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Emotional Intelligence, Emotional Self-regulation and Dispositional Mindfulness in High School Gifted Students

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Abstract

The aim of current investigation was to study the relationship among emotional intelligence, mindfulness and emotional self-regulation in high school gifted students. in line with the objectives of the study, using sectional method 144 gifted students (77male and 67 female) of gifted schools were selected in random sampling method. They were asked to fill Bar-On EQ-i, FFMQ, and Self-Regulation Questionnaire (SRQ) Data were analyzed using chi square, t-test, and Pearson's moment correlation and multivariate regression statistical tests. chi square tests revealed that the two studied male and female gifted students have no significant difference in the demographic variables. Moreover results of the t-test indicated that the two groups have significant difference in emotional intelligence. Results of stepwise regression indicated that variables of acting with awareness and no reaction from mindfulness variable explains about 17% of emotional self-regulation variance. Moreover, the components of problem solution and optimism about emotional intelligence explain 38%

of emotional self-regulation. According to the results, it can be concluded that from components of mindfulness, acting with awareness and no mental reaction and from components of emotional intelligence, problem solution and optimism play a major role in emotional self-regulation of the gifted students. Hence it seems necessary to pay much attention to the role of such components in emotional self-regulation and decreasing negative emotions of such students.

Key words: Emotional Intelligence, Mindfulness, Emotional Self-Regulation, Gifted Students

Introduction

Gifted children are more advanced than their age almost in all aspects of progress and skill acquisition and they are more mastered than other children. They enjoy all kinds of brain exercises and conundrum; they learn rapidly and use their taught widely. Some parents do not understand their child and some children do not understand their parent and doing so, the gifted children become introvert (Gallagher, James, 1926). The traditional definition of cleverness relies on the overall intelligence which is measured by an IQ test, individually. Hallahan and Kauffman (2009) suggest a definition for the gifted in terms of educational objectives and they consider gifted person who has following traits: a) having much capabilities and intelligence, b) having much creativity, c) much sense of commitment to his work.

According to Bandura (1977) self-regulation is use of self-dependent, self-control and self-guided abilities and capabilities. He believes that the above mentioned abilities are influenced by individuals' belief about self-efficiency in different activities and behaviors. Self-regulation is defined as mental effort in controlling internal condition, processes and functions to achieve higher goals (Cole, Logan and Walker, 2011). Emotional self-regulation is referred to active use of motivational strategies which maximize learning and decrease fear and anxiety. Self-regulation management method, as the key factor, plays an important role in children, teens and adults' academic achievement (Pajares &Valiant 2002), being

related to health promotion. Klassen (2010) indicated in a research that gifted students have higher self-regulation than normal students.

Certainly emotional self-regulation plays an important role in emotional growing way of gifted students. We should not expect gifted students to act at mental and dry level when confronting with the emotional problems and crises. Due to their exclusive abilities and talents, they can understand such relations and react to them better than others. Sometimes they might suffer more than other children of the same age through clear imagination and abnormal range of their information which have not been adjusted with the realities of life. Hence, these individual's emotional growth does not take place in the gap, rather factors such as emotional intelligence and mindfulness influence regulation of their emotions. And it seems that emotional intelligence, mindfulness and emotional self-regulation of gifted students are different from normal individuals.

In spite of differences in the definitions, structures, processes and mechanisms, all theories of intelligence emphasize on determinant role of motivation and its relationship with cognitive abilities of the gifted. Steinberg (Rise, 2006) considers self-regulatory strategies as the same as concept of intelligence. The successful intelligence is one kind of continued process in acquiring needed skills for successful performance at different aspects of the life. Dixon et.al (2001) considers creativity, flexibility and self-regulation as exclusive aspect of the gifted individuals. In Heller's theory of intelligence (1993) the intermediary role of motivational factors and self-regulation strategies are emphasized in actualization of potential capabilities of gifted individuals. Heller (1993) believes that enjoying higher levels of cognitive and gifted abilities does not guarantee achievement, rather interaction of such factors with non-cognitive characteristics of the personality such as motivational orientation and effective use of self-regulation strategies are among the most important necessary conditions at different fields.

Identification of factors and influential correlations in solving emotional problems and abnormalities of the students seem necessary. In the present era where mental pressures have dominated humans' life, the ability to

control unpleasant emotions has special effect on psychological health. Those who are skilled at emotions regulation can better compensate negative emotional states by pleasant activities (Salovey, 1999).

In the 1990, an article was published by Salovey and Mayer in which the term, “emotional intelligence” was used for the first time. They defined emotional intelligence as ability to understand and express emotions, use of emotions and managing them (Cherniss, 2002).

It seems that those who have higher ability in identification and management of their own emotions have also ability to be present at the moment to accept emotions without judgment (i.e. mindfulness). Langer believes that mindfulness is a compatible and creative cognitive process and it is revealed when the individual uses three key traits. These three traits are: 1-creating a new classification, 2-accepting new information, 3-being aware of more and deeper views and views’ perspectives (Cine, La Nacion, Winston, Curtis, Waller, 2005). Mindfulness is determined through continuous, moment by moment and non-evaluation awareness toward mental processes, involving continuous awareness of physical emotions, perceptions, emotions, thought and imaginations. Mindfulness is inseparable part of the thought (Wells, 2002).

Emotional intelligence and self-regulation as one of regulatory components of cognitive issue and designing plans of individuals’ social and emotional compatibility are attracted and used by most psychologists, counselors, educational scientists, specialists of mental health and other people who are involved with the students in a way (Myer, 2001).According to Segal et.al (2013) the two aspects of non-reaction and non-judgmental have common features in focusing on self-discipline ,self-regulation, being wise, intentional response to the events.

Arch and Kresk (2005) concluded in their studies that participants who had 15 minutes of concentrated breathing (one of mindfulness exercises), reported less negative emotion compared to those who hadn’t such breathing. Training mindfulness causes considerable improvement in the life quality and anxiety symptoms of patients with cancer (Carlson et.al, 2003). Moreover the mindfulness-oriented cognitive therapy resulted in significant increase of mental transparency, mental health and reduced

physical tension (Block, 2002). Using the mindfulness-oriented cognitive therapy, Shelman (2003) treated depressed individuals which finally resulted in considerable decrease of depression in the people. Moreover findings of this study were in balance with findings reported in Teasdale et.al theory. According to the theory our mind interprets and explains happening events, causing stable feelings and reactions. In the individuals vulnerable to depression, the mind is always focusing on the negative and annoying thoughts, resulting in much continuation of depression (Teasdale et.al 2000).

Identification of the main emotional and psychological problems of such people can help widely educational experts and practitioners. Moreover in the case of difficulty in emotional self-regulation of such individuals, we can present consulting services and psychotherapy to these people in the form of group sessions in order to decrease their problems and barriers on their growth way, paving the way for substantiation of their capabilities and development. Hence, in this study we attempt to investigate the relationship among emotional intelligence, mindfulness and emotional self-regulation.

Method:

The research design is of cross-sectional, descriptive-correlation and retrospective type. The statistical population of the study involves all gifted students of high school level of Tabriz city. The final sample consisted of 144 subjects (77male and 67 female) with the age range from 14 to 18 years.

In this investigation , first, we referred to gifted high schools of Tabriz city and then, selected the subjects and after explaining research objectives and attracting their cooperation, Bar-on’s emotional intelligence questionnaire, Baer et.al five-factor mindfulness questionnaire and Bufard’s self-regulation questionnaire were presented to them and they were asked to study the questions carefully and choose their answers based on their own personal traits and answer all questions, if possible.

Bar-On EQ-i

The Bar-On EQ-i is one of the most widely used EI measures (Van Rooy & Viswesvaran, 2004). Official translations into 29 languages currently exist (personal communication, MHS). However, published research validating the factorial structure of the EQ-i, and its different versions, is lacking. Matthews, Zeidner, and Roberts (2002) reported inconsistencies in the factor structure when reanalyzing data from the 1995 EQ-i technical manual (Bar-On, 1995). Palmer, Monacha, Gignac, and Stough (2003) presented empirical support for a six factor structure in an Australian sample. A Lebanese adaptation and validation study of the youth four factor version (EQ-i: YV; Bar-On & Parker, 2000) yielded a higher order two factor, eight subscale structure (Hassan & Sader, 2005).

Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ)

Five mindfulness processes have been suggested; namely the ability to observe, describe, act with awareness, be non-judging and be non-reacting, and the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ) is currently the only questionnaire assessing all five of these mindfulness facets (Baer et al., 2006). The FFMQ consists of 39 items measuring, one overall construct of mindfulness and five subconstructs of mindfulness, that is the skill to: 1) Be non-reactive to inner experiences, allowing them to be as they are, not getting absorbed or carried away, e.g. “I perceive my feelings and emotions without having to react to them” (‘non-react’, 7 items); 2) observe, notice or attend to one's internal and external experiences, e.g. “I notice the smells and aromas of things” (‘observe’, 8 items); 3) attend to current activity (not “automatic pilot”), e.g. “I find myself doing things without paying attention” (‘act-aware’, 8 items); 4) label observed stimuli or experiences with words, e.g. “I'm good at finding words to describe my feelings” (‘describe’, 8 items) and; (5) be nonjudging of experience - accepting inner experiences without evaluation, e.g. “I tell myself I shouldn't be feeling the way I'm feeling” (‘non-judge’, 8 items) (Baer et al., 2006). Each item is rated on a

Likert scale from 1 (never or very rarely true) to 5 (very often or always true). The scale has shown adequate-to-good internal consistency (Cronbach's a ranged from 0.72 to 0.92) (Baer et al., 2008).

Bouffard self - regulation questionnaire

This questionnaire includes 14 questions designed by Bouffard et al. (1998) and is standardized by Kadivar (2001). In this test, each question has five options including: completely agree, agree no opinion, disagree, and completely disagree, and have points from 1 to 5 respectively. The general reliability coefficient of the questionnaire based on Cronbach's Alfa was 0.71. The reliability of subscales of cognitive strategies was 0.70 and a metacognitive subscale was 0.68. The results of factor analysis showed that the correlation coefficient among the questions was right and instruments are composed of two factors. The value of factors was acceptable and this instrument is able to explain the variance of 0.52 for self-regulation. The validity of its structure is satisfactory (Kadivar, 2001). In research of Talebzade Nobaryan et al, its reliability was obtained 0.76 through performing test on 30 students and by using Cronbach's alpha (Talkhabi, 2008). In research of Atarodi and Karshki, the general reliability coefficient of questionnaire by method of Cronbach's alpha was 0.72 (Atarodi and Karashki, 2013). The reliability of this study was obtained 0.76 through performing test on 30 students and by using Cronbach's alpha.

Data Analysis

Stevens' suggestion (2012) was used to obtain the sample size. According to Stevens' suggestion, in the regression studies 15-20 participants were needed in ratio of each predictor variable. Considering that our research is of correlation and regression type, and considering that we have 10 predictor variables, hence 150 samples were needed. In the final analysis, the sample size was decreased to 144.

The collected data were analyzed using X2 and independent t, Pearson's moment correlation and multiple correlation statistical tests in the SPSS 21.

Results

Table 1: descriptive statistics of demographic variables based on gender

Variables	Total n=144	Group of women n=67	Group of men n=77	Value of P χ^2
Age 14	3	2	2	0.34
15	33	17	16	
16	37	13	24	
17	59	28	31	
18	12	8	4	
Education first year of high school	44	22	22	0.10
Second year of highschool	47	16	31	
third year of High school	53	29	24	
marital status Single	142	67	75	0.18
Married	2	0	2	
Socio-economic status Higher	20	7	13	0.27
Average	120	60	60	
Low	4	1	3	
Father Education	3	3	0	0.41

Primary				
third grade middle school	5	2	3	
Diploma	47	20	27	
Associate Degree	15	9	6	
Bachelor	40	18	22	
Master's degree or higher	34	15	19	
Mother Education Primary	7	5	2	0.51
third grade middle school	12	6	6	
Diploma	52	25	27	
Associate Degree	12	3	9	
Bachelor	42	20	22	
Master's degree or higher	19	8	11	
Father's job Self-employment	52	28	24	0.39
government job	89	38	51	
Unemployed	3	1	2	
Mother's job Self-employment	29	7	22	0.25
government job	41	21	20	
Unemployed	74	39	35	

Table 1 shows test results of □2 to investigate differences between two groups of gifted males and females in the demographic variables. As it can be seen the two groups indicated no significant demographic differences. The final sample consisted of 144 subjects with mean age of 16.31 (± 0.984 S.D.) years.

Table2: differences between two groups of gifted male and female students of high school in the study's psychological variables

Variables	Group of women n=67	Group of men n=77	Test of t	Sig
Mindfulness (mean±Standard deviation)	110.09±16.76	113.37±15.83	-1.170	0.244
observation	25.65±6.53	26.11±6.28	-0.429	0.669
Description	20.73±4.95	21.90±3.09	-1.123	0.263
Acting with Awareness	19.55±5.25	20.40±6.66	-0.762	0.447
Nonjudging of inner experience	23.25±5.65	24.45±5.60	-0.645	0.520
Nonreactivity to inner experience	20.89±4.66	20.49±4.77	-0.810	0.419
emotional self regulation (mean±Standard deviation)	50.14±6.63	50..93±8.42	-0.382	0.703
Cognitive	25.32±4.35	25.36±5.03	-0.263	0.793
Meta-cognitive	24.82±3.96	24.57±4.87	-0.428	0.669

Emotional Intelligence (Mean±Standard deviation)	303.88±38.39	323.23±42.85	-2.982	0.003
Self awareness	20.12±3.75	21.96±3.47	-1.901	0.59
Certainty	19.16±3.89	21.73±3.50	-3.098	0.002
Self-Regard	20.65±4.83	22.53±4.70	-2.530	0.013
Independency	19.56±4.74	22.00±4.81	-3.143	0.002
Empathy	22.95±4.18	23.01±3.64	-2.66	0.041
Interpersonal Relationship	21.79±3.55	20.40±3.79	0.775	0.44
Social Responsibility	21.10±4.84	22.88±3.40	-1.156	0.249
Problem-Solving	19.10±2.54	20.09±3.54	-2.256	0.026
Reality-Testing	17.94±3.44	18.41±3.34	-0.839	0.403
Flexibility	17.26±3.92	18.70±3.64	-2.277	0.024
Stress Tolerance	17.80±3.40	20.33±5.17	-3.410	0.001
Impulse Control	17.59±4.94	18.90±5.04	-1.163	0.247

Happiness	21.11±4.77	22.61±4.05	-1.666	0.098
Optimism	20.20±3.99	22.06±4.95	-2.682	0.008
Self-Actualization	20.11±4.85	22.29±4.19	-2.071	0.04

As it can be seen results of independent t-test shown in the table 2 indicate that both male and female groups have significant difference in the variables of emotional intelligence ($p<0.01$), certainty ($p<0.01$), self-regard ($p<0.05$), independency ($p<0.01$), Stress Tolerance ($p<0.01$), optimism ($p<0.01$), self-actualization ($p<0.05$).

Table 3: correlation coefficient of emotional intelligence and its components with emotional self-regulation among gifted students

The criterion variable emotional intelligence and mindfulness components	emotional self-regulation
Self awareness	0.443**
certainty	0.325**
Self-Regard	0.350**
Independency	0.277**
Empathy	0.292**
Interpersonal Relationship	0.289**
Social Responsibility	0.329**

Problem-Solving	0.566**
Reality-Testing	0.226**
Flexibility	0.344**
Stress Tolerance	0.395**
Impulse Control	0.157**
Happiness	0.368**
Optimism	0.491**
Self-Actualization	0.356**
(Emotional Intelligence) total	0.503**
Observation	0.216**
Description	0.239**
:Acting with Awareness	0.281**
Nonjudging of inner experience	0.145
Nonreactivity to inner experience	0.276**
(mindfulness) total	0.156

As it can be seen in table 3, the emotional intelligence has significant positive relationship with self-regulation(r=0.503) and all components of emotional intelligence at level of 0/001 have significant positive relationship with emotional self-regulation. Moreover considering table 3,

the observation components (r=0.216) description (r=0.239), nonreactivity (r=0.276) have significant positive relationship with emotional self-regulation. Moreover, the component of acting with awareness (r=-0.281) has significant negative relationship with self-regulation.

Considering that the aim of our research was to predict emotional self-regulation through emotional intelligence and mindfulness, and then the variable was analyzed on all components of emotional intelligence and mindfulness using stepwise regression. The results of the study indicated that from components of emotional intelligence problem solution and optimism, acting with awareness and no reaction of mindfulness are the best predictors of emotional self-regulation. The significant F-ratios show the relationships of these components with emotional self-regulation.

Table 4: results of determination coefficient and regression coefficient

The criterion variable	Statistical indicators / Predictor variables	R	R^2	SE	B	Beta	t (P)
emotional self-regulation	Problem-Solving	0.566	0.321	6.18012	1.065	0.429	5.648(0.000)
	Optimism	0.617	0.381	5.91981	0.548	0.282	3.710(0.000)
	Acting with :Awareness	0.281	0.079	7.19597	-0.377	-0.311	-4.040(0.000)
	Nonreactivity to inner experience	0.415	0.172	6.84687	0.554	0.307	3.981(0.000)

Summary of data related to identification coefficient and ratios obtained from emotional self-regulation regression analyses on the components of emotional intelligence and mindfulness can be seen in the above mentioned table. According to the table 5, it can be concluded that problem solution in itself explains 32% of emotional self-regulation. However, when the variable of optimism was added the explanation, value of these two variables was increased to 38.%considering the difference of explanation level, it can be claimed that problem solution has much share

in explaining emotional self-regulation changes compared to optimism and addition of optimism to the variable increases 32% coefficient of determination to 38%. Considering predicting inability of other components of emotional intelligence (mindfulness, certainty, flexibility, stress tolerance, impulse control, satisfaction) the variable self-actualization was eliminated from final model. Moreover, considering table 5, it can be concluded that acting with awareness determines 7% of emotional self-regulation.

This is while, with addition of the variable no reaction, determination level of these two variables became 17%. Considering the difference of determined amount, it can be claimed that no reaction has more share in determining emotional self-regulation changes compared to acting with awareness and addition of other components to the variable changes coefficient of determination from 7% to 17%. Considering prediction inability of other components of mindfulness description, observation and no judgment were eliminated from final model. Considering that the aim of current investigation was to determine the relationship between mindfulness and emotional intelligence, the variable mindfulness was analyzed, respectively, on all components of emotional intelligence, relying on the stepwise regression. It was observed that not all components of emotional intelligence play significant role in predicting mindfulness except for interpersonal relations and hence it was eliminated from the equation. Results of the study indicated that the component of interpersonal relations is predictor of mindfulness. The significant F-ratios show the relationship of these components with mindfulness.

Table 5: results of coefficient of determination and regression coefficients

The criterion variable	Statistical indicators Predictor variables	R	R^2	SE	B	Beta	t (P)

Mindfulness	Interpersonal Relationship	0.234	0.055	15.64110	1.108	0.234	2.867 (0.005)

Summary of the data related to coefficient of determination and ratios obtained from mindfulness regression analyses on emotional intelligence components can be seen in the above table. According to table 5, it can be concluded that interpersonal relations can determine just 5% of the mindfulness.

Discussion and Conclusion:

In this study the relationship among emotional intelligence, mindfulness and self-regulation was investigated among gifted high school students. Moreover, in a secondary objective, the differences of two groups of male and female gifted students were investigated in terms of demographic variables such as age, sex, socio-economic position, etc. and in terms of psychological variables such as emotional intelligence, mindfulness and emotional self-regulation. As was seen there was a positive and significant relationship between emotional intelligence and emotional self-regulation. Regression analyses indicated that 38% of emotional self-regulation can be determined by the factors. Meanwhile, only the role of problem solution and optimism significant in determination of emotional self-regulation and the other factors have no significant effect on the issue. This finding is in balance with De Groot and Pintrich's finding (1990). As our awareness is increased of feelings, emotions and their effects, we can regulate and control our abilities to improve them, so that they haven't negative effect on our performance. The efficient and self-regulatory individuals can better avoid negative emotions such as disappointment, anxiety and excitability in this field, confronting fewer problems in the life or they can return from problematic and annoying position in the case of arising problem (Mayer et.al 2004). Hence it can be concluded that, self-regulatory students are more developed and superior than other students whose learning is not self-regulatory, having less emotional intelligence (Pintrich and De Groot, 1990). This can widely influence study students' academic achievement.

Moreover regression analysis indicated that 17% of the gifted students' emotional self-regulation is determined by aware acting and no reaction. In other words results of the study revealed that gifted students consider their self-regulation caused by aware act and no reaction, rather than observation, description and judgment. Findings of the study are in balance with results reported by Baer et.al, (2006); Bishop Et.al, (2003). Hence, it can be concluded that mindfulness improves ability of self-regulation ability of the attention and leading it toward the task. Because evaluated regulation of the attention is beyond centrality of mindfulness. Most exercises used for improvement of mindfulness involve sustained attention exercises. The self-regulation of attention toward the task refers to sustained attentive ability of the mindfulness person. Results of the study are in balance with speculations of Shapiro, Carlson, Stein and Friedman (2006) showing the relationship between mindfulness and sustained attention range.

Since stress-reduction-oriented mindfulness training affects increase of positive emotions and decrease of negative emotions it can be claimed that this result is in balance with previous findings of Evans et.al (2008) who showed that training mindfulness meditation influences mental welfare, decrease of anxiety, anger and increase of life quality. Moreover this result confirms Brian and Rayn's findings (2003) that showed that mindfulness is predictor of self-regulation behavior and positive emotional states. In justification of this finding it can be said that since increase of attention and awareness to thought, emotions and positive practical tendencies are the positive aspects of mindfulness and training mindfulness increases sense of no judgment, helping clear seeing of and accepting of emotions and physical phenomenon, hence it causes students to be aware of their negative and positive emotions and this plays an important role in improvement and adjustment of their emotional states.

Results of regression analyses indicated that 5% of gifted students' mindfulness variance is determined by interpersonal relations. In other words the gifted students considered their mindfulness mainly caused by interpersonal relations rather than other factors. Most studies in the field of

mindfulness and emotional intelligence have reported significant relationship between them. For example MittMannsgruber, Beck, Huffer and Schabler (2009) when studying mindfulness and meta-emotion in emotional regulation reported that psychological symptoms of mental health are mainly predicted by mindfulness and meta-emotion and these components are playing major role in regulating the emotions.

Mindfulness is a process which mainly results in accepting feelings and emotions rather than searching for emotions or a way to new emotional feelings (Baer et.al 2006). Mindfulness helps us to understand that although negative emotions take place, they are not fixed part of personality and life process. Hence it causes the person to show thoughtful reactions and responses to the events instead of unintentional reactions. Hence mindfulness is a new method of more efficient relation with the life which decreases or heals human pains enriching his life and meaning of enjoyment. Baer et.al (2004) proceeded on investigation of mindfulness components and found the positive relationship between emotional intelligence and mindfulness. Considering that most descriptions of mindfulness which involve feelings description and observation are among elements of emotional intelligence, so we used emotional intelligence questioner in convergent psychological investigation of mindfulness questioner. Individuals who enjoy higher mindfulness, enjoy appropriate knowledge and view about their own cognitive processes and abilities and also they employ effective strategies when confronting tasks and using skills.

Another finding of the study is significant difference of male and female sexes in variables of emotional intelligence, self-esteem, independency, sympathy, problem solution, stress tolerance, optimism and self-actualization. This finding is in balance with Saklofske et.al (2007) findings. They showed that compared to boys, girls have higher emotional intelligence. Rogers et.al (2006) indicated that there is reverse relation in only one aspect of emotional intelligence (ability of mood regulation) and gender (being female). In other words the skill of mood control is lower in girls than boys.

According to the results of the study aware acting and no mental reaction from mindfulness variable and components of problem solution and optimism from emotional intelligence variables play a fundamental role in emotional self-regulation of gifted students. Hence it seems necessary to pay much attention to these components in emotional self-regulation and decreasing negative emotions of such students. The scholar tried his best in the current study to prevent imposition of the defects to the study, though some of such defects were out of his control which resulted in the following limitations in the study.

Present study was limited to high school level and overgeneralization of its results to other academic levels should be carried out with more care. The statistical population of the study involved survey of students and much care should be taken when generalizing its results to other classes of the schools. It is proposed to have a plan for training emotional intelligence, mindfulness and self-regulation and training such skills to the students by implementing specific educational plans. It is proposed to take individuals' level of emotional intelligence, mindfulness and self-regulation in the educational and vocational counseling and guiding process into account. Moreover it is proposed to investigate the study variables using other tools to determine the level of role of the tools.

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