

**Determination of Attitudes and Awareness Levels of Classroom Teachers for Gifted Students
According to Some Demographic Variables¹**

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study is to determine the attitudes of the classroom teachers towards gifted students and their awareness levels towards gifted students' behavioral characteristics according to some demographic variables. In this study conducted for this purpose, screening model, which is one of the quantitative research methods, was used. Study group of the research consists of classroom teachers working in schools in the center and districts of Kocaeli Province in the 2018-2019 academic year. In the study, the "Attitude Scale for Gifted Students" which is studied in terms of its validity and reliability by Erdoğan (2016) and the "Scale for Rating Behavioral Characteristics of Gifted Students" developed by Şahin (2012) were used as data collection tools. According to the findings of the study, while there is no significant difference in classroom teachers' attitudes towards gifted students and, their educational attitudes and awareness towards their behavioral characteristics according to gender and educational status. However, a significant difference was found in favor of those who attended the education in terms of whether they attend any education related to gifted people on "attitude towards support needs" and "attitude towards talent grouping" sub-dimensions.

Keywords: Classroom teacher, education of gifted, behavioral characteristics in gifted

INTRODUCTION

In line with some basic thoughts about the importance of the education of gifted children, studies have started in many countries and innovation process has been initiated in this direction in education systems. For example; a breakthrough in gifted education was made in the USA in 1958 with a special law. In this country, many practises such as expediting, class upgrading, course passing, crediting, early starting to secondary school, high school or university, etc. are implemented (Akarsu, 2001, 27-32). The main strategies used in many educational practises regarding gifted education are called as expediting (with intensive courses), enrichment and grouping. It is planned to develop higher-order thinking skills such as creative, critical and scientific thinking and problem solving with enrichment strategies. In the content of enrichment strategies; topics, activities, performance studies and projects to improve these skills are included. In addition, independent studies of students, making trips to cultural and scientific fields or professional organizations, inviting event-based speakers, learning centers created within the classroom or school's support room, weekend programs, activities implemented under consultancy,

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summer programs or summer camps can be given as an example for enriching the students in terms of their content (Davaslıgil, 2004).

Participation in enriched education programs, especially from a young age, is considered important for the emergence of the potential that gifted individuals have in themselves. In this context, classroom teachers, who provide education and training services to gifted children in primary schools, should have the knowledge and equipment related to these children, direct them to the relevant institutions in line with their educational needs accordingly, and have the professional experience that will enable them to actively participate in the learning environment with their peers in the classroom. Classroom teacher can be defined as the person who transfers the information about the subject areas in the education programs of primary schools to the children, and leads them to make researches, being creative and initiative, helps students to develop positive attitudes towards themselves and the outer world, and provides the development of effective communication skills with others (Tok & Bozkurt, 2010, 762).

The knowledge levels of the classroom teachers related to gifted children; with the concept knowledge and test knowledge in the relevant field, test practises within the framework of the formation, the objectives and student recruitment conditions of the institutions serving in this field, having acquired skills at the practise level related to the education models applied for gifted children and having scientific knowledge in regard with physical, mental, personality and social characteristics of gifted children may help those teachers to serve the purpose. In this context, it can be said that the knowledge of the teacher in the related topics will help effective and timely guidance of gifted children and having proper education.

METHOD

Research Model

In this study, according to some demographic variables, the attitudes of classroom teachers towards gifted students within the classroom and awareness towards gifted students' behavioral characteristics were tried to be determined. In this study conducted for this purpose, screening model, one of the quantitative research methods, was used.

Study Group

Study group of the research; in the 2018-2019 academic year, consists of classroom teachers working in schools in the central district and other districts of Kocaeli.

Table 1.

Socio-Demographic and Educational Status of Teachers

		<i>n</i>	%
Gender	Female	214	76.7
	Male	65	23.3
Educational Status	Bachelor Degree	237	84.9

	Masters Degree	42	15.1
Total		279	100.0

As can be seen from Table 1, 76.7% ($N = 214$) of the participating individuals are women and 23.3% ($N = 65$) are men. 84.9% ($N = 237$) of the individuals participating in the research have Bachelor Degree degree and 15.1% ($N = 42$) have Master Degree.

Data Collection and Data Collection Tools

Attitude Scale for Gifted Students and Their Education

The scale, developed by Gagné and Nadeau (1991) and originally named “Opinions about the Gifted and Their Education”, was developed as 34 items, and in 1991, another item was added and finalized. The validity study of the scale was done by Erdoğan (2016) and the number of items in the scale decreased to 21. The scale consists of six factors. The emerging factors were called Support Need, Exclusion and Isolation, Special Education Need, Social Value, Class Upgrading and Talent Grouping. In the study conducted by Erdoğan (2016), the reliability coefficient of the scale was determined as .72. For this study, the Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of the scale's total test score was found as .78.

Behavioral Characteristics of Gifted Students Scale

The scale was developed by Şahin (2012) to determine the level of knowledge about the characteristics of gifted students who attend classes in the 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th grades of primary education in the public education schools. The scale was prepared in a 5-point Likert type. Answers to the items in the scale are: Always - 5, often - 4, sometimes - 3, rarely - 2 and never - 1. The “Awareness towards the Behavioral Characteristics of Gifted Students” scale has a 3-factor structure, “Awareness towards the Problem Solving Characteristics”, “Awareness towards the Communication and Social Skills Characteristic” and “Awareness towards the General Cognitive Characteristics” and consists of 34 items in total. The highest score that can be obtained from the scale is 170, the lowest score is 34, and the average score is 102. Cronbach-Alpha internal consistency coefficient of the scale was calculated as .86, first sub-factor .92, second sub-factor .82 and third sub-factor .71. For this study, Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of the scale's total test score was found was .90.

Data Analysis

The research data were analyzed using SPSS package program version 16.0. When the internal consistency coefficients are analyzed at the data analysis stage, it is seen that the scales are sufficiently reliable ($\alpha > .60$). After analyzing the scores of the scales, whose internal consistency was revealed secondly, the suitability of the variables to normal distribution was tested. When the skewness and kurtosis statistics were examined, it was determined that the values of all variables were in the range of -1 and +1 (Demir et al., 2016: 133) and showed normal distribution accordingly. At this point, it was decided to use parametric analysis techniques to analyze the data. In the research, data were analyzed by using Independent Samples T-Test. In the research, $p = .05$ was accepted for the level of significance.

FINDINGS

In this section, the findings obtained with the data collection tool are presented. The differentiation status of the teachers who constitute the sample of the study in their attitude scores by gender is shown in Table 2.

Table 2.

Research on Classroom Teachers' Attitudes towards Gifted Students and Their Education According to Gender

<i>Scale</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	\bar{x}	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>DF</i>	<i>p</i>
Attitude towards Gifted Students and Their Education	Female	214	69.71	8.64	-.126	277	.900
	Male	65	69.86	7.94			
Need of Support	Female	214	10.59	2.64	2.460	277	.015
	Male	65	9.68	2.53			
Exclusion and Isolation	Female	214	15.05	3.24	.604	277	.546
	Male	65	14.77	3.24			
Need for Special Education	Female	214	8.75	2.12	-2.050	277	.041
	Male	65	9.34	1.63			
Social Value	Female	214	13.44	3.14	-.973	277	.331
	Male	65	13.89	3.73			
Class Upgrading	Female	214	11.64	2.63	-1.653	277	.099
	Male	65	12.25	2.45			
Talent Grouping	Female	214	10.39	2.43	.464	277	.643
	Male	65	10.23	2.23			

According to the independent sample t-test results in Table 2, the attitude of classroom teachers towards gifted students and their education ($t(277) = -.126, p > .05$), attitude towards exclusion and isolation ($t(277) = .604, p > .05$), attitude towards social values related to gifted students ($t(277) = -.973, p > .05$), attitude towards class upgrading ($t(277) = -1.653, p > .05$) and attitude towards the talent grouping ($t(277) = .464, p > .05$) did not differ significantly by gender, but the attitude level towards the need for support was significantly different in favor of female teachers, ($t(277) = 2.460, p < .05$) while the level of attitude towards the need for special education was male ($t(277) = 2.050, p < .05$). It has been determined that there is a significant difference in favor of teachers.

Table 3.

Research on Awareness Levels of Classroom Teachers towards Behavioral Characteristics of Gifted Students by Gender

<i>Scale</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	\bar{x}	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>DF</i>	<i>p</i>
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Awareness towards behavioral characteristics of gifted students	Female	214	130.06	15.30	1.321	277	.188
	Male	65	127.20	15.19			
Awareness towards problem solving characteristics	Female	214	74.94	9.12	1.398	277	.163
	Male	65	73.05	10.92			
Awareness towards communication and social skills	Female	214	34.44	6.63	-1.402	277	.162
	Male	65	35.69	5.00			
Awareness towards general cognitive characteristics	Female	214	20.67	4.81	3.135	277	.002
	Male	65	18.46	5.52			

According to the independent sample t-test results in Table 3, awareness towards classroom teachers towards behavioral characteristics of gifted students ($t(277) = 1.321, p > .05$), awareness towards problem solving characteristics ($t(277) = 1.398, p > .05$), awareness towards communication and social skills ($t(277) = -1.402, p > .05$) does not differ significantly by gender, but awareness towards general cognitive characteristics ($t(277) = 3.135, p < .01$) level was found to differ significantly by gender.

Table 4.

Research on Classroom Teachers' Attitudes towards Gifted Students and Their Education According to Educational Status

Scale	Educational Status	N	\bar{x}	SD	t	DF	p
Attitude towards Gifted Students and Their Education	Bachelor Degree	237	69.49	8.21	-1.181	277	.239
	Master Degree	42	71.17	9.77			
Need of Support	Bachelor Degree	237	10.31	2.64	-1.027	277	.306
	Master Degree	42	10.76	2.65			
Exclusion and Isolation	Bachelor Degree	237	14.78	3.24	-2.439	277	.015
	Master Degree	42	16.10	3.01			
Need for Special Education	Bachelor Degree	237	8.95	1.87	1.266	277	.207
	Master Degree	42	8.52	2.75			
Social Value	Bachelor Degree	237	13.61	3.15	.757	277	.449
	Master Degree	42	13.19	4.02			
Class Upgrading	Bachelor Degree	237	11.62	2.50	-2.419	277	.016
	Master Degree	42	12.67	2.95			
Talent Grouping	Bachelor Degree	237	10.39	2.14	.684	277	.495
	Master Degree	42	10.12	3.49			

According to the independent sample t-test results in Table 4, the attitudes towards the gifted students and their education ($t(277) = -1.181, p > .05$), attitude towards the need for support ($t(277) = -1.027, p > .05$) attitude towards the need for special education ($t(277) = 1.266, p > .05$), attitude towards social values related to gifted students ($t(277) = .757, p > .05$) and attitude towards talent grouping ($t(277) = .684, p > .05$) levels do not differ significantly according to the educational level, but attitude towards exclusion and isolation ($t(277) = -2.439, p < .05$), attitude towards class upgrading was determined that the level of ($t(277) = -2.419, p < .05$) showed a significant difference according to the education level.

Table 5.

Research on Classroom Teachers 'Awareness Levels of Gifted Students' Behavioral Characteristics According to Educational Status

Scale	Educational Status	N	\bar{x}	SD	t	DF	p
Awareness towards behavioral characteristics of gifted students	Bachelor Degree	237	129.55	14.97	.420	277	.675
	Master Degree	42	128.48	17.16			
Awareness towards problem solving characteristics	Bachelor Degree	237	74.45	9.37	-.193	277	.847
	Master Degree	42	74.76	10.82			
Awareness towards communication and social skills	Bachelor Degree	237	34.93	6.17	1.247	277	.214
	Master Degree	42	33.62	6.95			
Awareness towards general cognitive characteristics	Bachelor Degree	237	20.17	5.16	.087	277	.931
	Master Degree	42	20.10	4.48			

According to the independent sample t-test results in Table 5, awareness towards classroom teachers' behavioral characteristics of gifted students ($t(277) = .420, p > .05$), awareness towards problem solving characteristics ($t(277) = -.193, p > .05$), awareness towards the communication and social skills Characteristic ($t(277) = 1.247, p > .05$) and awareness towards the general cognitive Characteristics ($t(277) = .087, p > .05$) levels was determined that there was no significant difference according to the education level.

Table 6.

Examining the Attitude Levels of Classroom Teachers towards Gifted Students and Their Education According to the Status of Participation in the Seminar/Training with Gifted Students

Scale	Status of Participation in the Seminar/Training with	N	\bar{x}	SD	t	DF	p
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		<i>Gifted Students</i>					
Attitude towards Gifted Students and Their Education	No	166	70.08	8.70	.795	277	.427
	Yes	113	69.26	8.13			
Need of Support	No	166	10.73	2.62	2.782	277	.006
	Yes	113	9.85	2.60			
Exclusion and Isolation	No	166	14.69	3.35	-1.855	277	.065
	Yes	113	15.42	3.03			
Need for Special Education	No	166	8.92	1.80	.327	277	.744
	Yes	113	8.84	2.33			
Social Value	No	166	13.48	3.08	-.387	277	.699
	Yes	113	13.64	3.58			
Class Upgrading	No	166	11.83	2.47	.389	277	.698
	Yes	113	11.71	2.78			
Talent Grouping	No	166	10.61	2.25	2.198	277	.029
	Yes	113	9.97	2.54			

According to the Independent Sample T-Test results in Table 6, attitudes towards gifted students and their education ($t(277) = .795, p > .05$), attitude towards exclusion and isolation ($t(277) = -1.855, p > .05$), attitude towards the need for special education ($t(277) = .327, p > .05$), attitude towards social values related to gifted students ($t(277) = -.387, p > .05$), the attitude towards the class upgrading ($t(277) = .389, p > .05$) did not differ significantly from the level of participation in the seminar/training related to gifted students, but attitude towards the need for support ($t(277) = 2.782, p < .01$) and attitude towards talent grouping ($t(277) = 2.198, p < .05$) were found to differ significantly compared to the level of participation in the seminar/training related to gifted students.

Table 7.

Research on Classroom Teachers' Awareness Levels Regarding Behavioral Characteristics of Gifted Students According to Their Participation in Seminars/Training with Gifted Students

Scale	Status of Participation in the Seminar/Training with Gifted Students	N	\bar{x}	SD	t	DF	p
	Yes	113	127.33	15.78			
Awareness towards problem solving characteristics	No	166	75.33	9.69	1.767	277	.078
	Yes	113	73.27	9.32			

Awareness towards communication and social skills	No	166	34.98	6.90	.794	277	.428
	Yes	113	34.37	5.29			
Awareness towards general cognitive characteristics	No	166	20.48	5.46	1.299	277	.195
	Yes	113	19.68	4.39			

According to the independent sample t-test results in Table 5, awareness towards classroom teachers' behavioral characteristics of gifted students ($t(277) = 1.868, p > .05$), awareness towards problem solving characteristics ($t(277) = 1.767, p > .05$), awareness towards communication and social skills characteristic ($t(277) = .794, p > .05$) and awareness towards general cognitive characteristics ($t(277) = 1.299, p > .05$) levels were determined that there was no significant difference according to the participation in the seminar / education about gifted students.

DISCUSSION

As a result of the research, although there is no significant difference in the attitudes of classroom teachers towards gifted students and their education by gender, it is determined that there is a significant difference by gender only in the attitude level in terms of support needs and special education needs. While female teachers' attitudes towards the need for support of gifted students were higher, attitudes towards gifted students' needs for special education of male teachers were higher. While the studies conducted by Metin, Şenol and İnce (2017) and also Gencil and Satmaz (2017) determined that the score of pre-service female teachers were higher for "the attitudes towards needs and support of gifted students" were high, in the study conducted by Erdoğan and Aksoy (2019) it is found that male teachers' attitudes towards the class upgrading were higher. In a study conducted by Tortop (2014), it was found that female pre-service teachers have higher attitudes towards gifted students. However, Begin and Gagne (1994), Ekinci (2002), Chipego (2004), Curtis (2005), Lassig (2009), Tortop and Kunt (2013), Güneş (2015), Demirhan, Kaya-Uyanık, Canan-Güngören, and Gür-Erdoğan, (2016), Sözel (2018), and Yildirim and Öz (2018) stated that gender was not effective on teachers' attitudes towards gifted students' education.

As a result of the research, it was determined that the awareness level of classroom teachers towards gifted students' behavioral characteristics did not differ significantly by gender. Similarly, as a result of the study conducted by Şahin (2012) on the effectiveness of the education program for increasing the level of knowledge of gifted students and their characteristics, the level of awareness towards classroom teachers towards behavioral characteristics of gifted students did not differ significantly by gender.

As a result of the research, although there is no meaningful difference in the attitudes of the classroom teachers towards gifted students and their education according to their educational status, it was found that there was a significant difference only in the classroom teachers who had master's degrees in the sub-dimensions of attitudes towards exclusion and isolation and towards the way of upgrading the class. In addition, it was determined that the level of awareness of the classroom teachers towards the behavioral characteristics of gifted students did not differ significantly according to their educational status. As a result of the study carried out by Şayir (2015), it was stated that the level of knowledge of

the classroom teachers about gifted children varied significantly according to their education levels and this difference was in favor of the teachers who had master education.

As a result of the research, it was determined that the awareness level of classroom teachers towards gifted students' behavioral characteristics did not differ significantly by gender. Similarly, as a result of the study conducted by Şahin (2012) on the effectiveness of the education program to increase the level of knowledge of gifted students and their characteristics, it was determined that the awareness level of classroom teachers towards gifted students' behavioral characteristics did not differ significantly by gender.

As a result of the research, although there is no significant difference in the attitudes of the classroom teachers towards gifted students and their education according to their educational background, it was determined that the attitude levels in the sub-dimensions towards exclusion and isolation status and towards the way of passing the class showed a significant difference among graduate teachers. In addition, it was determined that the awareness level of classroom teachers towards the behavioral characteristics of gifted students did not differ significantly according to their educational status. As a result of the study carried out by Şayir (2015), it was stated that the level of knowledge of the classroom teachers about gifted children varied significantly according to their education levels and this difference was in favor of the teachers who had master education.

As a result of the research, although there is no significant difference in the attitudes of the classroom teachers towards gifted students and their education, in terms of their participation in the seminar/training related to gifted students, there was a significant difference only in the level of attitude levels in the need for support and talent grouping according to their participation in the seminar/training. In the study conducted by Gencil and Satmaz (2017), it was determined that there was a significant difference in the need and support sub-dimension of gifted students. In addition, in the study conducted by Yildirim and Öz (2018), it was found that the attitudes of the participants who took courses on special education were significantly different. With the studies carried out by Büyükcan (2008), Şahin (2012), and Alkan (2013), it was determined that the gifted students have increased their competencies regarding gifted students with the trainings given. Similarly, Lassig (2003) determined that the in-service trainings provided in the research positively affected the attitudes and awareness towards the participants as well as their attitudes. It is the fact that receiving education for gifted individuals positively affects their attitudes towards education. This situation has been supported by the literature. Many studies show that the attitudes of teachers who receive training for these individuals are also positively affected (Plunket, 2000). The more knowledgeable about the gifted teachers, the more positive the attitude is.

As a result of the research, it has been determined that the awareness level of classroom teachers about the behavioral characteristics of gifted students did not show a significant difference compared to the level of participation in seminars/training about gifted students. Similarly, as a result of the study conducted by Şahin (2012), it was determined that the level of awareness towards the elementary teachers about the behavioral characteristics of gifted students did not show a significant difference compared to the level of participation in seminars/training about gifted students.

Since gifted children are potentially different from other classmates in terms of learning speed, depth and knowledge they have, teachers should also have a number of different characteristics and

competencies (Dağlıoğlu, 2010). It is a very important need to know gifted children in our country as well as in the world, to provide them with the educational processes they need, to discover their interests and abilities and to offer them differentiated, enriched and accelerated educational opportunities (Baykoç & Özdemir, 2016). Considering these aspects, it is recommended to organize the necessary in-service seminars and increase the trainings in order to enhance the attitudes of the classroom teachers towards the education of gifted students and their awareness level towards the behavioral characteristics of gifted students.

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