is a wealthy, fast-developing country. It is comprised of seven emirates (Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, Ajman, Ras al-khaima, Umm al-Quwain, and Al-Fujairah) which are all governed by a federal system that is founded on the 2nd of December 1971. All are situated on the southern tip of the Arabian Gulf, east of Saudi Arabia and north of Oman. (Camerapix, 1998, p.5, in Gaad 2001). The emirates are settled

by a diversity of cultural groups. There are various Arab groups as well as Iranian, Indians, Filipinos and large numbers of Europeans and Americans. They are all known as expatriates.

1.7 Current Education System in the UAE

The education system in the UAE is in comparison to other countries is relatively new, but it has undergone major changes and expansion since 1970's (Bradshaw et al. 2004). In addition, the Ministry of Education attaches great importance to all its programmes and development plans due to its deeply-rooted belief in and awareness of the value and impact of education on the community. (National Report of the UAE, 1996).

The UAE's education system is divided into public and private sector. The government funds only the public sector schools. All UAE nationals have access to mainstream public education and no expatriates are admitted. (Gaad, 2001). Many expatriates, therefore, opened private schools to meet their religious, cultural and educational needs. In fact, the private sector is growing faster than the public sector as many new schools are opening. This study focuses on some private schools and specifically in two emirates of the UAE.

1.8 Structure of the Study

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. Having provided an introduction in chapter one. The literature review which is related to the study research questions is outlined in chapter two. Chapter three reveals research methodology. Analysis of research findings are presented in chapter four. Discussion, conclusion and research based recommendations are indicated in chapter-five. Finally the references and appendices. The appendices include the research net results which are presented in tables. In addition, some evidenced documents which are related to a group of stigmatized students.

2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will investigate the relevant literature and studies which are related to the questions of this research. It will shed the light on stigma phenomenon in the context of Goffman's theory, labelling and attribution theories. Causes of stigma and whether gender plays a role, and stigma effects will be discussed in this chapter. After long search for appropriate literature on this topic, a conclusion was drawn that virtually no work is done in the field regarding the subjective experience of stigma and stigmatizing practices inside the classrooms of the UAE's schools. Terms used in the literature on stigma are defined below for the purpose of this study.

2.2 Definition of terms

2.2.1 Stigma

The term stigma enjoys a long history as a central construct in social psychology investigated by both psychological and sociological social psychologists. Many theorists have woven stigma into their explanations of stereotyping, prejudice, social justice and social identity (Blascovich et al., 2002). The literature has revealed a range of stigma definitions. Goffman (1963) explained stigma by reference to the notion of deviance that is: '*Deviation from prevalent or valued norms*'.

Advances have also occurred in the definition of stigma. As defined by Crocker et al., (1998), stigma is '*the possession (or beliefs that one possess) of some attributes or characteristics that conveys a social identity that is devalued in a particular social context*'. This is in parallel with the meaning of stigma in the English Oxford Dictionary which is '*a bad reputation that something has because a lot of people have a fixed idea that is wrong, often unfairly*'. (Worn 1999). This fixed idea about a type of person is also known as a stereotype which is often not true in reality. This is

emphasized by Corrigan's and Penn's (1999) claim that '*stigma is a term based on negative stereotype*'. For the purpose of this study, both definitions of Crocker, et., al (1998), Corrigan and Penn (1999) are adopted.

2.2.2 Stereotypes

Teachers' beliefs about the nature of a student or a group that are summarily applied to students to reflect predictable characteristic and behaviour of those students are known as stereotypes. (Friske 1998). In other words, students who are stigmatized or stereotyped by labels due to gender, physical disability or learning difficulty, are students for whom teachers and administrators hold negative beliefs or stereotypes (Stephen, et al., 1998). For instance, when teachers say 'Ahmad is lazy', they are not saying that after diligently working on homework all afternoon, rather they are asserting a belief about a fundamental trait of Ahmad that is reliant across time. Evidence to this is Stephan's (1999) assertion that 'stereotypes serve as descriptive and explanatory vehicle for attributional judgments'. That is the negative attributes (stereotypes) like student's low intellectual ability and low-achievement have been linked with teacher's low expectancies for student's future success which, in turn, may limit the opportunities that offered to that stereotyped (stigmatized) student because he/she is not deemed as capable.

This indicates that stereotypes serve multiple functions, descriptive and explanatory. Descriptive means, they represent a picture of what a student is and does. While explanatory indicate that stereotypes provide information about why persons or students are in their present state. Reyna (2000) demonstrated that there are some stereotypes that suggest a trait, attribute, or behaviour.

Moreover, using offensive words or focusing on a student's disability easily lead teachers into the trap of stigma assuming one specific quality in a group of students. So, we hear teachers say, 'All Downs children are very loving', 'he is a Mongol' or 'Ahmad is stupid'. In fact, these stereotypes or offensive labels deny individuality and reveal teachers' attitudes toward them.

2.2.3 Labelling process:

Labels are considered a specific aspect of language, and exist in nearly every organisation and society throughout the world. Walker (2005) claimed that “It’s just a phase----he’s just one of those odd children ----It’s too early for labels”. This implies that labels oversimplify children and do not take into account a child’s strengths. Therefore, labels are considered as pessimistic because they imply that people are always going to be one way. This is in line with Gorrel (2002) who stated that ‘people who treat kids with learning difficulties tend to have fairly narrow views’. For example, people who diagnose attention deficits may label too many kids ‘ADD’. They neglect to consider how kids are wired and how memory impacts language and attention.

Thus, Labelling is a process of stigmatization in which those who do not comply with accepted behaviour are marked out for avoidance and ostracism. (Blascovich, et al., 2002). For instance, in a classroom, students’ hyperactivity, disruptiveness and aggressiveness are considered as an unaccepted, deviant behaviour in the view of the traditional cultural, values and beliefs of teachers and administrators in the UAE society. As a result, such students are labelled and stigmatized.

According to Heatherton et al., (2003), individuals sometimes categorize others in ways that stigmatize them so that others will devalue them. An example is some teachers’ categorization to under-achievers as a hopeless case. Furthermore, Gaad’s (2004) research outcomes revealed that ‘labelling process’ may play a role in stigmatizing a career in special education as well as shaping the teachers’ attitudes towards such a career in the UAE society.

2.2.4 Self-concept

Different authors agreed that self-concept have a multi-dimensional nature. It is considered to comprise various areas, some of which are more related to certain personality aspects (physical, social, emotional), while others appear to be more linked to academic achievement (in different areas and subjects). (Sanchez and Roda, 2000).

It is now accepted that self-concept characterizes a wider definition of the self-construct which includes cognitive, emotional and behavioural features. (Buckroyd and Flitton 2004). In order to reach a common definition of self-concept, the researcher opted to take the definition which is proposed by Marsh and Hattie (1996 cited Yeh and Evans 2004, p.58) who defined the term self-concept as “*a person’s self-perceptions formed through experience with and interpretations of his/her environment, which are influenced especially by evaluations by significant others, reinforcement and attributions for the individual’s own behaviour*”. This is in consistent with the social comparison theory (Dagnan and Sandhu 1999) which proposes that, ‘*one’s self-concept is largely determined by the ways in which one is treated by significant others, and that an individual becomes an object to himself/herself in the social environment in which he/she is involved*’.

These definitions can be related to the context of a classroom in that, student’s perception is formed from his/her experiences and relationships with the environment where significant people (teachers, administrators, peers) play an important role. This is in parallel with Smith (2002) who pointed out that ‘students apply labels to themselves and their peers every day, and these terms help determine how they define their self-concept’.

2.2.5 Learning difficulties (LD)

According to Alcott’s (2002) argument, all children with learning difficulties usually have serious problems with the basic skills of reading, writing and working with numbers. As a consequence, they show academic attainment that is significantly below that of their peers in most subjects of the curriculum. (P.31). This implies that those children who are not progressing and learning roughly at the same pace as their peers, have a learning difficulty.

In the United Kingdom (UK), a ‘learning difficulty’ is being defined by the Education Act (1996 section 312(2), cited Farrell 2003, p. 12) as that, a child has a learning difficulty if:

- a) *He has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of his age.*

- b) *He has a disability which either prevents or hinders him from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for children of his age in schools within the area of the local Education authority, or*
- c) *He is under the age of five and is, or would be if special Educational provision were not made for him, likely to fall within Paragraph (a) and (b) when of, or over that age.*

2.2.6 Special Educational Needs (SEN)

The provision of SEN concept and its areas were amongst the main ideas of the Warnock Report (1978) in the (UK). The current definition of SEN as it is used by the (UK) Department for Education and Skills is,

‘Children have Special Educational Needs if they have a learning difficulty which calls for special provision to be made for them’. (DfES 2001). Such definition indicates that it is possible for a pupil to have a learning difficulty but not to have a SEN. This is because the only learning difficulty that constitutes a SEN is one which calls for special educational provision to be made for it. Special educational provision is being defined as, *‘some kind of provision which is extra or different from that made for other children of his/her age in mainstream school’.* (Alcott 2002, p.26). An individual educational plan (IEP) is an effective educational provision which is considered as a tool that helps teachers to plan and teach children with SEN. (Farrell 2003, p.60).

On the other hand, the Salamanca Statement defines SEN as the needs of children with disabilities or learning difficulties. (UNESCO 1994, P.6).

Furthermore, Harter (1990 cited Buckroyd and Flitton 2004, p.307) defines ‘learning disabled’ children as *“those within the normal range of intelligence who have specific deficits in the area of information processing, reading, writing and the manipulation of symbols”*. This definition is adopted for this study purpose. However, Harter’s description corresponds best to what in the United Kingdom (UK) is called ‘learning difficulties’ and describes only part of the population of children with complex needs.

The term 'complex needs' can cover a wide range of conditions including 'slow learner', 'learning impeded by emotional factors' and 'developmentally delayed in language'. (Buckroyd and Flitton 2004). This indicates that students' complex or exceptional needs arise from their special characteristics or circumstances. This can be evidenced by Beveridge's (1999) statement that 'exceptional needs include aspects of children's learning, emotional and behavioural difficulties, but go beyond current definition of SEN'.

In the context of this study and based on Harter's description, some of the stigmatized (labelled) students in the private schools could have undiagnosed learning difficulties in specific deficits areas which might due to that the educational services which are provided for them are not appropriate.

Furthermore, in the UK, the Code of Practice (2001a cited Farrell 2003, p. 13) set out the latest classification of SEN areas relating to students' educational needs rather than classification by disability. The main areas of SEN are, communication and interaction; cognition and learning; behaviour, emotional and social development; sensory and/or physical needs.

- Communication and interaction needs- include children who have speech and language difficulties, specific learning difficulties like, dyslexia, hearing impairment and autistic spectrum disorder.
- Cognition and learning needs- include children who are making slower progress than others and who require specific programmes.
- Behaviour, emotional and social development needs- cover pupils who are demonstrating features of emotional behavioural difficulties (EBD). Such as those pupils who are withdrawn or isolated, hyperactive and lacking concentration.
- Sensory and /or physical needs- include children with visual and hearing impairments associated with physical disabilities. Children who use wheel chair due to a physical handicap and those whose sight is corrected with spectacles are not considered as being visually impaired.

Hence, children whose needs come into these areas are said to have learning difficulties and in turn require flexible teaching arrangements.

2.3 The relation between Stigma and SEN

Labelling continues, as it has been for most of this century, to be a continuous issue in the field of special needs education. (Norwich, 1999).

Although in the UK, the Warnock Committee (1978) was strongly influenced by the arguments against the negative aspects of labelling, and advocated the abandonment of categories, it actually replaced one set of labels in terms of deficits with another set in terms of a broad label of SEN. For example, labelling children as delicate, educationally subnormal and maladjusted were some of labels in the ten 'categories of handicap'. These were replaced by the term SEN. A supportive evidence to this is Beveridge's (1999) claim that 'when the term special educational need is applied as a label to children or students, it can lead to as much stigmatization'. (p.11). For this reason, some researchers like Hart (1996) and Booth (1998) argue that 'it is more appropriate to refer only to 'individual educational needs and to focus on barriers to children's learning'. This is also in line with the words of Booth and Ainscow (1998) who said that the term 'special education' itself is a label which has been called into question as an acceptable way of referring to the education of students with disabilities and difficulties.

Therefore, in the field of special education, labelling and stigmatization are seen to occur most evidently in schools when students are placed in separate special classes or as support in mainstream settings as a result of their disability or learning difficulty (Stobart, 1986 cited Salter and Byrne 2000). This is in accordance with the findings of Bradshaw et al., (2004) research on special education in the UAE's school system. It is found that, the Emarati school system appears to focus on an early intervention system. Students, who are assessed by the educational psychologist and / or speech-language pathologist as having learning difficulties, are assigned either to a special class or to resource room support. As a result those students are being stigmatized.

2.4 The relation between stigma and SEN teaching as a profession

Gaad (2004) continues this focus within the UAE. The outcomes of Gaad's (2004) research have revealed that in the UAE society, the negative attitudes of pre-service teachers towards seeking a career in special education to teach children with specific special needs are shaped and affected by the cultural values, morals and beliefs towards those students and their educators. As a consequence, a kind of cultural stigma is formed in the UAE society. This has led to that; teachers are stigmatized just like their students. In other words, because those children are stigmatized in society, so are their teachers. However, pre-service teachers were concerned about their labelling in society and how it could be linked to the labelling in of children with SEN.

2.5 Goffman's Theory and Stigmatization

It is curious to explore the literature in the context of the previous theories and studies regarding stigmatization in schools. The phenomenon of stigma was first explored by Goffman (1963). He wrote that a person becomes stigmatized when an individual possesses an attribute unexpected from someone in that 'category', which is considered different or deviant by the social group. As a result, what creates stigma is the social response to that attribute or characteristic. Goffman's theory is, in summary, that society's negative responses to people with disabilities, unfavourable images of them, and their own negative self-evaluations are explained by negative differences (deviance).

This is in accordance with Jones et al., (1984 cited May 2001) who explained the process of stigma by stating that, 'persons marked as different often receive negative reactions and evaluations from nonmarked persons because they deviate from what has been 'mutually' constructed as the standards for normalcy'. A parallel support to this was provided by Valas's (1999) claim that 'if people appear to be different from what are expectedly average norms, there is a tendency to attach a label to them, which marks and distinguishes them from the rest of society'.

Based on the above, Goffman's theory and other studies can be related to the context of a classroom activities at private Emarati schools in that; students who appear to be different in their abilities to keep up with other children in the same class of same age, that is, they appear to be different from what is expected by average norms (achievement and understanding level), there is a tendency to attach labels to them by their teachers, peers and administrators, like slow-learner, disable and lazy. As a consequence, these stereotypes will mark and distinguish them from the rest of class.

2.6 Labeling Theory and Stigmatization

Labels like dumb, slow-learner and naughty are all offensive to those students who appear to be different in their ability, understanding or behaviour. Such labels reinforce stigmatizing these students. In other words, stigmatization stream out from such labels which are attached to those students.

Labelling theory (or the interactionist approach) is a term describing a cluster of ideas that may state many different things. The basic premise of this theory is that people become deviant because certain stereotypes are attached to their behaviour by the majority population and authorities in society. (Link, et al., 1991 cited Byrne 2001). This implies that labeling theory conceives deviance as a social construction rather than an objective quality intrinsic to any particular activity. (Rains, et al., 2003).

In addition, based on Goffman's (1963) argument, labelling theory predicts that deviant labels also result in an associated stigma. This stigma is hypothesized to occur when there is a negatively valued discrepancy between one's actual identity and one's virtual identity (how one is expected to do, be by society).

In the context of a classroom, once a particular label has been assigned to a student, his teachers expect particular behaviour from that student and on the basis of these expectations, act toward him/her in an altered way. In turn, the labelled student acts in ways appropriate to his/her teachers' expectations. This is in line with Hayward and Bright (1997) statement 'stigma is the negative effect of labelling'.

2.7 Attribution Theory and Causes of Stigma

Based on the attribution theory (Weiner 1986 cited Robertson 2000) stigma can communicate causes that can be either internal or external. Internal causes are rooted in something about the person, such as student's traits and behaviour. While the external causes are those which are rooted in something outside the person, like the environmental agents and social factors. In addition, such internal and external causes can be stable, controllable, unstable or uncontrollable.

Controllability of the cause, refers to causes either controllable by the stigmatized (like laziness, hard-work or prosocial behaviour) or not (examples innate abilities, external causes). For instance, laziness is considered internal to the student and somewhat stable, but is considered controllable. While family issues, learning environment or being victim of rejection are external causes to the student, uncontrollable and probably stable. This can be related to the classroom in that; student's under-achievement and failure due to his/her family troubles (divorce) is considered an external and uncontrollable cause to that student. That failure and low achievement, in turn, determine teacher's judgments, expectations and attitudes towards such student. This is in parallel with Beveridge's (1999) statement that 'teacher judgments about students are more likely to be affected by the general levels of attainment in a class'. This is also in accordance with Reyna (2000) who argued that 'such controllability attributions are among the strongest predictors of how a stigmatized is treated by others'.

Furthermore, attributions that cause students' stigmatization in the classroom are considered either to be stable or unstable. Cause stability refers to wherein causes are perceived to persist across time or to be short-lived or unstable. Stability attributions play an important role in predictions and expectations for future behaviour. For instance, if a stigmatized student is not successful (failure) because of low intelligence (low IQ), this cause would be deemed internal to that student and most likely stable if it reflects a congenital state. (Coleman 1986 cited Reidy 1993). Likewise, laziness is also internal to the student and somewhat stable.

Moreover, based on the attribution theory (Weiner 1986 cited Robertson 2000) students are unmotivated due to their beliefs of why they succeed or fail at tasks.

These beliefs about causality are called attributions. For example, if students believe they failed due to low ability, then they would not be motivated to work harder to succeed. Such beliefs become internal and stable cause when they are associated with an attachment of labels and stigmatization by teachers and peers.

In brief, there are some specific internal attributes which restrict students' ability to participate fully in the educational opportunities that are generally available in a class. These are associated with the contribution of other external factors like home background, school, teachers' attitudes and other social factors. These all could be considered as causes of students' stigmatization.

2.8 Effects of Stigma

Clausen (1981 cited Byrne 2001) stated that 'stigma is a buzz word, arousing more emotional reaction than words like devaluation and discrimination'.

Many research studies have revealed the negative impact of labelling on stigmatized people, particularly students at different age levels. For instance, as Higgins, et al., (2002) noted that; when a student is considered to possess certain 'failing' or discredited characteristic, he/she may automatically be treated similarly as all other persons with the same 'failing' regardless of their achievements or other distinguishing characteristics. However, this evident in how a student may face organizational constraints on educational attainment once he/she is labelled as having learning disability. (Powell, 2003). As a result, that student may no longer be regarded as an individual with unique abilities, learning styles, circumstances and aspirations. This is also reflects Ho's (2004) point of view that 'once a child is labelled, various expectations and stereotypes that are tied to that label may be imposed on him/her. Such label changes the student's access to later educational opportunities'. Consequently, this may also produce negative expectations among his/her teachers, or even family members.

Furthermore, social and psychological research have revealed that labels have the effects they do because they convey attributional information that impact the way stigmatized are treated by others. (Robertson 2000). For instance, teacher's attitudes and expectations of students, and the extent to which theses are communicated can

influence the way those are being stereotyped perceive themselves as well as the way they are viewed by their peers.

Moreover, literature has revealed a range of consequences which result in stigmatizing or labelling students in a classroom. Such effects include self-concept, attribution errors, self-stigma (internalized stigma), unwillingness and rejection.

3

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The research method for this study was chosen bearing in mind the nature of the subject being dealt with, the nature of the area and categories of people to meet. This is in line with the assertion of Robson (2002): “The selection of a method or methods is based on what kind of information is sought, from whom and under what circumstances” (p. 224). However, in spite of the care and preplanning undertaken, limitations to the study were not all eliminated. This chapter includes area of the study in section 3.2. Section 3.3 reveals this research design. The research instruments are indicated in section 3.4. Research validity and reliability are in section 3.5. Section 3.6 presents sample selection. Ethical considerations are in section 3.7. Research procedures are revealed in section 3.8. Finally, the study limitations are revealed in section 3.9.

3.2 Area of Study

The area of study chosen for this dissertation is six private schools in two emirates of the UAE. Four primary junior high private schools in Dubai and two schools in Ajman. A few factors have motivated this choice:

First, being the researcher’s field of work in private Emarati schools, she knew it would be easier for her to collect data within the limited time and resources as the researcher would be dealing with people she is familiar with them. The advantage of being familiar with somebody, would give her a better chance to clarify the issue for respondents.

Secondly, the multicultural diversity that exists in such schools regarding students, parents, teachers and administrators who all comprise different nationalities, backgrounds, points of views and attitudes toward stigmatized students. This could

reflect a fairly true picture of those students and the real reasons that lie behind such stigma.

Finally, the kind and validity of information which is needed to achieve the aims of this study requires such school field to collect a reliable data about those students.

3.3 Research Design

Research design is being defined as a framework that guides research activities (Galyam, 2003). Therefore, the design of this research comprises the purpose, research paradigm, context and research techniques (instruments) employed.

Due to the aim of gathering a range of opinions from a group of people, this study is an ethnographic survey because it is seen as the best way of getting close to the reality of stigma phenomenon in a way which is not feasible with the experimental and survey strategies. (Robson 2002, p.188). Although, within the two emirates, six schools were chosen where interviews were conducted and questionnaires used, it was just a sampling of a few. Generally, this study has been conducted through a “qualitative” approach to data collection and analysis, although there is one element of the “quantitative” approach (questionnaires) as well.

The reasons for adopting the qualitative approach are, first, despite that the results showed numbers and figures that could be analyzed quantitatively, the researcher chose the qualitative approach as the number of samples was not representative of all students at all schools in the seven emirates of the UAE. Therefore, it was felt for that, the best approach was a qualitative method due to the sensitive nature of the subject and data collected. Nevertheless, numbers gave good indications of % which helped the qualitative analysis of the research results.

A second reason is to provide a rich, contextualized picture of the stigmatization phenomenon. This is in line with Denzin and Lincoln (2000), and Schwandt (2001) who all mentioned that “A qualitative research is an approach that uses methodologies designed to provide a rich, contextualized picture of the educational or social phenomenon under study”.

Thirdly, due to the lack of standardized instrument that can validly and reliably measure the research outcomes, qualitative approach is seen the best for this type of research. (Patton, 2002).

Fourth, being a research of social phenomenon, the survey would not be extensive enough to employ a fully quantitative approach, and to reflect a real picture of such stigma amongst the educational field.

Fifth, the nature of the issue being investigated, and the categories of respondents that were dealt with, could best be addressed through a qualitative approach such as unstructured interviews characterized by pursuit of an interesting issue raised. In addition, an exclusively quantitative instrument like questionnaires could not have met this need effectively.

Sixth, to achieve the aim of this study which is to elicit understanding and meaning of the word sigma in the context of a classroom, and to reflect experiences, beliefs and attitudes of participants as well as analyze practices of parents, teachers and administrators in response to such stigmatized students.

Finally, this choice of design was determined by what the researcher thought was the best combination to help her do this research successfully. As Edwards and Talbot (1999) said ‘a well-designed study sets the researcher free to explore and find the connections that make research so interesting’. (p.32).

3.4 Research Instruments

Bell (1999) asserts that the initial question is not ‘which methodology?’ but ‘what do I need to know and why?’ Only then do you ask ‘what is the best way to collect information?’ (p.101).

Having considered what the researcher need to know and why, four main types of research instruments were considered as the best way of collecting the data; interviews, questionnaires, observations and gathering documentary evidence. These choices were motivated by the associated advantages of each instrument concerned for the success of this research, and for the purpose of ‘triangulation’ and ‘validation’

of findings. Triangulation is being clarified by Mertens and Mclaughlin (2004) as ‘it involves checking information that has been collected from different methods for consistency of evidence across sources of data’. In other words, triangulation based on the usage of more than one method of data production in this study, was used to improve the validity of this research findings.

3.4.1 Interviews

Interviews were chosen because they provide access to information that cannot be accessed through observations and document analysis. (Denscombe, 2003, p.165). Therefore, structured, semi-structured and non-structured interviews were all used in the data collection exercise. A total of 27 people (teachers, head teachers, deputy principal, head of departments, parents and students) were interviewed. Sometimes were administered side by side with questionnaires for the purpose of comparing findings. Interviews with teachers and parents were accessed adopting semi-structured interviews as well as formal structured interviews for those who agreed to be interviewed in person, (like a deputy principal and head of a department). This is in order to collect information about their views on stigmatized pupils, reasons behind such stigma, and their recommendations to eliminate that phenomenon and help those students. Informal interviews were also conducted with parents whose children have educational problems to gather their views on stigma and to examine the extent to which their children were educationally and socially harmed. Four students who are stigmatized and not stigmatized were interviewed to find out their views of both stigma and its reasons.

Moreover, the interview questions were translated into the Arabic language which is the first language of those whose nationality is Arab and UAE. Therefore, all responses were, then, translated into English to facilitate analysis. In order to ensure validity of the translation, back-to-back translation technique was used.

One outstanding advantage of this instrument was that it enabled the researcher to clarify the issue of stigma inside school classrooms to respondents, generate detailed and desired information, and pursue issue raised that was of interest to the researcher for her dissertation.

On the other hand, a major disadvantage was that interviews were time-consuming. Due to the limited time the researcher had in her school and other schools, some interviews were scheduled after school to avoid running up against timetables and other interruptions to bridge the gap (the missed opportunity of talking to some teachers during the school day). Holland and Shortall (2000) was right to warn against the time consuming nature of interviews, (p.27). Moreover, a pilot study was designed to examine the semi-structured interview questions before interview.

3.4.2 Questionnaires

Two sets of questionnaires (one for parents, the other for teachers and administrators) were designed to be broad based and administered to all categories of respondents who were reassured on issues of voluntarily and confidentiality of their responses. The questionnaire which is derived from the literature was modified by the researcher to be culturally appropriate as a tool for collecting data. Such questionnaires were administered by the researcher face-to-face and sent by friends in schools and banks.

Such questionnaires were presented in two different color papers, pink and green. The aim of this is to differentiate it from the ordinary white colour which is familiar and usually used by all people on daily basis. In addition, the intention of using coloured questionnaires is to be easily attracted by the respondents as well as to create a kind of awareness to that questionnaire. Moreover, using the pink coloured questionnaire for parents and the green one for school's staff has a considerable advantage in being easier for the researcher to collect and analyze the data. (Please refer to Appendix-1, p.77).

The two questionnaires were piloted twice. Although they seemed to work satisfactorily and based on the interview and research questions; few respondents did not answer some questions. Teachers' questionnaire comprises two main parts. Part-1 includes questions on personal and occupational data. The personal part comprises, position in the school, teachers' major, whole and current years of experience, while the occupational data is based on collecting information on the independent variables: type of school, students' grade level, gender, nationality and size of class. Part-2 covered subjective areas regarding stigmatized pupils (16 items), reasons of stigma

(15 items), and predominant gender in stigma and reasons, the relation between stigma and learning difficulty, behaviour and academic achievement. Furthermore, the two questionnaires contained close-ended items which are absolutely vital for the research and of a kind which the respondents will be willing to answer, with the intention of making the task of responding to it “tick box” as straightforward and speedy as possible, but with three multiple choice questions which allowed respondents to insight into their responses in an area for comments associated with the question.

Questionnaires were chosen because they made it possible to collect data from a fairly large number of respondents in a short time. One major advantage with questionnaires was they enabled the researcher to access people whom she would have failed to meet in person, either due to their busy schedule, remote location or unfavorable appointment dates.

From the 115 questionnaires that were sent out, one setback of eight questionnaires was a poor return rate of only 6% ¹. This was expected as Rose and Grosvenor (2001) had already warned about these problems, (p.131).

3.4.3 Observations

To gain an understanding of what actually happens in a classroom and on the playground, to record this and then to describe, analyse and interpret what have been observed, the tool of observing such stigmatized pupils in the researcher school was chosen to achieve this. This is in parallel with Galton et al., (1980 cited Rose and Grosvenor 2001) who claim that is “Observation can be a source of rich data”. One major advantage of observation was that it enabled the researcher to have a real life picture of what was happening. Therefore, a five non-participant observations approach was the logical choice due to the need of looking for small interactions or reactions from these stigmatized students. As pointed out by Mertens and McLaughlin (2004) this was helpful in verifying information that had been obtained through questionnaires and interviews by spot checking on existing facilities. (p. 106).

¹ A total of 40 parents’ questionnaires and 75 teachers/ administration questionnaires. Eight questionnaires (5 of parents & 3 of teachers) were not returned.

The drawback, however, was sometimes, the difficulty of accessing certain periods due to the limitation of school time. This made the researcher fail to observe other stigmatized students she wanted to see.

3.4.4 Documentary Evidence

The word ‘document’ is being defined as a written or non-written text, (Robson, 2002, p.352). For the purpose of this study, some written documents were collected both from teachers and subject coordinators. Such documents included educational settings such as samples of pupils’ class work, homework, descriptive analytical reports, monthly tests, end of year test scores reports in all subjects which are all related to the five stigmatized pupils who were observed. A follow-up plan to 15 stigmatized students in grade three who have speech and language difficulties in the Arabic subject was also obtained from their teacher who mentioned this problem in the interview with her. Some original documents were translated into the English language.

3.5 Validity and Reliability of Research Instruments

According to Robson (2002) “Good rigorous research must be reliable and valid”. (p.170). Therefore, to enhance the research validity and reliability, a triangulation method (observation, interviews, documents and questionnaires) was adopted to check information that has been collected from different sources as well as confirm and support the findings. In effect, triangulation is a way to get to the finding in the first place by seeing or hearing multiple instances of it from different sources. (Miles and Huberman 1994, p.267). In addition, validity and reliability of observation and documentary evidence depended on being critical bearing in mind the possibility of manipulation. In an effort to avoid this, much attempt has been made to cross-check data by subjecting them to such triangulation.

3.6 Sample Selection (Participants)

A total of 134 people participated in this study. Data was collected from twenty seven interviewees (teachers, administrators, students and parents). Thirty five parents filled in the questionnaire, and seventy two teachers and administrators were respondents to the other questionnaire. All participants were of different nationalities, cultures and with various work experience. The reason for this range of respondents guarantees to some extent, the ‘validity’ of the findings. In addition, the involvement of parents is due to that parents play an active and valued role in their children’s education as well as supporters to their educational progress. (Garner and Davies 2001, p. 84).

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Out of ethical considerations, names of schools and all participants who are included in this work are totally with the full permission of those concerned. No one has been misled about the true nature of the study. On contrary, there has been explicit honesty about the study to the point that in cases it caused the withdrawal of some participants or request for anonymity. In addition, respect for the privacy, dignity, and integrity of those all participants from whom data is obtained, has been considered. Such requests have been totally honoured. This is in line with Bell’s (1999) recommendation which is “Be honest----”, (p.37). Furthermore, data collection methods and timelines were carefully planned and matched with research goals and purposes². According to Lankshear and Knobel (2004), there was a respect of both interview questions and other data collection methods to the social, cultural conventions and boundaries between what is accepted and what is not. (p.186). For instance, the designed interview schedules were sensitive to the social conventions followed by the respondent. Moreover, the surnames of the 15 students who were written on one teacher’s follow-up plan document were deleted except their first name for ethical issues in order to protect their identities.

² Going back time after time to collect additional bits and pieces of data that were not envisaged

3.8 Research Procedures (Data Collection)

Data collection (questionnaires, interviews and observations) took about three months. The first bunch of questionnaires was administered personally to the colleagues of the researcher's current private international school in Dubai. Then, permission was taken from a principal of a primary private school (Grade 1 till 6) who asked to send her a copy of the teachers/administrators questionnaire by email one week before the date of administering such questionnaires to her teachers. For the next bunch of questionnaires, they were distributed through the deputy principal of another private international school in Dubai. The third and fourth collections of questionnaires were distributed through the head of English department at the researcher's previous junior high school and by a principal of another private school in Ajman.

Concerning parents' questionnaires, some of it was administered personally to parents at the researcher's school. Another bunch of questionnaires was distributed via researcher's friends to different parents who are employers in a government institute, company and Bank in Dubai and Ajman.

Regarding the interviews, semi-structured interviews were conducted with coordinators, social worker and teachers of Kindergarten to Grade twelve and some students in the researcher's school. Interviews were conducted with the deputy principal, some primary level teachers and heads of English and Science departments in an international private school in Dubai. This was done after faxing a letter to get the approval from the principal to conduct such interviews. Also some colleagues were interviewed outside the work hours in both the British university and entertainment centres at the weekend's morning and evening times.

Five observations to five stigmatized pupils in different levels (Grade-one, two, four, six and seven) were conducted in the researcher's school. Permission was sought from the teachers and management concerned in relation to access to documentary evidence both of the class work, tests and final score report cards of such stigmatized pupils was obtained.

3.9 Limitations of the Study

There were a number of limitations on the way which had an impact on the research to some extent. For instance, this research results may not be allowed to be generalised due to that the schools that approved access to data collection were private schools.

Secondly, due to the sensitivity of this study subject, it was not easy to collect data for this research, as there were other challenges such as the totally refusal of some schools' principals to the access to interview conduction with their teachers and administrators. Such reluctant was informed after the submission of a permission letter wit a list of research interview questions. Other principals' refusal was accompanied with a denial of the presence of any stigmatized pupils in their school.

Thirdly, language difference between the respondents and researcher's questions is another challenge. For instance, for this dissertation, interview questions were translated into the Arabic language which is the first language of those whose nationality is Arab and UAE. Therefore, all responses were, then, translated into English to facilitate analysis. In order to ensure validity of the translation, back-to-back translation technique was used.

My own bias as a researcher and a teacher with an interest in the stigma phenomenon was another concern. I have used triangulation to minimize my bias. (Please see p. 21).

Finally, a common limitation to all research was by questionnaires. Social desirability may influence responses. Such as, based on the results of questionnaires, we do not know if the respondents were saying what they really understand or believe by the term 'stigmatized'.

4

Research Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents findings in response to the research questions (refer to chapter-1, p.3). It also shows the results from participants' responses to additional questions in the questionnaires which asked them to specify the number and gender of stigmatized students in their classes as well as students' problems, participants' views of a possible relation between stigma and learning difficulty, and students' behaviour effect on their achievement level.

A qualitative data analysis approach is followed. The one major strength of qualitative data is its focus on naturally occurring, ordinary events in natural settings, so that we have a strong handle on what 'real life' is like. (Miles, and Huberman, 1994).

In this chapter, section 4.2 describes the findings from both questionnaires (teachers/administrators and parents). Section 4.3 describes summary of results which are obtained from questionnaires. A summary of the qualitative data which is derived from interviews is described in section 4.4. Section 4.5 describes findings from five classrooms observations. A brief information about the documents which are collected for the purpose of this study is given in section 4.6.

4.2 Findings from Questionnaires

4.2.1 Results from Teachers / Administrators Questionnaire

All respondents to this questionnaire have teaching experience ranging from one year to sixteen years. Participants' students are of different nationalities (Arabs, UAE, and

Europeans) who are studying in classes that are ranging in size from 20 to 30 students per class.

4.2.1.1 The Typical Stigmatized Student in the Emarati School Culture

Participants' responses to this question produced the results in Table-1 as follows.

Table-1: The Typical Stigmatized Student in the Emarati School Culture from the Points of Views of Teachers and Administrators (No. 72)

Traits of a Stigmatized Student	Frequency No. of Respondents	Proportion %	Rank order beginning with the most common trait
The Slow learner	43	60%	1
The Lazy	32	44%	2
Who Experiences speech & language difficulty	32	44%	2
Who has little interest of the school	32	44%	2
Who is always Inattentive	32	44%	2
The Hyperactive	30	42%	3
The Aggressive	29	40%	4
The Withdrawn	20	28%	5
Who uses hearing aids	10	14%	6
The Multiple repeater	8	11%	7
Who Wears eye glasses	7	10%	8
Who has a difficulty in Math	5	7%	9
Who uses a wheel chair	5	7%	9
Has Asthma	4	6%	10
Gifted student	3	4%	11

Table-1 reveals that all participants' responses indicate a range of descriptive labels that are related to either student's academic attainment, behaviour, symptoms and characteristics. The majority of respondents (60%) believe that the "the slow learner" is the typical stigmatized student. This implies that such student does not learn at the same pace as his/her peers of same age in a class. 44% of all participants

shared the same vision on four characteristics of the stigmatized which are “the one who experiences speech and language difficulty, has little interest of the school, is always inattentive and Lazy”. These attributes indicate a student’s symptoms to a possible undiagnosed learning difficulty which hinders him/her from an access into the school curriculum. This is in line with documentary evidence. (Please see Appendix-10.1 p. 99.1 – 99.6).

11% of participants considered “the multiple repeater” is the stigmatized one. The “one who has difficulty in Maths” is the stigmatized from the view of 7% of respondents. It is apparent that these descriptive stereotypes revealed that the stigmatized is who has learning problems in mastering the basic skills of academic subjects like Maths, English or Arabic language which in turn affect his/her achievement level. (Please see Appendix- 10.1, p99.7).

Significant numbers of participants considered the stigmatized as one who has deviant or unaccepted behaviour like “hyperactivity, aggressiveness and withdrawn”. Others view that the one who is characterized by using hearing aids and wheel chair, wearing eye glasses or having Asthma is the stigmatized student. This means that the students who have special disability in hearing, vision, physical ability and breathing which differentiates them from the norms are likely to be stigmatized. A low proportion (4%) of respondents believes that the ‘gifted’ student is the stigmatized. This implies that the student who has a noticeable good achievement level can be also stigmatized in a class.

It is clear that the typical stigmatized amongst students in a private Emarati school culture from the view of majority of respondents is the slow learner, lazy, inattentive and who experiences speech and language difficulty associated with little interest of the school.

4.2.1.2 The Reasons that Lie Behind Stigmas in the Classrooms and whether Certain Factors like Gender Plays a Role

The results that are produced from participants’ answers are shown in Table-2 on the next page.

Table-2: Reasons that Lie Behind Stigmas in the Classroom from the Points of Views of Teachers/Administrators (No.72)

Reason for being stigmatized	Frequency number of respondents	Proportion % of respondents	Rank order
Trouble paying attention	44	61%	1
Little interest in learning	41	57%	2
Being overactive	40	56%	3
Family troubles	35	49%	4
Trouble finishing tasks	27	38%	5
Trouble peer relationship	26	36%	6
Failure in most subjects	25	35%	7
Inability to enjoy activities	20	28%	8
Easily tired	17	24%	9
Excessively angry	17	24%	9
Trouble keeping up with other students	16	22%	10
Being underactive	15	21%	11
Crying easily for no apparent reason	15	21%	11
Requires attention from an adult	14	19%	12
Overly anxious and fearful	13	18%	13
Being self-injurious	13	18%	13

Table-2 shows that a high proportion of respondents (61%) considered that student's "trouble paying attention" as the main reason of stigma. 57% of participants believe that student's "little interest in learning" is the reason of being stigmatized. "Being overactive" is the third common reason which is mentioned by 56% of participants. 49% of all respondents agreed that student's "family troubles" like divorce can be a reason. Other participants referred stigma reasons to student's achievement level like "Failure in most subjects" and "trouble finishing tasks". Social problems like "trouble peer relationship" as well as "keeping up with peers". Student's symptoms are also seen by participants as a reason like, "inability to enjoy activities", "under-activity", "crying easily for no apparent reason", "requires attention from an adult" and "being self-injurious". 18% of respondents agreed that student's self-perception and experiences feelings of "anxiety" and "fearful" are reasons.

Regarding teachers' and administrators' responses to whether they have stigmatized students in their classes or not, produced the results in Table-3.

Table-3: Current Stigmas in the Classrooms of some Private Schools

	Participants Total No.	Yes	Proportion %	No	Proportion %	No comment	%
Teachers/ Administrators	72	53	74%	16	22%	3	4%

It is apparent that the existence of stigmatized students in the classes of some private schools as indicated by the high proportion (74%) of teachers and administrators (53 out of 72) in Table-3, constitutes a challenge for them as well as for their school educational level.

Regarding the question which required the respondents to specify the number of stigmatized boys and girls in their classes. The findings are revealed in Table-4.

Table-4: The Number of Stigmatized Boys and Girls in their Classes

Respondents	Yes		
	Boys	Girls	Total
Total No.	151	82	233
%	65%	35%	

It is apparent from Table-4 that the proportion of stigmatized boys (65%) is more than that of stigmatized girls (35%). That is the ratio of stigmatized boys to girls is 2:1. This means that for every two stigmatized boys, there is one stigmatized girl.

In response to the reasons of why participants thought their students were stigmatized. Only 54 out of 72 participants mentioned the reasons. Participants' answers produced the following results in Table-5 on the next page.

Table 5: The Common Reasons that Lie Behind that some Students are Currently Stigmatized in their Classes. (No. of respondents is 54)

Reasons	Frequency No. of respondents	Rank order
Having trouble paying attention	16	1
Being Overactive	11	2
Having little interest in learning	9	3
Having family troubles	4	4
Having trouble peer relationships	3	5
Having trouble keeping up with other students	3	5
Being failed in most subjects	2	6
Unable to enjoy activities	2	6
Being depressed	2	6
Weak, unable to understand the basic skills	1	7
Depressed, lonely, passive learner, aggressive, underactive, easily tired	1	7

The results in Table-5 indicate that most of participants (16 out of 53) are challenged by their students' trouble paying attention to their instruction as well as concentration on class tasks which in turn, result in their stigmatization. 11 out of 53 respondents pointed out that their students' over-activity was the reason behind their stigma. Students' little interest in learning as well as family troubles were other reasons. It is obvious that these reasons and the rest of reasons in Table-5 are in line with the reasons which are mentioned by respondents in Table-2.

These outcomes reveal that there is a high proportion of participants who share the same vision on the common reasons that lie behind those students in some private schools are being stigmatized which should be taken in consideration. Furthermore, the reasons which are revealed by participants are most likely to be considered as possible indicators of learning difficulties. This is in parallel with Gaad's (2005) research findings which demonstrated that 'those with what is called the hidden special needs are those who look healthy, but with reading disabilities will not be identified until they fail their teachers and their school'.

4.2.1.2.1 The Role of Gender in the process of Stigmatization

The results which are produced from the responses to this question are presented in Table-6.

Table-6: Teachers'/Administrators' Views about the Role of Gender in Being Stigmatized

	Participants Total No.	Yes	%	No	%	No comment	%
Teachers/Administrators	72	36	50%	32	44%	4	6%

50% of teachers and administrators commented 'Yes' they thought that gender plays a role in being stigmatized. While 32% of respondents said 'No', and 4 participants did not respond.

Participants' views of the most stigmatized gender produced the results in Table-7.

Table-7: Teachers'/Administrators Views of the most Stigmatized Gender

	Participants Total No.	Boys	%	Girls	%	Either	%	No comment	%
Teachers / Administrators	72	26	36%	7	10%	3	42%	36	54%

36% (26 out of 72) of respondents believe that boys are more likely to be stigmatized than girls. A low proportion (10%) of respondents considered girls as to be more stigmatized than boys. Three participants believe that either boys or girls can be stigmatized. While a high proportion (54%) of participants did not answer this question. This might due to their values and culture concerning the differentiation between boys and girls. These results are in line with the findings of (Butlor 1987, McCall, et al., 1992 and Ablard 1997 cited Sherman 2003) who all demonstrated that boys are more expected to be stigmatized than girls.

4.2.1.2.2 Reasons that lie behind Boys are more Stigmatized than Girls

In a question asked for the reasons why teachers'/administrators thought that boys are more likely to be stigmatized than girls. The answers of only 26 participants produced the results in Table-8.

Table-8: Reasons for why Boys are more likely to be Stigmatized than Girls

Reasons	Frequency No. of Respondents	Rank order starting from the most common reason
Being hyperactive	7	1
Weak does not perceive as bright	5	2
Little interest in learning	4	3
Misbehaviour like has poor behaviour (does not follow rules)	4	3
Being Naughty	4	3
Is Inattentive	2	4
Physiological nature of boys as Being troublesome	2	4
Family troubles	1	5

The majority of teachers who have stigmatized students in their classes agreed that boys' hyperactivity and their difficulty to settle down or sit was the main reason. 5 out of 26 respondents considered that students' weakness on performing school tasks, a reason. Four participants agreed that 'students' little interest in learning, behavioural problems as hyperactivity and naughtiness' are the main reasons for boys' stigma. While very few respondents believe that the reasons are 'inattentiveness as well as boys' physiological nature'. One participant considered that student's family troubles as a reason.

4.2.1.3 The Possibility that a Stigmatized Student might have a Learning Difficulty

Participants' responses to this question are revealed in Table-9.

Table-9: A Stigmatized Student might have a Learning Difficulty

	Participants Total No.	Yes	Proportion %	No	%	No comment	%
Teachers/ Administrators	72	61	85%	10	14%	1	1%

It is apparent that a high proportion of teachers and administrators (85%) support the idea that there is a possibility that a stigmatized student has a learning difficulty. This might be due to the big challenge they face from such students' learning problems and low achievement level which might indicate that they have undiagnosed learning difficulties which are still not assessed and identified due to that these students appear healthy, normal in their appearance and have a normal range of intelligence till they experience frequent failure on subject tests. This is in line with Gaad (2005) and Harter (1990 cited Buckroyd and Flitton 2004).

4.2.1.4 Students' Behaviour Affects their Academic Achievement

The answers to this question produced an unexpected result. 100% of teachers and administrators commented 'Yes' they thought that a student's behaviour has a negative effect on his academic attainment level in a class. This means that a student's behaviour plays an important role in determining their achievement level which is mostly less than their peers. It can be argued that such behaviour might be one factor that contributes to a student's stigma due to their low achievement level. (Please, see appendix-10.2, P.100-O Ahmad's score report card due to his hyperactivity and inattention).

4.2.2 Findings from Parents' Questionnaire

All parents have children who are studying in different kinds of schools, ranging from government to private international and are in different grade levels from

kindergarten (KG) till grade 12. The results revealed that 15 out of 35 parents have children who have educational problems. While 20 parents mentioned that their children did not have any problem in their schools.

4.2.2.1 Parents' Views on the Stigmatized Student in a Classroom

The results of this question are shown in Table-10.

Table-10: The Stigmatized student in a Classroom from Parents' Points of Views. (No. of parents is 35).

Descriptions of a stigmatized student	Frequency No. of Respondents	Proportion (%)	Rank order
The Slow learner	20	57%	1
Who Experiences speech & language difficulty	19	54%	2
The Lazy	12	34%	3
Who has little interest of the school	12	34%	3
The Aggressive	12	34%	3
The Hyperactive	8	23%	4
Who is always Inattentive	7	20%	5
Who uses wheel chair	7	20%	5
Who uses hearing aids	7	20%	5
The Withdrawn	5	14%	6
The Multiple repeater	4	11%	7
Who has difficulty in Math	4	11%	7
The Gifted	4	11%	7
Who wears eye glasses	3	9%	8
Who has Asthma	2	6%	9

In Table-10, it is clear that most of parents (20 out of 35) agreed that 'the slow learner' is the typical stigmatized student. This is in line with teachers/administrators' views. Out of 35, 19 participants believe that the one who 'experiences speech and language difficulty' is the stigmatized. The same proportion (34%) of parents agreed that the stigmatized is the 'lazy', 'who has little interest of the school' and

‘aggressive’. 23% of parents view that the ‘hyperactive’ is the stigmatized. A group of parents share a common vision that one who ‘is always inattentive’; ‘uses wheel chair’ as well as ‘hearing aids’ is the stigmatized. A low proportion of parents mentioned that the stigmatized is the ‘withdrawn’, ‘multiple repeater’, ‘has difficulty in math’, ‘the gifted’, ‘who wears eye glasses’ and ‘has Asthma’.

It is apparent that the results obtained from the two questionnaires indicate that there is a similarity amongst all participants’ views concerning the typical stigmatized student. (Please see Table-11, Appendix-2, p.78).

4.2.2.2 Parents’ Views on the Reasons of Stigma and Whether the factor Gender Plays a Role

The parents’ views of the reasons produced the results in Table-12.

Table-12: Parents’ Points Views of the Stigma Reasons of (Total Number is 35).

The Reasons	Frequency No. of respondents	Proportion (%)	Rank order beginning with the most common reason
Trouble paying attention	21	60%	1
Family troubles	19	54%	2
Little interest in learning	13	37%	3
Trouble keeping up with other students	13	37%	3
Being overactive	12	34%	4
Failed in most subjects	10	29%	5
excessively angry	9	26%	6
Trouble finishing tasks	9	26%	6
Easily tired	8	23%	7
Being underactive	8	23%	7
Trouble peer relationships	7	20%	8
requires attention from an adult	7	20%	8
Overly anxious & fearful	7	20%	8
Being self-injurious	7	20%	8
Inability to enjoy activities	4	11%	9

Table-12 shows that the majority (60%) of parents view student's 'trouble paying attention' in a class and on tasks is the main common reason. 'Family troubles is the second main reason. The same proportion (37%) of parents mentioned the same two reasons which are student's 'little interest of learning' and 'trouble keeping up with peers'. It is clear that these main reasons with the other mentioned reasons stream out from different views and thought. Such reasons could be all related to either student's attainment level like trouble finishing tasks accompanied by inability to keep up with peers and then a failure on most subjects, or features as student's trouble paying attention associated with little interest of learning for being easily tired and requires attention from others, or behavioural problems such as, being overactive, underactive, excessively angry and self-injurious, or social problems like, family troubles and trouble peer relationships.

In overall, there is a commonality and consistency amongst the net results which are produced from the two questionnaires concerning stigma reasons. (Please refer to Table-13, Appendix-3, p.79).

Regarding the question which asked parents to mention whether their children have specific problems in their schools or not, and if so, what are their problems. 15 out of 35 parents said 'yes' their children had educational problems. Most of parents (20 out of 35) said 'No'. The main problems of such children as they are mentioned by their parents are shown in Table-14.

Table-14: The problems of children as commented by their parents

The Common reason	Frequency No. of Respondents	Rank
Has short attention span	10	1
Being slow in finishing his homework & class work	8	2
Has very little interest in learning	5	3
Has difficulty in Arabic language	5	3
Can not get a long with peers	2	2
Has difficulty in reading & writing	2	2
Has difficulty in Math	2	2
Has difficulty in English	2	2
Has no friends	1	1
Does not finish his food on time & does not like the school	1	1

It is apparent that students' 'short attention span' on tasks and to teachers' instructions is the main reason. The second main problem is children's 'trouble in finishing tasks like homework and class work'. The same number of parents (5 out of 15) indicated that their children had 'little interest in learning and difficulty in Arabic language'. Children's experience difficulties in 'Math, English, reading and writing and getting along with peers' were other problems amongst their children in a school. One parent mentioned that one of his children did not like the school, had trouble in finishing his tasks and had no friends. These all reflect students' struggle in learning, behaviour as well as social problems. This is in line with one parent's interview. (See Appendix-6, p.83, A4).

4.2.2.2.1 Gender Role in the process of Stigmatization from Parents' Views

Parents' views on gender role produced the results in Table-15.

Table-15: Parents' Views on the most Stigmatized Gender

Parents	Total No.	Boys	%	Girls	%	No comment	%
	35	20	57%	12	34%	3	6%

The results in Table-15, reveal that 57% of parents believe that boys are more likely to be stigmatized than girls in a class. 34% parents commented that girls are more stigmatized than boys. While, 6% of parents did not respond to the question. Parents' views are in parallel with that of teachers and administrators. This means that there is a common vision amongst participants concerning this issue.

4.2.2.2.2 Reasons of why Boys are more Stigmatized than Girls from Parents' Points of Views

Not all parents mentioned the reasons why they thought that boys were being more stigmatized than girls. 10 out of 35 parents shared similar reasons which were related to boy's behavioural problems such as 'hyperactivity, inattention and aggressiveness'.

This implies that such parents might suffer from behavioural aspects of their children who are boys.

Regarding participants' views (parents, teachers and administrators) of the reasons that girls are more stigmatized than boys. The results revealed that this is due to girls' 'sensitive nature, capability to pay more attention than boys, characteristics like shyness, quietness and emotional feelings'.

4.2.2.3 A Stigmatized Student might have a Learning Difficulty

Table-16 presents the results of this question.

Table 16: A stigmatized student might have a Learning Difficulty

Parents	Total No.	Yes	Proportion %	No	Proportion %	No comment	Proportion %
	35	24	69%	9	26%	2	6%

The majority (69%) of parents supported the idea that a stigmatized student might have a learning difficulty in mastering the basic skills of academic subjects. 26% of parents did not support the idea. Two parents (6%) of all did not give any comment on the question.

4.2.2.4 Students' Behaviour effect on Academic achievement

Table-17 represents the results which are produced from parents' views of whether behaviour affects students' achievement level or not.

Table-17: Students' Behaviour effect on the academic achievement

Parents	Total No.	Yes	Proportion %	No	Proportion %
	35	29	83%	6	17%

The results reveal that a high proportion (83%) of parents believes that students' behaviour can negatively affect their achievement level. This might indicate that their

children have low achievement level which is due to their behavioural problems. A low proportion (17%) of parents did not support the idea.

4.3 Summary of Results which are obtained from the two Questionnaires

It rapidly became in examining the results emerged, that there were similar views amongst all participants (teachers, administrators and parents) concerning the typical stigmatized student and the reasons that lie behind stigma. (For the net results, please see Table-18, Appendix-4, p.80).

Outcomes also revealed that there was a common vision amongst majority of participants concerning the gender role, effect of behaviour on achievement level and the possibility of a stigmatized student having certain learning difficulties. Findings also revealed that the general reasons of stigma were in line with those of students and parents' children who were stigmatized in their classes. Most of respondents shared the same vision of the reasons behind that boys were more stigmatized than girls.

4.4 Findings from Interviews

The following section presents samples of direct participants' quotes. A series of pre-negotiated and structured individual interviews were carried out to serve the qualitative part of this study. In total, interviews were conducted with 27 participants. Interviews lasted between 15 minutes and 25 minutes. The interview started with a general meaning of the term stigma by the researcher. The participants were then asked to respond to this research questions. Finally, they were asked to mention if they had any stigmatized student in their classes as well as provide their recommendation to help such stigmatized students.

Interpreting Interviews

Based on interviewees' understanding of the term stigma, a range of different descriptions and stereotypes emerged. Interviewees' main comments on the stigmatized student in a class are included in Table-19. (Please see Appendix-5, p.81

and Appendix-6, p.83-87) for other samples of interview transcripts. The following are word-for-word translation of extracts of interviews with some participants.

4.4.1 Interviewees Views on the Stigmatized student

According to the data produced in the investigation, most of participants shared the same view of the stigmatized student. These shared views constituted a common vision that was expressed by one of them as follows:

“I think that the student who experiences weakness, and cannot understand the basic skills of subjects”.

The content of this teacher’s comment reflects a student’s failure to access into the school general curriculum.

Five teachers who teach lower grades level (1-3) also shared the same opinion about the stigmatized student. Their views were expressed as:

“In my class I noticed that the withdrawn student who always stays alone away from other peers because of his shyness and who seems unable to get socially with others and teachers”.

This comment reflects that such student is still socially immature due to his/her lack of how to interact with others.

One head of an English department who is also teaches grade 11-12 level , said that:

“In my opinion, the stigmatized student in a class is the special need student who has sever learning difficulties like the dyslexic and whose mental ability is very low”.

Other teachers shared the same opinion. They revealed:

“See, the lazy student is who does not care to bring his books and staff more often”.

Their view reflects that such student has no or little interest of school which might due to his struggle in learning.

An administrative and a social worker agreed with eight teachers that the stigmatized is one who always misbehaves and disrupts the lesson. Their views were expressed by one of them:

“In my section, there is one who can be stigmatized by behaviour, he is naughty, hyperactive, can do anything to disturb the teacher and stop her. He has very low achievement level and has unaware family which is totally uncooperative with us”.

A group of teachers and coordinators shared one common view which was expressed by an Arabic teacher with an experience of 15 years. She said:

“In my point of view, there are different kinds of stigmatized students. There is the gifted who has a high level of intelligence. Also the student who is very weak, careless, and likes to attract the attention of his peers in a class”.

Two teachers who teach English and Science expressed a common vision that was indicated by one of them:

“Some students I would not call them stigmatized or labelled. I would call them the very shooed students who are very smart with high IQ level. They like to attract attention because they want to attract attention to prove something’.

A teacher, who teaches kindergarten level with an experience of 4 years, had a different view. She said:

“At kindergarten stage no stigma, as all children needs must be understood and met, but I have one girl who could be considered as stigmatized by her features. I think she has Down syndrome”.

The problem with labels is illustrated by this quote from one parent. She said:

“The school still sees my son as mentally retarded and asks, what can mentally retarded kids do? They never say “what can Sami do?”.

This quote reveals the ignorance of such child individuality and strengths by his teachers.

The issue of communication between the stigmatized and teacher was revealed by similar quotes from one deputy principal and three European teachers. Their views are expressed by one of them:

“In my opinion, is one who cannot understand the teacher. If that, it may be he/she does not understand the language. As a result he/she will not get the teacher, and always does not know what to do or ask. This makes a student’s learning very flat”.

The content of this view reflects the struggle of those students who are learning English as a second language and are taught by native speakers. This creates the gap of communication between them and the teacher.

Two parents whose children have problems. They expressed similar thought which is based on their struggle with their children as a result of stigma. Their views were expressed by one of them:

“I think that each child who has a problem and is treated as odd one, and whose teacher does not understand him and know his strengths or giving him a chance when not doing well, just she calls him the lazy”.

4.4.2 Interviewees’ Views of the Reasons of Stigma

Various reasons were revealed from the participants’ comments on the causes of stigma. Table-20 presents interviewees’ main reasons. (Please refer to Table-20, Appendix-7, and p.88). The following are transcripts of some of such comments.

The majority of interviewees shared the same view on more than one reason that lie behind stigma in a classroom. This common vision indicated:

“I believe stigma is due to the teacher who is instead of understanding the student and finding out the reasons behind his/her problem. So, she finds it easy to label the student as useless, hopeless, does not deserve the effort. Such language a teacher uses makes peers imitate her in labelling that student.

Five teachers shared the same opinion. Their vision was stated by one as:

'I see that teacher's first impression and misjudgment. Teacher's way of dealing with the student especially if it is rude, strict and is associated with ignorance and unawareness to him/her will make the stigmatization worse'.

This vision implies that teachers play a major role in creating or promoting constraints on student's educational attainment as well as stigmatization. This is in line with Higgins, et al., (2002), Powell's 2003) and Ho's 2004 outcomes.

Ten teachers and coordinators expressed similar views and ideas about the student's stigmatization. One of them revealed:

"I can say it could be the family itself, its background and culture. This is manifested by either too much parental care that the boy got spoiled or no parental care and unawareness and as result got neglected. This frequently occurs as a result of divorce'.

The learning environment was also another main reason of stigma. Six teachers shared the same vision:

".....When it comes to the learning environment, the large number of students in a class as well as no differentiation between students' learning abilities can cause stigma. Teacher's poor way of managing the class as well as teaching methods that are followed'.

One supervisor and three teachers also revealed similar views which were expressed by one of them:

"I believe that student's failure on most subjects as well as student's bad reputation that spread between teachers year after year'.

Regarding participants' recommendations which could be adopted to help such stigmatized students are revealed in Table-21. (Please see Appendix-8, p.90)

4.5 Findings from Observations

Five classrooms observations accompanied with playground observations were conducted for five students who were being stigmatized by their teachers. The main aim of these observations was to have a real picture of what is happening inside the classroom. The students (³) were a girl (Alia) in grade one, a boy (Ahmad) in grade two, a boy (Sami) in grade three, a girl (Salma) in grade four, and another boy (Ali) in grade seven.

4.5.1 Findings from Observation to Alia in Grade One

Alia was described as a hopeless case by her teachers. Observation to the English lesson revealed that Alia was very slow in understanding and following teacher's instruction despite teacher's repetition for the instruction several times. She also showed inability to understand the concept and master the skill. She could not comprehend any word or letter, even the letter (A), but she can copy simple words well, just verbal communication was a problem for her. Her articulation to the words was not always clear. Words with two or more syllables were difficult for her to say clearly. She was very quiet and did not participate in the lesson by herself. (Please see Appendix-9, p.93, **A, B**).

In the playground, she was seen alone and discriminated by peers. Sometimes she was seen tended to behave aggressively towards other peers by beating and pushing them. (Refer to appendix-9, p.93, **C**). Alia's documents are in line with these findings. (Appendix-10.1, p. 99.1 – 99.7).

4.5.2 Findings from Observation to Ahmad in Grade Two

Ahmad was known as a trouble maker. He was observed in the Arabic lesson behaved aggressively with peers, unaware of his staff, disrupted and wasted the time of the teacher, as he got in fights with a peer near him. (Appendix-9, p.94-**D**). Ahmad did not pay attention or participate and left his seat more than one time. Due to this, the teacher left him the rest of the lesson. The lesson ended and Ahmad did not finish his

³ The names of these students are not the real names. Their names have been changed for ethical purposes to protect their identity and privacy.

class work sheet which was given to him, as he seemed unable to pay attention and focus on tasks. (Appendix-9, p.94- **E**).

The playground observations revealed that Ahmad behaved in aggressive way, got easily in fights with peers who tended to reject him from participating in their game. These findings indicated that there was a strong possibility that he has symptoms of inattention associated with hyperactivity and aggressive behaviour. (Appendix-9, p. 94-**F**). Ahmad's documents support these findings. (Please see Appendix-10.2, p.100.1 – 100.7).

4.5.3 Findings from Observation to Sami in Grade Three

Sami was moved from a special need centre to his current school since two years. He was stigmatized as the 'lazy' boy. Outcomes of observation to an Arabic lesson revealed that Sami had a difficulty in reading and writing. He could not read simple words, had a problem "tracking" as his eyes move across the page, and was unable to identify the lesson words, as he showed inability to differentiate the shapes of Alphabetical letters. He was able to say words verbally, but unable to read them. (Appendix-9, p.95-**G**).

It was also noticed that Sami was able to copy the words but could not write them. As a result, his written work does not truly reflect his verbal ability, as he was observed unable to connect the letters to form one word. (Refer to Appendix-9, p.95-**H**).

Playground observation revealed he had good relationships with two peers and enjoyed playing football with them. (See Appendix-9, p. 95- **I**).

Sami's documents indicate that he might have a specific learning difficulty. (Please see Appendix-10.3, p.101.1 - 101.6).

4.5.4 Findings from Observation to Salma in Grade Four

Salma was being stigmatized as 'bad at Math'. Observation to the Math lesson revealed that she showed an apparent difficulty with the multiplication tables. To solve a problem, Salma used slow counting strategies such as her fingers. She had very little interest in the subject, as she did not pay attention and participate till she

was asked to do so, and she had many incidents in being late to attend the class at the lesson time. (Appendix-9, p.96 - **J**).

Observation also revealed that Salma has a difficulty in reading and solving simple word problems as well. (Appendix-9, p.96-**K**).

The play ground observation revealed that Salma is a lively girl who likes to play with others. (Appendix-9, p.96-**L**). Salma's documents revealed her weakness in Math and other subjects. (Please see Appendix-10.4, p.102.1-102.8).

4.5.5 Findings from Observation to Ali in Grade Seven

Ali was labeled as the 'withdrawn who has very little interest in school'. Observation to an Arabic lesson revealed that he was lonely, had no interest in learning, inattentive, always laughing and lack of self initiation to participate in the lesson discussion. (Appendix-9, p.97- **M**).

Ali showed a difficulty in recalling the information given to him quickly, and took longer time than usual to identify and read verbs written on the board. This indicated that Ali was struggling and experienced a difficulty in understanding Arabic concepts, as he showed an apparent difficulty in differentiating between kinds of verbs (past and present). He was also seen as if he had short attention span when he experienced unusual boredom during the lesson. (Appendix-9, p.97- **N**).

The playground observation revealed that he wandered around the playground alone attempting to avoid pupils, but sometimes tended to tease a peer who was not in his class, and got in fight with him.(Appendix-9, p.97-**O**). Ali's documents support these findings. (Please see Appendix-10.5, p.103.1 -103.4).

It can be concluded that these students were being stigmatized for their struggle in the access into the curriculum and mastering its basic skills, and experiencing behavioural and social problems.

4.6 Findings from Document analysis

The analysis of some reports which are related to other stigmatized students who were not observed revealed that these students (boys and girls) have common severe weakness in the Arabic language skills (reading, writing and dictation). (Please see Appendix-11, p.104). For the five stigmatized students who were observed, the analysis of their documents have evidenced their undiagnosed learning difficulties as well as their failure on most academic subjects. (Please see Appendix-10, p.98).

5

Discussion, Recommendations and Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

This study is set out to examine stigma phenomenon through the investigation of research questions which are mentioned in the introductory chapter. In this research aspects of stigmatized students were investigated and examined. Care was taken to include all participants' views and /or opinions (teachers, administrators, parents and students themselves).

The following is a discussion of issues that are explored by this study in an attempt to answer the four research questions accompanied with interviewees' recommendations and some suggestions from the literature. This chapter ends with a conclusion.

5.2 Research question one: Who is stigmatized among students at the private school culture in the UAE?

5.2.1 The Stigmatized Student Among Students at the Private School Culture in the UAE

The outcomes of this research revealed that the typical stigmatized student is one who possesses negative stereotypes and deviant behaviour in the points of views and beliefs of majority of participants. This is in line with Reyna (2000) statement 'stereotypes suggest a trait, characteristic, attribute or behaviour'. This is also in accordance with the findings of Friske (1998) who demonstrated that 'teachers' beliefs about the nature of a student that reflect predictable characteristic and behaviour of those students are known as stereotypes'. For example, slow in learning, difficulty in speech and language, laziness, inattention and little interest of the school

are stereotypes of the stigmatized student as are revealed by this research results. This implies that due to student's difficulty in reading and writing, he/she becomes very slow in learning, lazy, inattentive and as a consequence loses his/her interest of the school.

Results also revealed that student's negative aspects of behaviour can stigmatize him/her, such as inattention, aggressiveness, hyperactivity and withdrawal. These indicate student's hidden need in how to cope with the learning and social settings around him. Such students need additional help in order to improve their learning and establish positive social relationships. Therefore, students who appear to be different from the normal norms in attainment level as well as behaviour are more likely to attach labels or attributes to them than others.

To stop calling students with labels and improve their learning, behavioural and social relationships, the following is a set of suggested recommendations resulted from the interviewees' opinions.

5.2.2 Recommendations for Research Question One

- There should be careful usage of language by teachers inside the classroom. Rich labeling should be avoided.
- It is necessary to adapt teaching approaches to cater for all students' learning abilities associated with teacher's awareness of those stigmatized with low-achievement level.
- Building up a direct and close relationship between teachers and the stigmatized through teacher's role in talking with students to identify their interests and help them develop these in new communication practices.

5.3 Research question two: What are the reasons that lie behind stigmas inside the classroom, and whether certain factors like gender play a role?

5.3.1 Reasons that Lie Behind Stigma in the Classroom at a Private Emarati School

Findings indicated various reasons of stigma. The researcher categorized them under three main factors that are:

- A. Student's characteristics and behavioral problems
- B. Student's family background and domestic troubles
- C. Teachers' attitudes, beliefs and expectations

5.3.1. A. Student's characteristics and behavioural problems

Outcomes revealed that student's trouble paying attention associated with little interest of learning were the main stigma reasons. These characteristics indicate that such student has short attention span associated with difficulty in sustaining attention on tasks. These traits are manifested in student's trouble finishing tasks and trouble keeping up with peers. As a result such student has missed much of his/her education which results in his/her drawback and failure on Mid and Final-year exams.

Results also revealed that student's hyperactivity, inability to enjoy activities, being excessively angry and self-injurious associated with feelings of frequent tiredness, fearful and anxiety are considered as reasons of stigma due to behaviour. These kinds of behaviour challenge the authority of their teachers, school management and parents who get frustrated, angry and disappointed. Ultimately, they are being blamed for their under-achievement by their teachers and parents 'saying' they just do not care or try hard enough to study and behave well'. These outcomes are in line Valas (1999) and Kakouros, et al., (2004) research results that 'low-achieving students seem to display more social behavioural problems, inattention and impulsivity than others'.

Another reason which was raised by some teachers was students' self-perception and belief about themselves as bad, incapable and useless. This is called by Coleman (1986 cited Reidy 1993) self-stigma. This implies that stigmatized students absorb

into oneself negative teachers' beliefs and expectations held about them, lose self-efficacy and respond to these stereotypes adapting their behaviour such as by social isolation or aggressive and disruptive behaviours. Martinez and Snider (2000) research findings support this outcome. They demonstrated that students with a less positive view of themselves are more likely to be low achievers than high achievers (39 percent vs. 11 percent).

5.3.1. B. Student's family background and domestic troubles

Most respondents agreed that student's family troubles, background and culture play a significant role in a student is being stigmatized. They mentioned that parents' divorce, culture, negative attitudes towards learning and background knowledge were common social factors behind labelling a student as low-achiever and aggressive. This means that student's family troubles can affect his/her behaviour as well as his attainment level. This outcome is in line with Kauffman (2005) who demonstrated that 'student's lack of secure and nurturing home background due to the parents' divorce or other troubles play a major role in shaping the student's behaviour, inattention and consequently his achievement level'. (p.8).

Furthermore, Martinez and Snider (2000) demonstrated that 'Differences in achievement are often attributed to a student's family background characteristics, and there is some validity in doing so'. Noble (1999 cited Martinez and Snider 2000) also asserted that 'family characteristics can serve as flags for identifying and assisting students who are at-risk of not doing well in school'.

However, educators must remember that poverty, troubled family situations or low parent educational level does not automatically mean a lack of interest in academic achievement by those stereotyped students.

5.3.1. C. Teacher's attitudes, beliefs, and expectations

Attitudes drive people's behaviour. What they believe and how they feel about a matter, largely determines what they do with respect to it. (Gaad, 2004). This is in line with what interviewees of this study mentioned about teachers' attitudes and

beliefs toward their students, particularly, those who frustrate their teachers by either their low-achievement level or disruptive behaviour.

This research findings revealed that 89% of participants asserted that teacher's negative attitude, strict and aggressive way of dealing with the student, frequent use of offensive labels as well as teacher's unawareness of the student's learning difficulty, result in that a student is being stigmatized and neglected; either by not giving him/her the chance to answer or understand. Evidence to this is the outcome of Alghazo and Gaad (2004) general results which showed that in the Emarati schools, male teachers have more negative attitudes than female teachers towards teaching students with learning difficulties, and 'teachers' negative attitudes towards students with exceptional learning needs limits their opportunities to be successful in regular classrooms'.

The outcome of this research is also in parallel with other research findings which revealed that, in the UAE community, teachers' attitude towards other pupils and, particularly, those with learning problems and exceptional learning needs are shaped by the traditional cultural issues, values, fixed ideas and beliefs in the society. (Alcott 2002, Alghazo and Gaad 2004, Bradshaw et al., 2004, and Gaad, 2004).

Teacher's first impression about the student's behaviour, academic level and how he/she looks (student's physical features) was another cause of stigma. Teachers' negative impression will lead to misjudgment about the student's ability and what he can do. This opinion as it is mentioned by the interviewees implies that student's failure on the first test or disruptive behaviour on the playground will invoke a stereotype which will, in turn, provide attributional information that may bias a teacher's interpretation of that event. As a consequence, the teacher will misjudge such student and label him/her as 'failure' or 'aggressive'. Evidence to this is what one stigmatized student in grade four said in the interview "*My teachers are always calling me 'disruptive boy', I am not like this, but I will continue to be like this as they want*". This outcome is in parallel with the results of a research which was conducted by Gaad (1998:433) on Rasha, a girl with Down's syndrome. The findings revealed that, "Rasha was judged by how she looked and by what she could not do rather than by what she could do". This is also in line with one parent's opinion in the interview. She said "*My son could be helped, instead of calling him the lazy; the teacher should*

ask him about his interests and what he can do well". However, such focus on students' weakness points could not help improve their attainment level as well as meets their educational needs.

Student's negative reputation which is usually spread amongst teachers year after year is revealed by this research outcome as a reason of stigma. Interviews outcomes indicated that student's new teachers form fixed idea, belief and an expectation of his/her failure or success throughout the academic year. And in accordance to this, the student is priority being stigmatized.

Therefore, to overcome such reasons, interviewees expressed their recommendations as follows.

5.3.2 Recommendations for Research Question Two

- Creating a favorable, conducive and positive learning environment which formed high level of peer acceptance and friendship among low to high achieving students in order to help the stigmatized improve academically and socially.
- The improvement in home-school relationship through the cooperation between students' teachers and their parents confidentially can contribute to a large extent in solving student's difficulties as well as improving his behavioural problems. This is in line with Frederickson and Cline (2002).
- The adoption of appropriate assessment procedures which should be followed by teachers in determining the type and degree of assistance through an accurate evaluation of a student's strengths, weaknesses and current levels of performance. As this will help teachers gain the background knowledge and understanding that are needed to be able to improve his/her attainment level.

5.4 Research question three: What is the relationship between having a learning difficulty and being stigmatized?

5.4.1 The Relationship Between having a Learning Difficulty and Being Stigmatized

The outcomes of this study from the majority of participants' views revealed that a stigmatized student might have a learning difficulty. In addition, the stigmatized student's stereotypes (traits, characteristics, symptoms and behavioural aspects) and the reasons which lie behind such stigma as are indicated by the results, could be considered as indicators of students' undiagnosed learning difficulties. Evidence to stigma relationship with having a learning difficulty is that; the characteristics of the typical stigmatized student which are obtained from the analysis of this research outcomes are in line with the SEN areas. (SEN Code of Practice 2001a:53 cited Alcott, p.15). For example, speech and language difficulties is an example of communication and interaction area in the SEN Code, slow learning is an example of cognition and learning area, hyperactivity, inattention, withdrawn and aggressiveness are symptoms of the behavioural, emotional and social development area in the Code.

Furthermore, student's experiences of speech and language difficulty trait as an outcome of this study imply that those students have unrecognized specific learning difficulty which impacts their achievement level. (Please refer to Appendix-10.1, p. 99). This finding is in accordance with Ott (1997, p.1); Bradford (2000); Alcott (2002, p. 39) and Goldstein (2004) who all demonstrated that 'Children's difficulties in speech and language aspects of reading, writing and using words are symptoms of a specific learning difficulty called Dyslexia. As defined by Thomson (1990 cited Ott 1997, p.1) dyslexia is an ancient Greek word means 'difficulty with words'.

In addition, slow learning label which could be related to any form of Dyslexia is consistent with Bradford's (2005) notion that, 'as a dyslexic child's difficulty is not visible, so, it often goes unrecognized by teachers', which in turn results in that a child is stigmatized and labelled as 'slow' or 'lazy' at school. This is in line with this research results. (Refer to appendix-10.2, p.100).

Furthermore, student's difficulty and struggle in Math as the findings revealed could be also related to dyslexia disorder. As pointed out by Miles (1974) 'The majority of dyslexics have difficulty in recalling and repeating multiplication tables, the difficulty

is so widespread, it cannot be accidental'. (As it is cited in Ott 1997, p. 138). This is in consistent with observations results. (Refer to Appendix- 9, p.96-**J, K**).

Thus, some students' struggle in language aspects of reading and writing either in Arabic or English at a private Emarati school are due to their undiagnosed specific learning difficulty which could be dyslexia. This results in their under-achievement as well as failure on most subjects. (Please see Appendix-10.1, p.99.1 and p.100.1, 101.1). This result is in parallel with the findings of the authors, Farrell's (2003, p.15); Beveridge (1999, p.47), Place, et al., (1999), Fox (2001, p. 77-78), Birkett (2003, p. 39), Kauffman (2005, p.269), SEN Code of Practice (DfES 2000a), American Psychiatric Association (1994) and Merrell and Tymms (2004).

On the other hand, students' slow in learning, inattention and laziness could be due to children's difficulties remembering academic content which often translates into failure on subject tests. This outcome is in line with the findings of Scruggs and Mastropieri (2000), and the cognition and learning area in the SEN Code (2001a:53).

Findings of this research revealed that stigma reasons were due to students' inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity. Such attributes could be considered as indicators of behavioural difficulty problems as well as immature social skills which imply that those stigmatized have greater difficulties than others in meeting their personal and social needs. This is in accordance with SEN Code of Practice (2001a:53), Walker (2000); Bogod (1999); Gorrel (2002); Boudah et al., (2002), Kerr and Nelson (2002) and Chazan et al., (1998), whose research results have demonstrated that such characteristics are behavioural outcomes of a student's learning difficulties This is also in line with the five observations outcomes. (Please refer to Appendix-9, p. 95-G, H).

Furthermore, inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity are three criteria in the diagnostic and statistical manual for mental disorder (DSM4 Criteria) which is published by the American Psychiatric Association (1994), such as attention deficit disorder (ADD) and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). This is in accordance with the results of Bradshaw et al., (2004) which revealed that 'there are many students enrolled within the UAE private schools who would fit into the upper

levels of a typical categorical disabilities system (i.e. mild disabilities, learning disabilities, ADD/ADHD)'.

In sum, at a private Emarati school culture, students' low-achievement level associated with behavioural problems is due to their undiagnosed specific learning difficulties which result in their stigmatization. This is in line with Bradshaw et al., (2004) findings that 'those students with mild learning difficulties who are maintained in their schools in the UAE until it becomes very obvious that they have significantly different needs, as the gap in their performance level widens'. This is also in parallel with Gaad's (2004) and Sparling's (2002) research results that 'the nature of the student's disability creates a stigma, and therefore impacts the attitude of educators against children with disabilities'.

The following are interviewees' recommendations and some literature-based ones:

5.4.2 Recommendations for Research Question Three

- Early identification of student's difficulties and a continuous progressive cycle of assessment, planning, action and review associated with partnership between school staff and parents.
- The requirement to appoint a special social worker, psychologists or special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) at Emarati schools to help teachers identify and diagnose students' exceptional learning needs and difficulties like Dyslexia and ADHD disorders. This interviewees' suggestion is in line with that of Davies and Garner (2001, p.47).
- Teachers' background culture in Psychology can help in realizing student's psychology, as it plays an important role in identifying their learning difficulties as well as social problems.
- The use of planning document by Emarati schools like the individual educational plan (IEP) as an effective tool to help teachers identify stigmatized students' strengths as well as weaknesses. ((DfES, 2001a), Neil (2005) and Avramidis (2003).

- The application of mnemonic (key word, pegword and letter strategies) strategies have been proved in recent decades that they are extremely powerful when applied experimentally, particularly, with students with learning difficulties, due to its effectiveness in improving their memories for specific content, as well as their academic attainment. (Thomas and Mastropieri, 2000).
- A follow up of effective instructional approaches such as controlling task difficulties through breaking down skills, sequencing activities, drill-repetition, practice, the use of technology (computers, presentation media), direct instructions and ongoing and systematic progress monitoring. (Heward 2003).

5.5 Research question four: What are the effects of stigma on the lives and education of those who are stigmatized at the Emarati schools?

5.5.1 The Effects of Stigma on the Life and Education of Stigmatized Students at the Emarati Schools

The outcomes indicated that stigma has various effects which results in student's under-achievement and behavioural problems. Such effects were on student's self-concept and his social relationships.

5.5. 1. A. Stigma Effects on Student's Self-concept

The findings from most participants' views indicated that a student who is being stigmatized or stereotyped establishes a negative self-concept and low level of belief in his/her abilities and talents associated with feelings of inferiority and unworthiness as a result of experiencing failure and loss of access into the curriculum. (Please see Appendix-6, p.84-B, and p.86-E). By time, this self- stigma and negative feelings become a fixed idea about himself/herself that he/she is bad and incapable to cope with the curriculum and learning environment. This is in line with Byrne's (2001) research findings that 'self-stigma is the most damaging effect on the stigmatized,

because it can consequently follow one through life, regardless of the external evidence of success or achievement'. Valas's (1999) statement also supports this 'that low-achieving students suffer from unfavorable self-perceptions'.

5.5.1 B. Stigma Effects on Student's Behaviour and Social Relationships

Findings revealed that students' reaction to labels is fear and rejection. Peer rejection associated with feelings of inferiority and loneliness increases their feelings of failure, depression and worthlessness. As a result, this promotes the development of negative aspects of behaviour towards others like aggressiveness, inattention, disruption and hyperactivity. This is all due to their inability to overcome their difficulties in learning and getting along with peers or keeping them up. (Please refer to Appendix-9 p.94-F and p.97-O). This is in line with Alcott (2000), Lee and Odom (1996 cited Sparling 2002) who all demonstrated that, stereotypic behaviour which is often associated with moderate and severe learning difficulties causes a social stigma and isolates the student from engaging in social and learning opportunities.

Furthermore, findings from most participants' views and document analysis revealed that students' behaviour adversely affects their outcome achievement level in most subjects.

The following recommendations are based on interviewees' suggestions and suggestions from literature to help overcome or at least minimize the negative effects of stigma.

5.5.2 **Recommendations for Research Question Four**

- A positive approach to classroom management underlines the importance of developing students' self-concept and confidence in a supportive environment. Consistency, in the use of positive language that supports the student to focus on developing and improving learning skills, rather than providing a focus on the negative aspects of his/her behaviour. This is in line with Pajares's and Schunk's (2003) claim that 'it is self-belief that drives effective learning'.

- Cooperative learning activities, circle time activities, group work, peers support and self-esteem building games are all proved to be as effective teaching approaches that can be adopted by teachers. Mosley's (2000) and Kuntz's et al., (2001) demonstrated that these approaches have a positive effect on increasing students' academic achievement, self-concept, motivation and promoting positive behaviour, foster peer relationship and social skills.

The researcher believes that if these methods were followed by teachers in all Emarati schools, it will further encourage a stigmatized student's sense of positive belief and provide opportunities for him/her to succeed and receive recognition and praise.

- Teaching students the study skills tools for learning and behaviour necessary to enable them to study more effectively and become self-sufficient at studying. As current educational texts point out that students who are labelled as 'learning disabled' or as 'attention deficit hyperactivity disorder' or 'lazy', typically lack effective ways to approach learning tasks, and consequently, tend to be passive learners, partly due to the fact that, they do not know how to study. (Wayman, 2006). These study skills include, promoting listening skills, note taking skills and strategies, encouraging students to ask for clarification and helping them develop personal organizational skills. (Mastropieri and Scruggs, 2004, p. 306). This is in line with Strydom's (2000) recommendation.
- The set up of teachers' pre-service training program as a strategic plan by the school's management is recommended by this research participants, as an important strategy to help teachers in Emarati schools focus on students' wellness, capability, potential and the importance of high expectations to students' success. They also suggested that teachers need extensive training in understanding the backgrounds of students they teach as well as the knowledge of how to present issues of stigmatization and discrimination to their students. This is in parallel with Stephan's (1999, p.72) findings that pre-service training of teachers have a positive impact on teacher's ability to work with a range of diverse students.

- Improving the quality of teacher-students interactions could lead to equitable outcomes for all learners, especially for low achievement students. Vogel (2006).
- Organizing programs which deal with a change in attitudes of the majority of general education teachers based on awareness of successful integration programs. This can be done through visits to schools, discussion with people with special needs, strategies to avoid labelling and programs to assist in the integration process. As recommended by Gaad (2004).
- The establishment of a centre for the study of stigma could be a valuable focal point for research in education and promotion of effective program practices. Although it could involve collaboration with supportive researchers and educators without direct experience and service recipient. (Reidy 1993). However, the establishment of such centre in the UAE might provide the opportunity to conduct research studies on stigmatized low-achievers and failures in order to recognize how stigma forms and how it contributes to attribution errors. On the other side, there can be some challenges to the establishment of such centre in a country like the UAE. Those challenges could be:
 - A. The UAE's educational system is influenced by traditions, cultural values, beliefs and attitudes in the society as well as teachers' attitudes.
 - B. There is still no clear legislative law concerning those pupils with exceptional learning needs and disabilities.
 - C. Teachers' time taken away from the rest of the students, class size with size with a minimum number of 28 students in nearly all mainstream classes in the UAE schools and the lack of training programs and resources are all factors that might shape the negative attitudes of teachers towards cooperating with such research centre.

The aim of the previous recommendations of research questions one, two, three and four is an attempt to develop the educational services that are provided for students who are struggling in their learning as well as being humiliated by the labelling process in their classes. It is hoped that the adoption of these recommendations might stop stigma phenomenon.

5.6 Conclusion

Findings of this study revealed that the low academic achievement and deviant behaviour characteristics distinguish those students from others as different from the standard norms. As a result, they are more likely to attach labels to them by significant people in the classroom than their peers. Once labels are attached to them they are stigmatized and consequently a phenomenon of stigmatization is rebuffed amongst their teachers and peers.

Based on the data obtained during this research, it is apparent that a range of reasons emerged in contributing to this stigma phenomenon. Screening for such labels and reasons revealed that those stigmatized students are struggling in their learning due to their experience of some sort of difficulties in understanding and mastering the basic learning skills in reading and/or writing and understanding Maths principles. Their difficulties seemed to be also associated with unpleasant labels as well as the experience of various social and behavioural problems.

All these findings indicated that such students have learning difficulties which hinder them from studying at the same pace as their peers and as a consequence, have stigmatized them as low-achievers and failures. This is also evidenced by the common and consistent points of views of all participants who agreed that the typical stigmatized student in the classroom at a private Emarati school is the lazy and the slow learner who experiences speech and language difficulties. Such characteristics as demonstrated by previous studies outcomes impact students' interest of school and consequently make the students experience behavioural problems like inattention, aggressiveness and hyperactivity.

Furthermore, the research outcomes revealed a significant degree of commonality and consistency between the features of a stigmatized student and the reasons which have

lead to such stigma. Trouble paying attention, little interest in learning, family troubles as well as being hyperactive were the main causes of stigmatization and in parallel with those attributes of stigma. This draws the attention to the fact that there are significant numbers of students with more boys than girls who might have undetected and undiagnosed attention deficit disorder and/or dyslexia which is still unknown by their teachers. This is due to the fact that such schools in the UAE lack the appropriate assessment procedures which can help teachers diagnose students' learning difficulties and identify their educational needs. This has been evidenced by the results of interviews and research studies which are conducted on SEN students and educational system in the UAE by some researchers like Gaad (2004), Alghazo and Gaad (2004), Gaad et al., (2005) and Bradshaw et al., (2004).

Similarly, the analysis of this research outcome revealed the negative effects of stigma which impact stigmatized students' self-concept, achievement and peer relationship. Teachers' attitudes and expectations have also an effect on students' attainment level.

To overcome or stop such stigma phenomenon, a range of recommendations were offered to help suggest helpful tips and actions that could be done, and others that could be avoided to help such children to reach their full potentials. However, this research suggests raising teachers' standards and expectations for those students' learning by providing training programs and workshops, creating positive and conducive classroom environments that provide personal support for learning as well as adopting appropriate assessment procedures and strategies which help in the diagnosis of students' learning difficulties in order to meet their various needs of learning and behaviour.

Likewise, the results suggest strengthening the relationships between students, peers and teachers, focusing on promoting school-home relationships and providing the appropriate social support for students and their parents as partners of the school and the learning process.

This research findings challenge 'either-or' proposals for school reform academic focus and rigor and social support for stigmatized students with SEN in general and learning difficulties in particular as contradictory strategies. To succeed in helping identify and support those students, this study suggests the establishment of a centre

for the study of stigma and its origin. Still, such suggestion will be challenged by cultural, ethical and legal issues which still impact teachers' and educators' attitudes as well as educational system in the UAE.

Finally, this research was set to investigate the issue of stigma in some private Emarati schools, an under researched, but yet important issue. Findings showed that the issue is critical and has implications on the learning of such stigmatized/labelled students. On the other hand, such study does give information about stigma, but information which can neither generalise nor claim to be representative of all Emarati schools. This is because it was limited (please, see study limitations in chapter-three, p.27). Nevertheless, it is hoped that this study offers a starting point to understand stigma and labelling process in the UAE's schools culture. The study act as a base for future research practice and only a trial on the road of enabling children in schools. It is hoped that future research will be undertaken to further investigate such phenomenon.

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Appendix – 1

Enclosed are the Two Questionnaires

- 1. Teachers and Administrators Questionnaire (Green)**
- 2. Parents Questionnaire (Pink)**

Appendix - 2

Table-11: Net Results of the Typical Stigmatized student in the view of all Respondents (72-Teachers/Administrators & 35 Parents)

A comparison between participants' views				Net Results		
Teachers/Administrators	Frequency No.	Parents	Freq No.	Teachers/Administrators & Parents	Total frequency No.	Rank
Slow learner	43	Slow learner	20	Slow learner	63	1
Lazy	32	Experiences speech & language difficulty	19	Experiences speech & language difficulty	51	2
Experiences speech & language difficulty	32	Lazy	12	Lazy	44	3
Has little interest of the school	32	Has little interest of the school	12	Has little interest of the school	44	3
Always inattentive	32	Aggressive	12	Aggressive	41	4
Hyperactive	30	Hyperactive	8	Always inattentive	39	5
Aggressive	29	Uses hearing aids	7	Hyperactive	38	6
Withdrawn	20	Uses wheel chair	7	Withdrawn	25	7
Uses hearing aids	10	Always inattentive	7	Uses hearing aids	17	8
Multiple repeater	8	Withdrawn	5	Multiple repeater	12	9
Wear eye glasses	7	Multiple repeater	4	Uses wheel chair	12	9
Has difficulty in Math	5	Has difficulty in Math	4	Wears eye glasses	10	10
Uses wheel chair	5	Gifted	4	Has difficulty in Math	9	11
Has Asthma	4	Wear eye glasses	3	Gifted student	7	12
Gifted student	3	Has Asthma	2	Has Asthma	6	13

Appendix - 3

Table-13: Questionnaires Net Results of Stigma Reasons in the view of All Respondents (72-Teachers/Administration & 35 Parents).

A comparison between participants' views				Net Results		
Teachers/ Administrators	Freq. No.	Parents	Freq. No.	Teachers/Administrators & Parents	Freq. No.	Net Rank Order
Trouble paying attention	44	Trouble paying attention	21	Trouble paying attention	65	1
Little interest in learning	41	Family troubles	19	Little interest in learning	54	2
Being overactive	40	Little interest in learning	13	Family troubles	54	2
Family troubles	35	Trouble keeping up with other students	13	Being overactive	52	3
Trouble finishing tasks	27	Being overactive	12	Trouble finishing tasks	36	4
Trouble peer relationship	26	Failed in most subjects	10	Failed in most subjects	35	5
Failed in most subjects	25	Excessively angry	9	Trouble peer relationship	33	6
Inability to enjoy activities	20	Trouble finishing tasks	9	Trouble keeping up with other students	29	7
Easily tired	17	Easily tired	8	Excessively angry	26	8
Excessively angry	17	Being underactive	8	Easily tired	25	9
Trouble keeping up with other students	16	Trouble peer relationships	7	Inability to enjoy activities	24	10
Being underactive	15	requires attention from an adult	7	Being underactive	23	11
Crying easily for no apparent reason	15	Overly anxious & fearful	7	Requires attention from an adult	21	12
Requires attention from an adult	14	Being self-injurious	7	Overly anxious and fearful	20	13
Overly anxious and fearful	13	Inability to enjoy activities	4	Being self-injurious	20	13

Appendix – 4

Table-18: Net Results of two Questionnaires from the points of Views of all participants. (No. 107)

A Stigmatized student is who	%	Rank	The Main Reasons of Stigma are student's	%	Rank
Is a slow learner	59%	1	Trouble paying attention	61%	1
Experiences speech & language difficulty	48%	2	Little interest in learning	50%	2
Has little interest of the school	41%	3	Family troubles	50%	3
Is Lazy	41%	3	Being overactive	49%	3
Is aggressive	38%	4	Trouble finishing tasks	34%	4
Is always inattentive	36%	5	Failed in most subjects	33%	5
Is hyperactive	36%	6	Trouble peer relationship	31%	6
Is withdrawn	23%	7	Trouble keeping up with other students	27%	7
Uses hearing aids	16%	8	Excessively angry	24%	8
Is a multiple repeater	11%	9	Easily tired	23%	9
Uses wheel chair	11%	9	Inability to enjoy activities	22%	9
Wears eye glasses	9%	10	Being underactive	21%	10
Has difficulty in Math	8%	11	Requires attention from an adult	20%	11
Is a gifted student	7%	12	Overly anxious and fearful	19%	12
Has Asthma	6%	13	Being self-injurious	19%	13

Appendix – 5

Table-19: Interviewees Comments on the Stigmatized Student

1	The one who does not interact with teachers, who has family problems and problems with peers , the one whose other peers talk about him
2	The naughty, stupid, talkative who has family troubles due to the mother or father.
3	The poor one, who other students wait his answer, who is unable to keep up with others due to his family troubles
4	The intelligent who has high confidence and he can be the one who cannot interact or respond. Who has very attainment level.
5	Who is mentally ill and cannot understand any concept
6	Each child has a problem, any one who is giving the teacher extra work or not doing the work. (mother)
7	The very clever one who knows every thing and keeps answering, and the lazy who does not have anything to do, does not bring his books, wastes the time of teacher, hitting kicking others and wandering around the class
8	He is the special need student and needs to be treated as special
9	According to my personal view is a child who cannot understand the teacher due to the code of communication or she does not understand the language. The teacher talks but she does not get her
10	Who is mentally ill and cannot understand any concept
11	Each child has a problem, any one who is giving the teacher extra work or not doing the work. (mother)
12	The very clever one who knows every thing and keeps answering, and the lazy who does not have anything to do, does not bring his books, wastes the time of teacher, hitting kicking others and wandering around the class
13	He is the special need student and needs to be treated as special
14	Who misbehave, naughty, does not stay still, has careless family, gifted student, hyperactive, does not understand due to he does not study. The stigmatized who are mostly in special centres.
15	The one who is hyperactive and poor . because he is poor in subjects he tries to misbehave. The one who is either the very quiet, uncooperative or intelligent and very clever.
16	Whose behaviour is being naughty, talkative,
17	At KG stage no stigma, as children are still very young and their needs must be met by all teachers, but I have one girl who is considered stigmatized by her features as having down syndrome and autistic boy case.
18	The gifted and poor ones can be stigmatized. The gifted are labelled by peers because they are the best in the class. Poor ones are stigmatized and labelled as lazy, due to his bad and low grades and always stigmatized from the first mistake and label continues with him for the following year.
19	Mostly is the student who is clever, intelligent and withdrawn, who has a particular personality and is labelled by peers as wired, stupid, clumsy , who has strong personality.

20	The clever, top one, the naughty, the poor, the very quiet one. the one fro the view of peers is the hero and strong .	
21	The stigmatized is who does not like to participate, poor one, sometimes the one who has physical disability is stigmatized.	
22	Children who are weak ones, day dreamers, slow finishers and ones who socially have problems.	
23	Mostly who are not the same nationality as the major in a class , I mean who are from different nationality who do not know English as the majority of children so, the other children don not ask them to play with them and they are then isolated in the lunch time in the library to avoid their contact with other children	
24	I would say the stigmatized is something lies in their personality, the way they communicate with other people around them	
25	The hyperactive children who are also disruptive.	
26	Who cannot get along socially, who cannot make friends and who are stigmatized at the work level because they find difficulty fitting in with the skills they learn	
27	I think the poor one who cannot pay attention and waste the time of his teacher by disrupting the lesson.	

Appendix – 6

Samples of Interviews Transcripts

A. An Interview with one mother

- Q1. Can I ask how many children do you have?
- A1. I have only two sons who are twins and age of 13 years old but are totally different.
- Q2. What do you mean by totally different, I think twins have common things?
- A2. They are different in body weight, interests, intelligence and behaviour. One of them suffers from obesity and this is a problem for him. He has very bad mood, does not like to play with other boys, just likes to play with our relatives who are girls. He feels happy when he hurts others and makes them angry. He is strange I don not know what to do with him.
- Q3. What do you think is the reason for this behaviour?
- A3. Because boys always laugh at him and calls him the ‘fat’ and this is the worst in his school. His peers always label him and he gets in fight with them, and the school has no effective role to stop this, just they send for me to complain. What can I do ? I am not with him at school to solve his problems with others.
- Q4. To what extent do you think does this affect him at school and home?
- A4. At school he does not concentrate and forgets quickly, he failed in four subjects. I feel he is not intelligent as his brother, he does not understand quickly. His school asked to transfer him to another school. At home he likes to sleep most of the time, rarely plays with his brother. I feel his relation with his brother is not good

B. An Interview with a stigmatized boy (age 13 in grade six)

Q1. Are you happy here in this school?

B1. No. I do not like it. I want to leave it but my parents do not agree.

Q2. Why, what makes you say so?

B2. Because students here are rude with me, calling me bad words and my teachers always with them against me.

Q3. Why?

B3. I think because I always get in fight with them, push them when they call like the 'dark' and 'stupid'.

Q4. How about your teachers. Do they call you with names?

B4. yes. I am the stupid in their views.

Q5. I heard that your teachers complain from your academic level. Why?

B5. I do not know. But most of times I cannot understand the lessons and when I ask, the teacher, he shouts at me and said ' where are you, I explained this, you do not concentrate and care', and then students look at me and laugh. I do not like to learn.

Q6. Did you tell your parents about your problem at school and ask them to help you in understanding your subjects?

B6. Yes, they complained to the principal but nothing happen. No body can help me in doing the homework. My mother says Math and Science are difficult for her to explain for me.

C. An Interview with a social worker

Q1. Who do you think is the stigmatized student?

C1. In opinion the one who misbehave aggressively and always has problems with peers and teachers. I have one in boys section who is disruption behaviour.

Continue with social worker interview:

Q2. What do you think are the reasons?

C2. Boy's misbehaviour anger and frustrate others. As a result will be well known for this, and teachers have curriculum to finish on time.

Q3. As a social worker, what did you deal with this case?

C3. I talked and offered my advice to this boy many times, but the result was his reluctance to all my attempts. I sent for his parents, but unfortunately, this did not work and they did not come. His parents even do not care for his failure in subjects and even did not attend teachers – parents conference to ask about his attainment level.

D. With one boy in grade two who is stigmatized as the 'naughty' in grade four

Q1. Do you like to come to school?

D1. Yes

Q2. Why ?

D2. To play and learn.

Q3. Why do you always make your teaches angry from you?

D3. I do not do that. They make me angry.

Q4. How?

D4. They always call me the bad and naughty. I am not naughty, but now I got naughty and more than first because they call me like this

E. With one girl (age is 16 years old in grade ten who is stigmatized as ‘bad in Math’

Q1. Do you like your school?

E1. A little bit. I do not have many friends, just one.

Q2. Is this the reason for this?

E2. No. Other reason is the learning and teachers’ way of dealing with me, especially the Math teacher.

Q3. Why the Math teacher?

E3. I am not good at Math, I can not understand it and when I try to understand by asking her, she gets angry with me saying ‘ you must concentrate and pay more attention to my explanation’. This makes me feel bad and hates the Math and I think I will never pass in.

Q4. Are other teachers like her with you?

E4. Some, but I like the biology teacher because she understands me and always tries to help me.

F. With one boy (age is 14 years old in grade eight who is not stigmatized and has good reputation.

Q1. Who do you think is the student who is likely to be more called by labels than others in your class?

F1. I think the one who is careless. Who does not deal in a good way with peers and whose teachers always angry from him.

Q2. Do you know somebody who is labelled by peers or teachers?

F2. Yes, in my class there is one boy who likes to appear as the superman who likes to charge about with others and let him obey him. They scare from him but at same time he does not care for his lessons.

Q3. How about you, do like to help like this student to change his behaviour and care for his study?

F3. No. I do not like to be with him or talk with, because this makes teachers and peers that I am like him.

Appendix – 7

Table-20: Interviewees Comments on Stigma Reasons

1	I believe strongly that family troubles (no parental care) as a result of divorce Or due to careless family who does not follow the child
2	I think , teacher’s way of dealing with the child,(continuous labeling),(relationship) aggressive & strict treatment (be neglected and ignored by the teachers),unawareness of his learning difficulty. Due to that the teacher is unqualified. Also not giving the stigmatized student the chance to answer or even understand.
3	Teachers’ first impression of him & the misjudged of him due to his failure in the first test
4	In my view is the background & culture of the family in raising up the child (nurture) & the way of dealing with him(labeling) I mean his home environment can be a reason
5	Who always absent due to family troubles
6	See, I consider this is due to family’s negative attitude to cooperate with teachers
7	Racism due to skin color or the way he looks (his/her features) , nationality. I have one girl who is frequently rejected by peers for her dark skin colour.
8	The personality of the child shyness, quietness will give a teacher an impression that he/she cannot do anything or even understand . I mean this give the wrong impression about him
9	In my opinion the wrong the diagnosis of a child’s case, such as when some teachers label a child as a ‘mentally retarded’. On what basis such teacher makes him uses such label.
10	I see that this is due to student’s low IQ level and low level of attention associated with low mental ability and an apparent weakness in mastering the basic skills of subjects
11	I think that the code of communication between the teacher and a child who does not understand the teacher’s language could be a reasonable reason to stigmatize him/her.
12	I believe that the reason is the learning environment where there no differentiation between students’ abilities and teacher’s unawareness to the real differences between students concerning the level of understanding and processing the information or instruction.
13	The teaching methods play a role in being stigmatized , teacher’s way of managing the class
14	I guess that the believe of a child that he is bad, useless about himself
15	The continuous labeling of the child with the same labels by teachers & peers
16	In my point of view I say that genetics , heredity plays a big role in being stigmatized
17	It could student’s failure in most subjects due to sickness and frequent absence which results in the miss of most lessons
18	I believe that the bad reputation which spread by teachers and peers year after year
19	The misbehaviour of an intelligent one can affect his academic level and stigmatize him
20	I refer stigma to the teacher who has personal grudges against the student which then grows up and goes like a rumor.
21	Student’s misbehaviour, or his aggressive way of behaving with others
22	Language difficulty in English and Arabic affects student’s achievement level and stigmatize him/her.

23	The students' imitation to the labels which are used by the teacher in class and start calling him/her by these labels
24	In my opinion this is due to teachers lack the knowledge of psychology field in general and the child's psychology in particular. Likewise, her lack of knowledge about a student's background socially and academically.
25	Teacher's belief that such stigmatized student is a hopeless, useless case and does not deserve any effort .
26	The large number of students in the class can impede the teacher from discovering the real academic ability of her students.
27	Teacher's belief that such stigmatized student is a hopeless and useless case

Appendix – 8

Table-21: Interviewees’ Recommendations to Overcome Stigmatization Phenomenon and help such Students

1	The knowledge of the stigmatized student’s background by his teachers is important in order to know how to deal with his social and academic problems.
2	There should be a direct, close relationship between the teacher and the stigmatized student like the creation of a kind of humor between the teacher and her/his students
3	The cooperation between the teacher and the school supervisor confidentially to solve the student’s problem
4	The cooperation between the teacher and parents
5	The arrangement of a weekly meeting session with all class students to discuss their needs and problems
6	To be aware of the student’s low academic level , and to cater between students, and using the proper teaching methods that can meet a student’s needs.
7	There should be awareness from the teacher to the ethical issues which play a big role in either avoiding or stopping such stigma in the class. For example, the teacher should avoid the announcement of student’s results in front of his peers.
8	Understanding the student’s psychology by his teacher plays an important role in solving his problems and improving his academic level.
9	Praising the student for his politeness and good behaviour can improve him socially
10	Hiring a social worker and psychologists is essential at school
11	Not judging the child at the first few weeks of the school year and giving him a chance to express himself.
12	The use of individual education plan (IEP) can help in identifying the weakness and strengths of a student, as well as improving his learning .
13	Parental good relationship and good caring for the child can improve the academic level of the child
14	Teachers should have a psychological background culture to help her understand student’s problems
15	Teachers should be careful about the usage of language inside the classroom, as well as avoiding saying this is a bad child or a slow one. So, a teacher should avoid rich labeling which consequently lead to misbehaviour
16	The implementation of consequences and rewards policy at school can manage students’ misbehaviour.
17	The need to hire a person who is specialized in special needs in order help the teachers identify cases of special needs and learning difficulties of students, and set programs for them.
18	The teacher has a very important role to make such stigmatized students improve their learning or even by creating a conducive and favorable atmosphere to learning. If not , the result will be that the teacher will have many kinds of stigmatized students in her class.
19	Teachers should have a report about the student’s social , medical and academic level at the start of the school year.
20	The teacher is considered as the central part who can contribute to change the situation of a stigmatized student.
21	If teachers are motivated to intervene , they can solve the problem of such stigmatized students in the class.
22	Handling things and trouble maker students quietly can help. Also promoting self-confidence and encouragement
23	The implementation of the effective teaching methods can help in catering for students’ abilities and

	solve their problems.
24	If teachers are motivated to intervene , they can solve the problem of such stigmatized students in the class.
25	Handling things and trouble maker students quietly can help.
26	Promoting self-confidence and encouragement
27	The implementation of the effective teaching methods can cater for the students and solve their problems.

Appendix – 9

Extracts of Classroom Observations to Five Stigmatized Students

This appendix includes:

- 1. Observation to Alia in Grade One**
- 2. Observation to Ahmad in Grade Two**
- 3. Observation to Sami in Grade Three**
- 4. Observation to Salma in Grade Four**
- 5. Observation to Ali in Grade Seven**

1. Observation to Alia in Grade One

The English Lesson

A: Although Alia is seven years old, but she looked with her curly hair and dark skin, taller than her peers in the class. It was the fifth period when I attended the English class at 11:30 a.m. She stayed two years in kindergarten two. (As mentioned by her class teacher). Alia was sitting quietly in the middle of the class, looking at the pictures of her book cover. When the teacher asked all students to open books on page 78, Alia looked at her partner's book and opened it after the teacher asked her to do so more than one time. She seemed as if she did not understand teacher's instruction.

B: Alia copied the day date from the board correctly, but when the teacher asked her to read the sentence 'A Dog is on the log', she paused, stared at the board and could not read, even when the teacher asked her to read 'A Dog' only; she was also unable to read it. After the repetition of the word by the teacher for more than two times, Alia read the word. When the teacher asked students to tell her the total number of kittens in a picture at the phonics book. Alia was totally unable to count the pictures and say four. The teacher asked her to show the number by her fingers. Alia rose up and opened her hand to show five instead four, the teacher asked her to bend one finger to get four. Then, the lesson ended when the school bell rang.

C: Play ground observation

It was revealed that observation revealed that no body liked to play or talk with her. As a result Alia had no friends, as her peers seemed to avoid playing with her, as she was rejected from participating in their game. Alia was observed pushing away one boy from the swing to take his turn to play.

2. Observation to Ahmad in Grade Two

The Arabic lesson:

D: Ahmad age is eight years old, painfully thin and ill looking It was the second period at 8: 50 a.m. When I attended Grade-2B class, where there were 27 mixed pupils in the class sitting in three vertical rows. Sami was walking round the tables, and then got in fight with one pupil who pushed him away. Their teacher started shouting at them and asked all pupils to put on their books on tables. Sami looked worried, stayed silent and fidgeting his hand and legs for a while, did not get his book out of the bag. When the teacher asked about his book, he answered that he did not find it. She asked him to share his peer with his book, but he got in fight with the peer, as he asked for the book.

E: The teacher asked pupils to read the lesson all together, but Ahmad seemed as a day-dreamer who did not show any awareness of what was happening around him. When his teacher asked him to read, he did not look at her or even to comply, till she approached him and pointed at one line for him to read. With a very low sound, he misspelled the first two words and then stopped and refused totally to continue. When he was given a work sheet to match the reading words with pictures, he asked to go to sharpen his pencil. It was noticed that he sharpened it for more than three times and did not finish all words, but matching the first two words only which were wrong. The bell rang and he was observed running to the outside of the room.

F: Playground Observation:

Due to Ahmad's aggressive behaviour, it was noticed that his peers tended to reject him from participating in their game. Ahmad tried hopefully to play with them, but he got in sever fight with some of them, and then he chose to leave and go to the garbage bin where he got two empty soft drink cans, put them on the ground, stepped vigorously on them, kicked and played with as if they were a ball.

3. Observation to Sami in Grade Three

The Arabic lesson

G: In a class of twenty five boys, was seen wearing glasses all the time, strong and energetic. It was the third period before the first break, at 9:25 a.m. when I attended this class on time. There were 25 students sitting in five vertical rows and Sami was sitting at the first row near the class door. After a quick revision to the previous lesson, teacher asked students to open their books to continue reading the same lesson. Sami was sitting quiet staring at the teacher, did not participate at the initial discussion. The teacher asked one student to read, and then asked Sami to continue reading. He seemed that he did not follow his peer's reading, as he started to read the wrong paragraph. The teacher pointed to the line where he should start. He started with a low, unclear sound reading with many mistakes, and then he could not continue, which made the other students laugh. His teacher wrote and read the words Sami could not read on the board, and asked him to read word by word, he kept silent and could not identify them. When the teacher segmented one word into letters and asked him to put them together to help read, he could not also do it.

H: The teacher asked students to provide sentences verbally on the lesson words. When the teacher asked Sami, he said a correct sentence on one word. Then the teacher distributed work sheet on the lesson words which were written on the board for students to copy and put each in a sentence. It was observed that Sami copied the words well, but could not write any sentence on the sheet.

I: Play Ground Observation

It was observed that Sami's difficulty in Arabic did not affect his relationship with two peers only, while the others were always in fight with him in break times due to their calling him as stupid and lazy.

4. Observation to Salma in Grade four

The Math Lesson

J: Salma is nine years. She is average in height, thin with smooth long black hair. It was the fourth period after the first break at 10:40 a.m. when I attended grade four. Salma was late for seven minutes when she attended the class. She sat at back of the class and seemed quiet and shy. Her claim for this delay was that she did not hear the school bell. The lesson was about the application of the multiplication principle through solving problems that are related to this concept. The teacher started to solve quickly the homework questions on the board associated with an oral participation of the students. Salma did not show any kind of interest in participating till the teacher suddenly asked: Salma, what is the product of 4 times 8?" Salma paused for a while, used her fingers and then answered 24. The teacher then repeated the question and asked: 4 times 8 Salma?. Salma looked worried and stayed silent for a minute and then she said 'I do not know'. The teacher seemed embarrassed and appeared to ignore her response possibly to hide her inability to answer. While the teacher continued solving equations on the board, Salma was scratching with her pencil on the desk.

K: After students opened their books on page 45, one student was asked to read the first problem and then solve it. When Salma was asked to read the second problem, she showed a very slow reading rate with unclear voice. This made the teacher to stop her and let another to read. Salma was observed unable to solve Math problems, as she seemed unable to read and understand it. The lesson ended before Salma solve any problem, and her teacher seemed unaware of her problem, as she did not check what Salma did in the problems. This action reflects the teacher opinion of Salma when she said "Salma is the worst student on my subject, she is lazy, does not care and did not memorize the multiplication table till date".

L: Playground observation

The play ground observation revealed that Salma is an active girl who formed a group of fiends to play with them. She seemed she liked to participate in all school activities.

5. Observation to Ali in Grade Seven

The Arabic Lesson

M: When I attended Grade-7, there were 13 students in the class sitting in four vertical rows. Ali was sitting alone on the first row on the left side of the class near the window. The lesson was about the kinds of verb (present and past). While there was a discussion about the kinds of verbs as the teacher asked students to give examples, Ali was busy in looking through the window and showed unawareness of what was happening around him. His behaviour challenged his teacher who tried to overcome his frustration.

N: When Ali was asked to give examples on a past verb, For example he could not give correct examples of such verbs. his answer was wrong, the teacher explained for him quickly and gave him two verbs to differentiate between them. He also failed in doing so. As a result, his teacher shouted and strictly asked him to pay attention as well as warned him in being excluded from the lesson. Despite this, Ali seemed quiet, stubborn, not interested and did not pay attention to teacher's instruction and continued his engagement either playing with his staff or looking through the window. When was given an activity sheet to work on verbs, he turned his head left and right and then started to write. When the teacher checked his work, he found little was done and wrong. The teacher seemed embarrassed and chose to leave him without any further clarification to Ali's mistakes till the end of the lesson.

O: Playground observation

Ali's withdrawal and isolation case inside and outside the classroom has drawn the attention of the social worker, teachers. At the break time he wandered around the playground attempting to avoid pupils, but his peers were noticed to charge about and calling him 'the black' due to his dark skin colour. As a consequence, this forced Ali to get in fights with them associated with verbal aggressiveness. It was also noticed that he sometimes tended to tease a peer who is not in his class. When Ali was asked by the social worker about the reason for such behavior, his answer was always that he was just joking with that peer. This behaviour indicates that Ali may have not been taught how to deal with others.

Appendix – 10

- Documentary Evidence-

This includes the documents of the five observed stigmatized students which are:

- 10.1 Alia's documents
- 10.2 Ahmad's documents
- 10.3 Sami's documents
- 10.4 Salma's documents
- 10.5 Ali's documents

Appendix-10.1

- Alia's Documents -

This appendix includes the following documents:

1. Alia's **Final Score Report Card in all subjects** which describes her achievement level on each subject at the end of year 2005/2006.
2. Alia's **Analytical Report in English**
3. Alia's **graded Class Work sheet in English.**
4. Alia's **Quiz sheet in Math.**
5. Alia's **graded Class Work sheet in Arabic.**
6. Alia's **Analytical Report in Arabic** (The Original) – A-
7. Alia's **Analytical Report in Arabic** (The Translated) – B-

Appendix-10.2

- Ahmad's Documents -

This appendix includes the following documents:

1. Ahmad's **Class Work sheet in Arabic** subject
2. Ahmad's **Homework sheet in Arabic** subject
3. Ahmad's **Quiz sheet in Math**
4. Ahmad's **Dictation sheet in Arabic** subject
5. Ahmad's **First Evaluation in English** subject
6. Ahmad's **First Evaluation in Arabic** subject
7. Ahmad's **Final Score Report Card in all subjects** which describes his achievement level on each subject at the end of year 2005/2006.

Appendix-10.3

- Sami's Documents -

This appendix includes the following documents:

1. Sami's **Final Score Report Card in all subjects** which describes his achievement level on each subject at the end of year 2005/2006.
2. Sami's **Placement Test** at the start of the academic year in Arabic (The Original)-A-
3. Sami's **Placement Test** in Arabic (The Translated) –B-
4. Sami's **Dictation sheet** in Arabic.
5. Sami's **graded Class Work** sheet in Arabic.
6. Sami's **Second Evaluation Test in Arabic** for the second term.

Appendix-10.4

- Salma's Documents -

This appendix includes the following documents:

1. Salma's **Final Score Report** in all subjects
2. Salma's **Graded Class Work sheet** in Math
3. Salma's **First Evaluation Test in Math** for the second term
4. Salma's **Descriptive Report in Math- A- (The Original One)**
5. Salma's **Descriptive Report in Math- B- (The Translated One)**
6. Salma's **Analytical Report in Arabic- A- (The Original One)**
7. Salma's **Analytical Report in Arabic - B- (The Translated One)**
8. Salma's **Second Evaluation Test in Science** for the second term

Appendix-10.5

- Ali's Documents -

This appendix includes the following documents:

- 1 Ali's **class work sheet in Arabic** subject
- 2 Ali's **dictation sheet in Arabic** subject
- 3 Ali's **Academic Report** in all subjects.
- 4 Ali's **Score Report Card for the first term** in all subjects
- 5 Ali's **final Score Report Card for the end of year 2005/2006** in all subjects

Appendix – 11

-Extra Documentary Evidence-

This includes:

**One Teacher's Follow-up Plan to 15 Pupils in Grade Three who all
Showed Speech and Language Difficulty in the Arabic Subject for
the Second Term
of the Academic Year 2005/2006**

- This plan describes pupils' weakness points in Arabic Subject, reasons and the degree of their improvement

