CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the results of this study. The interpretations and discussions are divided into four cases. In each case, a general description, traits, characteristics, academic achievement and performance of each underachieving intellectually gifted student will be discussed. The five factors that are believed to contribute to underachievement will also be analysed and discussed in the context of these four underachieving intellectually gifted Malaysian students.

4.2 Case A

Personal Details

Jacky Lee (fictitious) is a 19-year old Malaysian male studying in a private college. Jacky scored 132 on the Cattell’s Culture Fair Intelligence Test. This shows a relatively high level of intellectual giftedness. However, his CGPA score is only 2.3. His CGPA that is less than a B, indicates the presence of a discrepancy between his intellectual ability and his academic performance.

General Description

Jacky is a Chinese boy who has been brought up with Christian values. Due to his asthmatic problem, which attacks occasionally, he is quite a sedentary person. He does not like sports very much and only loves chess. He has won many competitions in chess tournaments and reads books on mastering chess. He always
demands for reasons for why he should do the things he is asked to do. Although he is talkative, he is also polite, cheerful and well mannered.

Traits and Characteristics

Jacky's parents and teachers regarded him as a very smart boy. Jacky himself described himself as a quick learner. He "learns things fast." However, the teachers were quick to point out that Jackie is also very unmotivated and restless towards schoolwork. His teachers also complained about him being too talkative during lessons in class. His mother says her son has ambitions about being a national chess player. His parents also brought up their frustration with Jacky's underachievement. To them, Jacky has the potential but he is not willing to work towards a distinction. He only wants to do what is average. Jacky comments that even when he does not study, he will earn himself a B. This is already satisfactory to him, considering that he does not have to do anything. He does not see why he would want to put himself through sleepless nights remembering facts that make no sense to him for an A.

Jacky is inquisitive and often questions the reasons for why he needs to do things that were required of him. He loves chess and reads nothing except on chess. Despite what is claimed by the literature, Jackie is rather conventional in his views. He is sweet natured and cheerful outside the classroom, when he does not have to attend lessons.

Academic Achievement and Performance

Although he does not put effort in his studies, he easily scores an average B in his subjects during secondary school. In the Peperiksaan Menengah Rendah
he scored 2As, 3Bs and 2Cs. In the *Sijil Peperiksaan Menengah (SPM)*, he scored 4As almost effortlessly, without failing even a single subject. This indicates that he is capable of doing more than what he is achieving in the classroom.

### 4.2.1 Factors of Underachievement

**Family and Parental Factors**

Both Jacky’s parents were very cooperative and responsive towards this research. They were very obliging in setting time apart for this interview. They also asked many questions pertaining to Jacky’s underachievement. They even asked for materials that they could read about underachieving gifted students.

Jacky’s father is a businessman in the field of used car. He partially owns a used car centre. He has had tertiary education and is fluent in English. His father is not the typical businessman who only works and never has time for his family. In fact, his father should be given credit for spending a considerable time with the 3 boys (including Jacky) and his wife. Jacky’s father, in short, is a very homely person. The interior decoration and landscaped garden of their new house are evidence of his homeliness for they were his pride—he had personally designed them.

Jacky’s mother is also a homely person. The mother believes in spending time with the children in their growing up years. Thus, she has opted to leave the corporate sector and took her role as homemaker in the house. She also has tertiary education and was working as a company secretary before she left the working world. She ferries the children to and from classes every day.

Jacky is close to them and says that he is able to tell them what he feels although he admits that he does not tell them everything, especially things on boy-girl relationships.
In section 1 of Hauick-2, Jacky scored 67, which indicates the presence of high parental pressure. According to Jacky, his parents always check his homework; encourage him to read more, tell him he is lazy, ensure that he does his homework before he sleeps; keep up with his progress in school; remind him to finish his homework.; purchase books and resources for him so that he can do well in school; are unhappy when his school work is not well done and check his school work at least twice a week. Jacky’s response seem to match that of his parents’ caring and concern nature.

In question 10 of the School-Attitudes Inventory, it is found that Jacky’s parents has great interest in his school life and that his parents have little or no satisfaction in his school achievement. He admitted that his parents put a great deal of pressure on him in regard to homework. In the Interview Schedule and Instruction Form. Jacky once again verified that his parents are not happy with the way he is getting along at school.

From the information above, it is found that in Jacky’s case, parents’ educational level is not a contributing factor to underachievement as claimed by literature. The literature also claims that underachievement is the result of the parents’ low interest in the child’s schoolwork. Jacky’s parents are evidence against this claim. What may have caused Jacky’s academic underachievement is his parent’s high expectations of him. Although they may not be aware of the term intellectual giftedness, his parents are somehow aware that he is an intelligent boy. Based on this understanding, they respond with high expectations, which resulted in treating school seriously. This takes fun out of learning and inhibits Jacky’s interest in school thus, underachieving. His parents’ high supervision of his schoolwork at home should be applauded but this will only Jacky to feel insecure once he leaves
the home environment for school. He will feel inadequate and dependent and these are factors that contribute to academic underachievement in intellectually gifted students.

**Peer and Social Factors**

Eight of his classmates were randomly chosen to participate in the Attitude Questionnaire. All of them said that he is a god conversationalist, sociable, healthy, mature and a talker. All eight of them also agreed that Jacky boasts about never studying, feels that he is above the average person, talkative, friendly, easy to get along with and hardly goes to dances. Seven of them said that Jacky cannot get a date, doesn’t have much fun, thinks he is always right and does not dance much. Five of them said that he is a perfectionist, obedient, boasts about his marks, shows off his brilliance (especially in chess), not too much fun in a crowd and stays at home a lot.

When interviewed, Jacky said he knows that his friends like him because he is friendly and nice. He is aware that going to dances are important in college but he would rather stay home and read up on chess or play computer games. He is afraid that by not going to these dances, he may be rejected by his peers and therefore, compensates by being extra nice. When asked if his friends are all brilliant, he said that they were average students who just want to have fun. At this point, there is a slight hint that Jacky may be underachieving because he wants to be at the same level with his friends. When probed if he thinks he would lose his friends should he be a top student in studies, he said yes. This might he an indication that Jacky is consciously underachieving because he does not want to be rejected by his peers.
School Factors

Through the interview schedule and instruction form, Jacky feels that school is boring. He sees it as only a place to meet friends. He also thinks that the teachers are always giving unnecessary work and that most of the subjects he is taking are irrelevant. He said the most interesting thing about going to school is the extracurricular activities. He looks forward to the Chess Club meetings but says that there are more things that the Chess Club should do. One of the few he suggested was to combine chess and classroom assignments. He recalled how his English lecturer has motivated him to complete an excellent piece of assignment for an English project. He combined the subject with chess. Undoubtedly, he scored an A for the project.

In short, Jacky sees the courses he is taking as too content-based. As a result, school becomes useless, boring and dull. His underachievement is caused by a too-content-based syllabus used in the classroom. More challenging project work would help stimulate Jacky’s intellectual capability and reverse his academic underachievement, as can be seen from his English project.

Self-Concept

Jacky scored high on Section C of Hauick-2. He said that although his parents tend to put pressure on him, he would rather be himself than anybody else. He added that he is very happy at home; he is a person that other can count on; his friends like him and people usually like his ideas. Jacky scored 12 out of 15 in this section. It can be concluded that Jacky’s underachievement is not attributed to low self-esteem.
Locus of Control

In Section B of Hauick-2, Jacky said his reasons for not doing well in his studies are his bad time management, he did not give enough time to the subjects, he was very playful, he had insufficient preparation, he was simply careless, he had no motivation to study, he was bored by the subject and that he was under a lot of stress. His score for section B of Hauick-2 is 48. This means he is internally controlled and that his underachievement is not due an external locus of control.

Summary

A number of factors can be attributed to academic underachievement for this intellectually gifted boy. They are high parental pressure, his dislike for the courses that he is taking, his dislike for the lecturers who are teaching him, spending too little time in his studies and his fear of peer rejection. Self-esteem and locus of control cannot explain his underachievement, as Jacky does not have low self-esteem or an external locus of control.

4.3 Case B

Personal Details

Lee Liu Bin (fictitious) is a 18 year-old Chinese boy. He scored 132 on the Cattell’s Culture Fair Intelligence Test, which is an indication of intellectual giftedness. On the other hand, his CGPA of 2.4 is also an indication of academic underachievement as it is below grade B.
General Description

Liu Bin is the oldest child in a family of four. He has another sister who is in Form Four. Liu Bin is active and has a comment for everything. He describes himself as being obsessed with computers. At 18 years of age, he already knows how to use Unix, a computer software used by the professionals. He comments that people who use MIRC to chat are “dumb computer users.” He talks a lot about his astonishing ability in computers, about “hacking” into confidential information and about his “Hackers’ Club”. He is witty and often cracks jokes in class, which leaves his classmates bursting with laughter.

Traits and Characteristics

His lecturers do not think that he is gifted or intelligent but his parents do. His parents described him as intelligent especially in dealing with computers. Both parents agree that he is a fast learner in things that he is interested in learning. According to them, Liu Bin has never attended any computer courses but he is able to create web pages and hack into private systems. His parents complained that he spent too much time on the computer. His parents also commented that Liu Bin is short-tempered and gets irritated easily.

His lecturers were not very much in favour of him, saying that he is a nuisance in class. They complained that his jokes disrupt the class and it was obvious that they are quite annoyed by him. According to them, Liu Bin always criticized the work they gave in class, saying that the work is useless, too much, too difficult or too easy.
Academic Achievement and Performance

Liu Bin skips class very often and always has an excuse for doing so. When he is in class, he is either doing his own work, reading his own book, sleeping, talking to his friends or cracking jokes. He hands in below average work and assignments. He never failed any of his tests but also never manages to obtain anything more than a B. In the PMR examination, he only managed an A for English while in SPM, he scored two As: one for English and the other for Mathematics. Now doing his foundation studies in the college, his academic results are still very much the same. The CGPA of 2.4 is definitely an indication of underachievement in this intellectually gifted student who scored 132 on an intelligence test.

4.3.1 Factors of Underachievement

Family and Parental Factors

Both Liu Bin’s parents have tertiary education. His father is an executive in a bank while his mother is a teacher in a government school. At the time of this research, his father was not available for interview. However, his mother was helpful and cooperative.

Liu Bin’s parents are indeed aware of their son’s talent with computers and are frustrated at why he cannot do as well in his studies. His mother, who teaches Mathematics in school, tried to coach him at home but Liu Bin is always restless and has many excuses for not wanting to deal with schoolwork. Asked if his father is concerned about Liu Bin’s progress in school, his mother replied that his father is the one that buys all of Liu Bin’s books when he asks for them. His father also reprimands him for the poor results in college but they are all to no avail.
In section 1 of Hauick-2, Liu Bin scored 77, which indicates the presence of high parental pressure. According to Liu Bin, his parents always check his homework; encourage him to read more, tell him he is lazy, ensure that he does his homework before he sleeps; keep up with his progress in school; remind him to finish his homework; purchase books and resources for him so that he can do well in school; tell him how to spend his time; are unhappy when his school work is not well done and very interested in what he is learning in school. Like Jacky, Liu Bin’s response also matches that of his parents’ caring and concern nature.

In question 10 of the School-Attitudes Inventory, Liu Bin’s response show that his parents have great interest in his school life and that his parents have little or no satisfaction in his school achievement. He admitted that his parents feel that going to college is essential and that they give him a great deal of pressure with regards to homework. In the Interview Schedule and Instruction Form, Liu Bin said he is aware that his parents are not happy with his results in school.

In Liu Bin’s case, factors of his underachievement are attributed to high parental expectations and the parents’ failure to fully understand the nature of giftedness.

**Peer and Social Factors**

Eight of his classmates were randomly chosen to participate in the Attitude Questionnaire. One of them includes a boy whom Liu Bin has named as a close friend in the Background Data Questionnaire. Almost all of them said that he is a good leader, a good conversationalist, a good sport, popular, sociable, healthy, cheerful, has good ideas and has an answer for every question. All eight of them
agree that he is not egotistical sometimes thinks his classmates are all stupid, very outgoing, easy to talk to, likes people in general.

Liu Bin sees himself as popular but owes his popularity to his ability to mix freely with everybody. He said that he does not have any problem getting along with people in the college. In fact, he admitted that one of the factors that keeps him motivated to go to college is his friends and the people (girls) in the college.

 Asked if he thought any of his friends are intelligent or brainy, he named a few without any indication of bitterness. He said he liked them too and they are like the rest of his classmates. He said the intelligent ones do not put on an air about their intelligence and that they are equally nice.

From the above information, it can be concluded that peer and social factors do not contribute significantly to Liu Bin’s academic underachievement. It does not appear to the researcher that Liu Bin is trying to please any of his friends for fear of social rejection. His popularity is due to his personality, not a forced pretense for the sake of being accepted.

School Factors

Through the Interview and Schedule from, Liu Bin feels that school is boring and useless. He feels that the subjects that he is taking are repetition of what he has learnt during secondary school. He also thinks that his teachers are just doing their job and his attitude towards them is almost indifferent. He said he realized that his parents are happy that he has many friends in school but they are unhappy about his examination results which is always below grade B. His parents have asked him to put in more effort in his studies but he said he is unable to bring himself to study “these boring stupid stuff”. His parents think that the amount of social activity he
takes part in at the college is too great but he begs to differ. He said that the activities are the motivating factor that wakes him up every morning for college.

Asked if he is going to continue letting his grades stay, he said he hopes that the next semester will be better because he will be in Year One, studying Computer Science. He hopes that the subjects that they will do in Year One will be more interesting since they are about computers.

Clearly, Liu Bin’s underachievement is caused by school-related factors, not teachers in particular but the overall school system. Subjects taught are too content based. In the School Attitudes Inventory, Liu Bin said that the school and the college has not taught people to develop new ideas and learn to evaluate ideas critically. Most importantly, Liu Bin pointed out that he wanted a course that could help him prepare for a vocation or a profession and he has not found one yet. Perhaps some changes need to be done with the focus of change being underachieving gifted students. The needs of students like Liu Bin need to be considered.

**Self-Concept**

In Section C of Hauick-2, Liu Bin scored 11 out of 15. He acknowledges the fact that he is as popular as most people and that people usually like him and his ideas. He never thinks of leaving his family and he is a person others can count on. In short, he would rather be himself than anybody else. This means that Liu Bin has a high self-concept and that his underachievement is not attributed to self-concept.
Locus of Control

In Section B of Hauck 2, Liu Bin scored relatively high, 88. This would indicate that he is most probably externally controlled and this would explain his underachievement. Among his reasons for failing to do well in his studies are he had too many projects and assignments; he had too much parental pressure; he was under a lot of stress; he had bad luck; his memory was poor; he was mentally tired; his school’s atmosphere was not conducive for learning; he had no interest in the subject; he was unable to concentrate in class and that there were too many distractions in class.

This clearly shows that Liu Bin’s underachievement is due to an external locus of control. He feels that he is not in control of his own learning situation.

Summary

From the above description about Case B, it is concluded that Liu Bin’s academic underachievement is due to the presence of parental pressure, school-related factors and the external locus of control. Apparently, school-related factors seem to affect his underachievement the most. Liu Bin is confident about himself. Thus, self-concept does not contribute to Liu Bin’s academic underachievement. Neither do peer nor social factors.

4.4 Case C

Personal Details

Melissa The (fictitious) is 19 year old. She is Chinese girl who scored 140 on the Cattell’s Culture Fair Intelligence Test. This high score suggests that she is
an intellectually gifted student. However, her CGPA of only 2.3 suggests academic underachievement.

**General Description**

A layman would never be able to see Melissa as an intellectually gifted child. In physique, she is small and petite. She is quiet and timid-looking. She speaks only when spoken to but when she speaks, she is able to carry a conversation very well. She is proficient in English and has a passion for Art. She not only paints very well but she is also well versed on the theory of art. She is the youngest child in the family. She has two other older siblings: a sister who is working abroad and a brother who is working as a sales executive.

**Traits and Characteristics**

Although Melissa may look timid, her personality proves to be otherwise. When spoken to, Melissa can actually carry on a mature conversation. She can also discuss intellectually on the issue of Arts in Malaysia. She hopes to study Art and Design after Foundation Studies but her parents are against the idea. She is forced to study Business Administration instead. She does not think of herself as gifted or even intelligent. Melissa seems to think that she will never do well in her studies since she has never done well anyway.

She is impatient with her schoolwork except for those that involve artwork. At the time of the interview, she was in the midst of completing an assignment for English Language Proficiency. She was decorating the journal that she had to pass up a week later. Melissa’s diligence, conscientious and interest were observed. It is
disheartening though because she cannot seem to apply the same commitment to other school tasks.

**Academic Achievement and Performance**

Melissa herself revealed that her most memorable academic result were when she was in standard two. She reminiscence of the time when she scored As for all the subjects in school. After that, her results were usually below average and they became worse as the years pass by. In the *PMR* examination, she only managed 2As, one for English and the other for Art. In the *SPM* examination, she managed 3As: for English, Art and Mathematics.

According to her teachers, her performance in class is that of average or below average. In classroom discussion, Melissa rarely participates. This indicates academic underachievement because Melissa’s IQ test result showed a 140.

**4.4.1 Factors of Underachievement**

**Family and Parental Factors**

Both Melissa’s mother and father are educated only to the primary level. Coincidentally, Melissa’s father and Jacky’s father have something in common. They are both involved in the sales of used cars. Melissa’s mother is a housewife.

Melissa’s older sister and brother love her very much. Her sister who is working in Singapore showers her with gifts whenever she returns home. Although her parents themselves are not very educated, they would like to see Melissa doing well in school. After all, she is their first child to enter college. Melissa’s parents clearly showed that they are very concern about Melissa’s studies during the interview sessions. Both parents were cooperative. They are aware that she is gifted
in art but would like to see her excel in other areas of her studies as well. They are worried about her performance in college.

In section 1 of Hauick-2, Melissa scored 69, which indicates the presence of high parental pressure. Melissa indicated that her parents always encourage her to read more, are involved in most of her decision-making, give her a study area at home where she can do her homework, tell her how to spend her time, thought that she will fail in the final exams this year, feel that she should spend most of her leisure time revising school work and tell her to excel in her studies so that she can get a good job later.

In question 10 of the School-Attitudes Inventory, it is found that Melissa’s parents has great interest in her school life and that his parents have little or no satisfaction in his school achievement. She said that her choice of subjects is largely guided by their decisions and her post-secondary school plans are guided by their judgement of what is best for her. In the Interview Schedule and Instruction Form, Melissa said that her parents think that the subjects that she is taking are useful although she may not agree.

From the above information gathered, the researcher concluded that Melissa’s underachievement is also due to high parental expectations and high parental supervision. Her parents have three children and Melissa is the youngest. She is also the first to enter college and they have spent a considerable amount of money on her. They expect her to get a good job later. They did not want Melissa to study Art and Design although Melissa herself badly wants to. The reason given by them is rather conventional, that an art designer does not earn much. For noble intentions, they always make decisions for her, without realizing that this may cause underachievement. Due to their high expectation, they have taken away the joy of
learning and the joy of a college life. This makes school useless for Melissa. High supervision from her parents, sister and brother can be seen as they pamper her and make her feel very secure at home. The competition in the college may cause some imbalance. She may not be able to cope on her own and may even find college hostile and cold. This was confirmed during the interview session when Melissa said she hates the college because everyone is always trying to outdo everybody else in every aspect.

Melissa's academic underachievement may be due to high parental pressure and high parental expectations. Another contributing factor is the high supervision at home as contrasted to the hostile environment in the college. A sense of insecurity in the college can lead to academic underachievement.

**Peer and Social Factors**

Like the others, eight of Melissa's classmates were randomly chosen to participate in the Attitude Questionnaire. One respondent was found not serious and was dishonest in answering the questionnaire and therefore, his response is ignored.

Six out of seven of her classmates regard her as a perfectionist, nice looking, serious, quiet, shy, mature, has good manners, doesn't have much fun, sticks with her own crowd, always wanting to learn, doesn't have much to say, introvert, mostly listening instead of talking, stays at home a lot. Five said that Melissa is not egotistical, is ambitious, intent on doing work well and completely (all of them agree with this, especially when art is concerned) and hardly ever goes to dances. Three said she doesn't have too many friends and she is not sociable. Two of them thought that Melissa doesn't date much. Only one found her easy to talk to.
Melissa also rated herself less popular. She thought she was a difficult person to be with. When asked why she thought so, she said that she could not talk to her friends unless she is first spoken to. She admitted that she would like to be more outgoing and go out with the opposite sex but is shy to make the first move. In the School Attitude Inventory, she said it is important for the college to help students learn to get along better with members of the same and opposite sex. She also seemed angry with the fact that everybody is always competing with one another to be the coolest, the smartest, the brightest and the most popular. This can be confirmed because in the same inventory, she wanted the college to help students learn how to become cooperative, friendly, fair-minded and tolerant.

The above information led the researcher to suspect that Melissa is underachieving because of peer and social factors. She is socially withdrawn. Melissa may be facing maladjustment and has difficulty in peer relations. This adversely affects her schoolwork, thus causing the underachievement.

School Factors

Like her other counterparts, she becomes restless and bored when having to complete her schoolwork. In the School-Attitudes Inventory, she listed all the subjects as the ones she likes the least because she found them to be the least interesting, the least challenging and the least satisfying. She believed that the college should be a place to help students develop new ideas and learn to evaluate ideas critically but she said the college has not done that so far. She felt that more music, art and dramatics activities should be implemented in the college. She also wanted more opportunities for independent rather than assigned projects. She wanted less competition in class
In an interview session, Melissa mentioned that going to college and choosing what to study are entirely her parents' decision. Given a choice, she would have studied Art & Design. Therefore, she does not enjoy studying as she found the subjects irrelevant and boring. She felt a lot of pressure from her parents and classmates. When asked why she thinks she cannot achieve a higher level of grade, she said the lecturers and classes were boring. The assignments were too heavy and required a lot of facts. In the School Attitudes Inventory, she said she would get more out of a class if there was a student-led discussion or if she was working with a small group on individual projects.

Clearly, Melissa's underachievement is related to school factors.

Self-Concept

Melissa scored 9 out of 15 in Section C of Hauick-2. She rated herself as not proud of her homework, not as popular as most people and there are many things bothering her. However, she said she is a person that others can count on and she would rather be herself than anybody else. This indicates a high self-concept. And Melissa's underachievement cannot be attributed to a low self-concept.

Locus of Control

In Section B of Hauick-2, Melissa scored 77 out of 112. This is quite a high score, which indicates that Melissa's academic underachievement may be due to an external locus of control. Her reasons to explain her failure to achieve are feeling intimidated by peers who are better in their studies, she had too much parental pressure, she had too many projects and assignments, she was under a lot of stress, she ran into bad luck, her memory was poor, she found no motivation to study, her
college's atmosphere was not conducive for studying, she was bored by the subject, she had no interest in the subject and there were too many distractions in college.

Melissa sees things as beyond her control. She does not internalize the relationship between effort and outcome, process and product. She does not own a sense of self-efficacy. She attributes failure to luck, difficult test and assignments. She feels as if she has lost control over her learning situation. Melissa is clearly an externally controlled gifted underachiever.

Summary

Melissa's academic underachievement is due to many factors ranging from high parental pressure, high parental supervision and high parental expectations. She also faces maladjustment in peer relations and this is another contributing factor to her underachievement. Apart from that, Melissa also found school or college a boring place. She found the courses too content-based and very dissatisfying and unchallenging. Finally, an external locus of control may be yet another factor that has caused her underachievement.

4.5 Case D

Personal Details

Freddie Chiew (fictitious) is 19 years old and is a male. Freddie scored relatively high on the Cattell's Culture Fair Intelligence Test. 136 makes him an intellectually gifted student. However, his CGPA of only 2.0 is far below the average B. He is thus an underachieving intellectually gifted student.
General Description

Freddie is a well-built, good-looking nineteen-year-old boy who talks so much that his lecturers regard him as the “tin kosong” (empty can, a local proverb for someone who makes a lot of unnecessary noise). He is also very active outside class. He is the only subject who already has a steady girlfriend. His girlfriend was even asked to participate in the Attitude Questionnaire. From the way he talks, Freddie appeared to be loud and confident. Lecturers do not like him very much. They said he is too bold and ill mannered. One teacher reported that Freddie once yawned and told her that her lesson was extremely boring in front of the whole class.

Traits and Characteristics

When being told of the objective of this study and why he was being chosen to participate, Freddie was overwhelmed and pleased. Freddie is an extrovert and is very expressive. He would let people know how he feels about things. He does not seem to be fearful of anyone or anything. He can be rather sweet when he wants to and pleases the lecturers, flattering them with compliments. At other times, he would be rude and disruptive causing a stir in the classroom. His lecturers commented that he was like a “chameleon with double personality”. Even during this study, Freddie would be very cooperative at times but very restless and fidgety at other times.

Academic Achievement and Performance

Freddie scored 3As for PMR, which he assumed was very good. He was satisfied with the result because he said he did not even leave a single finger to read anything. Therefore, 3As to him was an achievement not to be expected. In the
SPM, he again scored 3 As. Now in college, his CGPA is a 2.0. He realized that it was a low grade but quickly promised to work harder in the next semester. His lecturers said that he is active in classroom participation but most of the time, his responses were nonsensical answers, which tickle other students in the class, but irritate the lecturers and disrupt the lectures.

4.5.1 Factors of Underachievement

Family and Parental Factors

In section 1 of Hauick-2, Freddie scored 76, which indicates the presence of high parental pressure. According to Freddie, his parents always encourage him to read more, tell him he is lazy, are involved in most of his decision making, keep up with his progress in school; tell him how to spend his time, remind him to finish his homework, purchase books and resources for him so that he can do well in school; feel that he should spend his leisure time revising schoolwork, are unhappy when his school work is not well done and are very interested in what he is learning in school. Most of the time, his parents want to know what he is reading when he is reading, remind him to finish his homework and tell him that good results will ensure him a good job later.

In question 10 of the School-Attitudes Inventory, it is found that Freddie’s parents have great interest in his school life and that his parents have little or no satisfaction in his school achievement. Freddie complained that his parents put a great deal of pressure on him in regard to homework. He also said that his parents felt that the amount of social activity he takes part in college is too great. In the Interview Schedule and Instruction Form, Freddie once again verified that his parents are not happy with the way he is getting along at school.
Both his parents were not available to take part in the interview as they were away for a vacation. His guardian, an aunt, was cooperative to share what she knew about Freddie. Being the only son to her sister, Freddie’s aunt has heard his mother complained a lot about him. According to his aunt, Freddie’s mother is concerned about Freddie’s results since he began secondary school. His mother has sent him for various private tutors but they were all to no avail. His aunt recalled Freddie being a high achiever during his primary days. His aunt commented that Freddie is a smart boy, judging from the way he talks and learn things. She also complimented him as a fast learner. She said he had learnt to cook just by observing people. Freddie’s aunt also complained that Freddie always had excuses for not wanting to do his work. He is able to sweet-talk anyone and get things done his way.

His aunt said that his parents are always concerned with their son’s progress in school. They are always looking for a solution to overcome his underachievement. They keep coaxing him to put in more effort. They tried to coach him themselves and tried to encourage him to do better by rewarding him.

From the little information from his aunt, it is enough that there exist high parental expectations and high parental pressure, as what is claimed by Freddie earlier.

**Peer and Social Factors**

Eight of his classmates were randomly chosen to participate in the Attitude Questionnaire. Most of them described him as a good sport, popular, sociable, talkative, expresses himself well, nice-looking, very outgoing and is in many extracurricular activities. Perhaps it is due to his popularity and confidence, most of his peers also described him as spoiled, stuck up, snobbish, boasts about never studying,
conceited, has the 'know-it-all' attitude, has an answer to every question and walks around with superior feeling. His girlfriend, who is one of the respondents, found him to be a perfectionist, a good conversationalist and likes school. When interviewed, his girlfriend of almost one year also complained that he sometimes irritates her because he talks too loudly and too much. They often argue and he always ends up having the last say. Even with his friends, he must always have the last say.

Freddie himself knows that he is popular and that most people in college know him. He boasts about everybody being his friend, without realizing that most people found him stuck up and snobbish. He commented that members from his group do not study but they all make it through examinations and projects. He exaggerated that they were the coolest crowd in college.

At this point, there is some hint that Freddie is under peer pressure not to perform. He wants to be socially accepted by this 'cool' group and the fear of rejection has forced him to consciously underachieve. Probed further, Freddie mentioned that high achievers in the college are all nerds and bookworms who "has no life".

School Factors

None of the subjects in college appeals to Freddie. In his own words, he finds them "all boring and so dumb." He feels that the college should help students to learn to work better with people, develop new ideas and learn to evaluate ideas critically. When asked to suggest changes that would improve the college, Freddie said he wanted to see more teacher assistance and interest in students' academic work. He said at the moment, lecturers are just not interested in weak students like
him. He commented that lecturers were biased towards smart students only. He also wanted more competitions, elective courses and opportunities for independent rather than assigned projects.

Freddie said he does not mind going to college but could not stand the lessons in class as they were often boring and uninteresting.

Undoubtedly, Freddie’s academic underachievement is largely due to school-related factors. He dislikes the courses he is taking and the lecturers who teach him. He has low-grade aspiration and finds lessons boring, unchallenging and useless. All these are contributing factors to Freddie’s underachievement.

Self-Concept

Freddie scored a high 9 out of 15 in Section C of the Hauick-2. Even though he said his parents tend to put pressure on him, he never thought of leaving home. He said that friends his age like him a lot and he would rather be himself than someone else. All this indicates that Freddie does not suffer from low self-esteem and his underachievement cannot be associated with a low self-concept.

Locus of Control

In Section B of Hauick-2, Freddie said his failure was due to his home and school environment that was not conducive for studying, too much parental pressure, too many projects and assignments, too difficult school work, too much stress, bad luck and poor memory. He also said that there were too many distractions in school, the teachers did not teach properly and he had no interest in the subjects. He admitted that he was playful, he found no motivation to study and he was unable to concentrate in class. Freddie scored 90 out of 112 in this section. This highlights
that he is externally controlled and that his academic underachievement may be contributed by this external locus of control.

Summary

In short, Freddie's academic underachievement may be contributed by numerous factors. They are high parental pressure, high parental expectations, peer and social factors and an external locus of control.

4.6 Chapter Summary

A common thread among these four underachieving gifted students can be observed. All four have criticized the school system. There is enough evidence to attribute their academic underachievement to school-related factors. The four students found no motivation to excel in their studies. This could be due to the boring, content-based curriculum that makes no sense to them. Family and parental pressure also play a big role in causing academic underachievement among these intellectually gifted students as all four are reported to have felt the pressure to excel. What is consistent in all these four students is that they all have high self-concept. This means that self-concept is not a contributing factor which affects academic underachievement in all these four students.