# Özel Yetenekli Öğrencilerin İnsani Değerler Düzeyinin İncelenmesi

## An Analysis of Gifted Students' Adoption of Human Values

Şule DEMİREL DİNGEÇ

**ÖZ:** Özel yetenekli öğrencilerin bazı özellikleri yaşıtlarına göre farklılık gösterebilir. Bu farklılıklar onların ihtiyaçlarını da etkileyebilir. Bu çalışmada özel yetenekli öğrencilerin insani değer düzeylerinin belirlenmesi amaçlanmıştır. Çalışmada tarama modeli kullanılmıştır. Çalışmaya Üstün Yetenekliler Eğitimi Uygulama ve Araştırma Merkezi'ne (ÜYEP) devam eden ortaokul düzeyinde 48 öğrenci katılmıştır. Çalışmada Dilmaç (1999) tarafından geliştirilen *Ahlaki Olgunluk Ölçeği* ile insani değer düzeyi belirlenmiştir. Cinsiyete ve sınıf düzeyine göre farklara doğrudan fark analizleriyle bakılmıştır. Araştırmanın sonuçları özel yetenekli öğrencilerin insani değer düzeylerinin yüksek olduğunu, ancak sınıf düzeyine ve cinsiyete göre farklılık göstermediğini ortaya koymuştur. Yüksek insani değer düzeyi bulunan özel yetenekli öğrencilerin, değerleri yaşantılarına yansıtacak biçimde eğitim programlarıyla buluşturulması öğrenciler için yararlı olabilir.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** Özel yetenekli öğrenciler, insani değerler, ahlaki olgunluk ölçeği

**ABSTRACT:** Gifted students differ from their peers with regard to some of their characteristics, which may affect their needs as well. This study aims to determine the extent human values are adopted by gifted students. Survey was used as the method in the study. 48 secondary school students attending the Gifted Education Application and Research Center (UYEP) participated in the study. The level of human value adoption was determined with the *Moral Maturity Scale* developed by Dilmaç (1999). Existence of any gender- and grade-based differences were examined by performing direct difference analyses. The results of the study revealed that the human value adoption levels of gifted students are high, but they do not differ by grade and gender. It may be helpful to teach gifted students with strong human value adoption through curriculums that allow them to reflect these values in their lives.

**Keywords:** Gifted students, human values, moral maturity scale

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

In the most general sense, a value can be defined as a combination of preferences that undergird the perspective on life, play a role in the decisions of individuals, reflect their beliefs, and form their principles (Baloğlu & Balgamış, 2005). While human values pertain to honesty, tolerance, kindness, and compassion (Kulaksızoğlu & Dilmaç, 2000) moral values concern all aspects of life, such as science, religion, and arts (Güngör, 1993). Human and moral values are the elements that complement each other and reveal the good in people (Kulaksızoğlu & Dilmaç, 2000).

According to Dilmaç (1999), human values are values such as responsibility, friendship, peace, tolerance, respect and honesty. According to Turan (2019), love, respect, tolerance, empathy, sincerity, rationality, good morals, justice, freedom and benevolence are human values. These human values were described as personal and social values in the *Living Values Education Program* in the USA, launched in 1995. The values in question are humility, cooperation, honesty, love, respect, tolerance, peace, responsibility, unity, simplicity, happiness, and freedom (Tillman, 2000). Human values are factors that can affect almost all human behaviors, attitudes, moral judgments, and comparisons (Rokeach, 1973).

Gifted individuals can show advanced and early development in one or more areas compared to their peers. Among these areas, the moral development can be early and more advanced compared to their peers, or it can be age-appropriate as one characteristic feature associated with gifted individuals is asynchronous development (Silverman, 1997). As such, while a trait may appear early, another may not develop at the same level or speed. The perspectives in the literature on the moral development of gifted people vary. For example, according to Hökelekli and Gündüz (2004), gifted children show superiority over their peers in terms of moral development as well as cognitive, social-emotional, or physical development. While still young, they display a high level of moral sensitivity. Roeper (1990), on the other hand, states that although gifted children are at a certain level in terms of values, some of them experience problems in moral matters such as arrogance and stubbornness.

Determining the human values adoption level of gifted individuals and tapping into their existing potentials properly can be beneficial for both their individual and social growth. Thus, we review the previous studies on the subject first, and then present our study.

## 1.1. Gifted Students and Values

There are different theoretical perspectives in the literature regarding the level of gifted people's adoption of human values, such as leadership, tolerance, and perseverance. For example, Sternberg (2003) suggests that the combination of intelligence, creativity, and virtue is necessary for the acceptance of special talent in the WICS model. In other words, if a very intelligent person is not virtuous, s/he is not considered gifted. Therefore, having virtue and being above average in terms of having values are seen as the conditions for giftedness. In Sternberg and Zhang's (1995) Pentagon Theory, in order for a person to be gifted, he or she must meet all the criteria of rarity, perfection, productivity, evidence, and value at the same time. The value criterion here is related to the perceived value of one's talent in the society s/he lives in. According to this theory, while a gifted person must meet this condition in a society where human values are important, in another society where different values are accepted, the human value adoption level of a gifted individual will not even be mentioned. In the Talent Hierarchy Model, Tannebbaum (1983) states that different types of talent are valued differently, and the talents of specially

talented people who contribute to the society, especially to the continuity of biological life, are much more valuable. For example, a gifted person who finds a cure for cancer is regarded as extremely valuable as s/he provides a solution to a health problem and contributes to humanity in terms of healthy and better living.

Some of the researchers who have examined the characteristics of the gifted report that the gifted individuals show superior value development. For example, Renzulli (1999) states that gifted individuals are at a higher level than their peers in industriousness, focus, motivation, taking responsibility, courage, behavior control, and anger control. Roeper (1990) states that gifted individuals are at a certain level in terms of values, but they also experience some moral problems. Kurnaz, Çiftçi, and Karapaza (2013) emphasize the teachability of values, asserting that gifted people need education on values even though they have some superior characteristics.

Few studies have focused on special talents and values in the Turkish context. A study on a values education program for science high school students in Türkiye by Dilmaç (2007) can be given as an example of these studies. The human value levels of the experimental group students in the study were found to be higher than the control group students. Gökdere and Çepni's (2003) study on the subject discusses the characteristics teachers should exhibit in the values education of gifted students, and concludes that teachers can be both role models and guides in the values education of these students. Çetinkaya and Kıncal (2015) found that they were able to raise gifted students' awareness about values in their study on democracy education. Turgut Yıldırım (2019) studied the values education for gifted students delivered in Science and Art Centers in Turkey and revealed that this type of education was not systematic and consisted of temporary solutions.

As for the international literature, Hartsel (2006) found that only one values education lesson is not sufficient or appropriate for gifted students, but a holistic perspective on values education is necessary. Another study by Tirri (2011) on virtue and moral judgment revealed that gifted students are able to make moral judgments at a higher level than their peers. However, the most accurate results regarding values can be observed in real life rather than through cross-sectional, single-session measurements. Berkowitz and Hoppe (2009) also state that gifted people should receive a well-designed character education so that they can internalize values. Bakar (2020) found that a character education program implemented with gifted students positively affects their self-esteem, and suggested that character education programs including values education, psychoeducation programs and counseling services should be provided in an integrated manner since holistic programs have a more positive effect on the personalities of gifted students.

In the current study, the primary aim is to determine the human value levels of students attending the Gifted Education Application and Research Center (UYEP), a program which gifted students attend after school. This study also aims to determine whether the human value levels of the students varied by gender and grade. Considering that gifted individuals have the potential to lead the society and create products that will contribute to the society, their human value adoption levels are important. For example, it may be possible for an individual with a high level of intelligence to design a deadly weapon or to find a cure for cancer. As such, the degree of their human value adoption can determine the way they will utilize their intelligence and talent potential. Therefore, having an idea about the human value adoption status of gifted students can be a source of data to assess their potential. In the studies reviewed in the literature, the value adoption levels of gifted students were not discussed in terms of grade or gender variables. Therefore, the current study is expected to contribute to the literature by filling this research gap. As well as determining whether the human value adoption of gifted individuals show advanced

development or not, revealing how this level is affected by the gender role is also important because this can help formulate gender-specific suggestions. Similarly, examining the human value adoption level by grade can give clues about the changes that may occur as the grade level progresses. Accounting for such gender- and grade-specific differences requires fine-tuning the approaches to values education for different genders and grade levels.

## 2. METHOD

In this part of the study, information about the research design, participants and data collection process is presented.

### 2.1. Research Design

The survey, one of the quantitative research methods, is used in this study (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2012). This method aims to describe a past or present situation as it is, within its own context and conditions (Christensen et al., 2015; Karasar, 2009). Thus, in order to make a general judgment about the universe, data are collected from the sample group, which is thought to represent the universe (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2012). This study set out to determine the current human value adoption levels of gifted secondary school students, without any intervention. Permission with protocol number 36506 was granted on 30.03.2021 by Anadolu University Social and Human Sciences Research and Publication Ethics committee before the research phase began.

### 2.2. Research Sample

The universe of the study consists of gifted secondary school students. In this study, students from the Gifted Education Application and Research Center (ÜYEP) at Eskişehir Anadolu University are taken as a sample by using the purposive sampling method. In the use of the purposive sampling method, firstly, the characteristics of the relevant universe are determined and individuals with these characteristics are included in the sampling (Johnson & Christensen, 2000). The students in the current study sample are secondary school students diagnosed with special abilities. UYEP is a university-based program that provides after-school education to gifted students at secondary school level (UYEP, 2022). Including all 65 students attending the program in the spring semester of the 2021-2022 academic year was aimed, and thus the scale was applied to all 65 students, 50 of whom completed it. Two of the students who filled out the scale were not included in the study because of the missing data. Thus, the participants of the research consisted of 48 secondary school students attending UYEP. The demographic information about the students are given in Table 1.

**Table 1:** *Grade and Gender of Participants*

| Variable | Groups | The number of participants | Percentage |
|----------|--------|----------------------------|------------|
| **Gender** | Male | 31 | 64.6 |
|  | Girl | 17 | 35.4 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Grade Level** | 6 | 22 | 45.8 |
| | 7 | 12 | 25 |
| | 8 | 14 | 29.2 |
| **Total** | 48 | 48 | 100 |

As seen in Table 1, 31 of the participants are boys and 17 of them are girls. 22 of these students are in 6th grade, 12 in 7th grade and 14 of them in 8th grade. Since there were no 5th grade students in the UYEP during the data collection period, only the group consisting of 6th, 7th and 8th grade students were included.

## 2.3. Data Collection Tool

The *Moral Maturity Scale* developed by Dilmaç (1999) was used as the data collection instrument. Permission was obtained from Dilmaç for the use of the scale, which aims to determine the human value adoption status of students. The tool was developed for primary school students and is suitable for use in this study. The scale is in Turkish, 4-point Likert type and consists of 66 items. 37 of the items are positive and 29 are negative. A minimum of 1 and a maximum of 4 points can be obtained for each item. According to the bottom-top 27% method, those who score 1.08 or less on average have low, those who score between 1.09 and 2.92 are at a medium level, and those who score 2.93 and above have a high level of human value adoption (Erkuş, 2003). The scale items are related to the values of truth, love, avoidance of violence, peace of mind, and proper behavior. The internal consistency coefficient of the scale was reported as .73 (Dilmaç, 1999), but was calculated as .92 in the current study. Therefore, it can be said that the scale is highly reliable (Özdamar, 2004). The descriptive statistics values of the scale used in the study are shown in Table 2, showing the lowest, highest, mean scores and standard deviations of the items.

**Table 2:** *Descriptive Values of Moral Maturity Scale Items*

| Item | Min. | Max. | $\overline{X}$ | ss | Item | Min. | Max. | $\overline{X}$ | ss |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1 | 4 | 3.46 | .504 | 34 | 1 | 4 | 3.50 | .505 |
| 2 | 1 | 4 | 3.50 | .505 | 35 | 3 | 4 | 3.75 | .438 |
| 3 | 1 | 4 | 3.85 | .357 | 36 | 1 | 4 | 3.48 | .505 |
| 4 | 2 | 4 | 3.27 | .449 | 37 | 3 | 4 | 3.75 | .438 |
| 5 | 2 | 4 | 3.60 | .494 | 38 | 1 | 4 | 3.50 | .505 |
| 6 | 1 | 4 | 3.62 | .489 | 39 | 3 | 4 | 3.48 | .505 |
| 7 | 1 | 4 | 3.42 | .498 | 40 | 2 | 4 | 3.85 | .357 |
| 8 | 2 | 4 | 3.77 | .425 | 41 | 3 | 4 | 3.83 | .377 |
| 9 | 1 | 4 | 3.63 | .489 | 42 | 1 | 4 | 3.63 | .489 |
| 10 | 1 | 4 | 3.50 | .505 | 43 | 3 | 4 | 3.60 | .494 |
| 11 | 1 | 4 | 3.44 | .501 | 44 | 3 | 4 | 3.67 | .476 |
| 12 | 1 | 4 | 3.65 | .483 | 45 | 2 | 4 | 3.63 | .489 |
| 13 | 3 | 4 | 3.73 | .449 | 46 | 3 | 4 | 3.77 | .660 |
| 14 | 3 | 4 | 3.98 | .144 | 47 | 1 | 4 | 3.44 | .501 |
| 15 | 3 | 4 | 3.92 | .279 | 48 | 3 | 4 | 3.71 | .459 |
| 16 | 1 | 4 | 3.96 | .202 | 49 | 1 | 4 | 3.38 | .489 |
| 17 | 2 | 4 | 3.75 | .438 | 50 | 3 | 4 | 3.35 | .483 |
| 18 | 1 | 4 | 3.56 | .501 | 51 | 1 | 4 | 3.37 | .489 |
| 19 | 3 | 4 | 3.77 | .425 | 52 | 3 | 4 | 3.67 | .476 |
| 20 | 1 | 4 | 3.21 | .410 | 53 | 2 | 4 | 3.58 | .498 |
| 21 | 2 | 4 | 3.25 | .438 | 54 | 3 | 4 | 3.65 | .483 |
| 22 | 2 | 4 | 3.63 | .489 | 55 | 1 | 4 | 3.73 | .449 |
| 23 | 3 | 4 | 3.48 | .505 | 56 | 3 | 4 | 3.83 | .377 |
| 24 | 2 | 4 | 3.52 | .505 | 57 | 1 | 4 | 3.35 | .483 |
| 25 | 3 | 4 | 3.60 | .494 | 58 | 3 | 4 | 3.87 | .334 |

| 26 | 1 | 4 | 3.73 | .449 | 59 | 2 | 4 | 3.71 | .459 |
| 27 | 3 | 4 | 3.73 | .449 | 60 | 3 | 4 | 3.54 | .504 |
| 28 | 1 | 4 | 3.38 | .489 | 61 | 1 | 4 | 3.44 | .501 |
| 29 | 3 | 4 | 3.87 | .334 | 62 | 3 | 4 | 3.44 | .501 |
| 30 | 1 | 4 | 3.69 | .468 | 63 | 1 | 4 | 3.77 | .425 |
| 31 | 3 | 4 | 3.71 | .459 | 64 | 1 | 4 | 3.71 | .459 |
| 32 | 1 | 4 | 3.44 | .501 | 65 | 1 | 4 | 3.50 | .505 |
| 33 | 3 | 4 | 3.90 | .309 | 66 | 3 | 4 | 3.85 | .357 |

As can be seen in Table 2, the average of all items scored out of 4 is above 3 points. The mean score of all scale items is 3.62 out of 4, which is very close to 4.

## 2.4.  Data Collection and Analysis

The scale was handed out to the UYEP students during their lessons, and the volunteer students handed over the completed scales to the researcher at the end of the lesson. In addition to the written instruction on the scale form, verbal instructions were also given to the students. Since the volunteer students filled out the scale, feedback was received from 50 students, and the forms of 2 students who made incomplete or incorrect markings were not included in the analysis. Thus, the data were obtained through the scales completed by 48 students. During data entry, reverse items were reversed.  In the analysis of the data, the human value adoption level of the students was examined by giving descriptive values. Independent sample t-test was used for differences by gender (Büyüköztürk, et al., 2015). For the independent sample t-test, the dependent variable is continuous and the independent variable is categorical. Both in the data set of 48 people and in the comparison groups, the Shapiro-Wilk coefficient was >.05 and a normal distribution was achieved. The kurtosis and skewness values of the items were found between -1 and +1. In addition, the Levene test revealed the homogeneous distribution of variances as >.05 (Akbulut, 2010). ANOVA was used for the differences by the grade, which consists of three levels (Büyüköztürk, et al., 2015). The conditions for normal distribution were met for the whole group and for each grade level (Shapiro-Wilk>.05). The skewness values of the items were between -1 and + 1, and the kurtosis values were between -1 and +2. The homogeneity of variances were provided (>.05) and independence of observations required for ANOVA were also met (Akbulut, 2010; Field, 2013). The averages of the whole group were also examined to get an idea about the human value adoption level of the students.

## 3. FINDINGS

In this section, the results about the human value adoption levels of gifted students are presented, and whether this level changes according to gender and grade are discussed.

## 3.1. Human Value Adoption Levels of Gifted Students

To examine the human value adoption levels of the students participating in the study, the mean and standard deviation values of the data were analyzed. The results of this analysis are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3:** *Descriptive Values of Gifted Students Regarding their Human Value Adoption*

| Grade level | Gender | n | $\overline{X}$ | ss |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |

| 6 | Girl | 14 | 3.71 | .146 |
|---|------|-----|------|------|
|   | Boy | 8 | 3.59 | .122 |
|   | Total | 22 | 3.67 | .147 |
| 7 | Girl | 8 | 3.54 | .214 |
|   | Boy | 4 | 3.68 | .107 |
|   | Total | 12 | 3.59 | .192 |
| 8 | Girl | 9 | 3.58 | .139 |
|   | Boy | 5 | 3.51 | .189 |
|   | Total | 14 | 3.56 | .155 |
| Total |  | 48 | 3.62 | .166 |

As seen in Table 3, the mean score of the 6th graders was 3.67; the mean of the 7th graders was calculated as 3.59, and the mean of the 8th graders was calculated as 3.56. The human value average of all students is 3.62, and it can be stated that this score is quite high over 4 points (Field, 2013).

## 3.2. Human Value Adoption Levels of Gifted Students by Gender

The independent sample t-test was used to determine whether the human value levels of the students participating in the study changed by gender, and results are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4:** *Human Value Adoption Levels of Gifted Students by Gender*

| Gender | n | $\overline{X}$ | ss | t | sd | p |
|--------|---|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| **Boy** | 31 | 3.63 | .176 | .821 | 46 | .41 |
| **Girl** | 17 | 3.59 | .147 | | | |

As seen in Table 4, the independent sample t-test revealed that the human value adoption levels of gifted students did not differ by gender ($t_{(46)}$= .821; p>.05). Accordingly, UYEP students' human value adoption levels do not differ depending on their gender.

## 3.3.  Human Value Adoption Levels of Gifted Students by Grade Level

ANOVA was conducted to determine whether the human value adoption levels of gifted students differed by grade. In this analysis, grade levels were considered as the independent variable, and the level of human value adoption was considered as the dependent variable. The analysis results are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5:** *Human Value Adoption Levels of Gifted Students by Grade Level*

|  | KT | sd | KO | F | p |
|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Intergroup | .115 | 2 | .058 | 2.193 | .123 |
| Intragroup | 1.181 | 45 | .026 | | |
| Total | 1.296 | 47 | | | |

As seen in Table 5, the human value adoption levels of the gifted students did not differ significantly by grade level ($F_{(2,45)=}$2.193, p>.05). Therefore, no follow-up testing was performed. The human value adoption levels of the students do not change by grade.

# 4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Gifted individuals are individuals who perform at a higher level than their peers in intelligence, creativity, art, leadership capacity, motivation, or special academic fields (MEB, 2013). As described by the Ministry of National Education Gifted Individuals Strategy and Implementation Plan 2013 - 2017, the concept of special talent covers general mental ability, special academic ability, mathematics, language, social sciences, science, visual and auditory arts, psycho -motor skills, leadership and creativity. Although this fails to fully clarify whether there will be early and advanced development in the moral development of the gifted, the related literature states that they may have social and emotional strengths (Hökelekli & Gündüz, 2004) and weaknesses (Rooper, 1990).

In the current study, the human value adoption levels of the gifted secondary school students attending UYEP were examined through the *Moral Maturity Scale* (Dilmaç, 1999), which revealed high levels of human value adoption. This is supported by the research results by Gündüz (2010), and Hökelekli and Gündüz (2004). Many researchers have reported that gifted children show moral sensitivity at an earlier age, have higher moral judgment levels, and have higher moral potential than their peers. In this study, the human value adoption levels of the gifted students were found to be quite high. In another study, in which a human values education program was developed for science high school students by Dilmaç (2007), the human value adoption levels of science high school students were also found to be high after they received education. The human value adoption levels of these students were high and similar to the human value levels of the students in the current study.

The analyses on gender in the study showed that the human value adoption levels of gifted students did not differ between male and female students. Although not related to gifted students, Koh (2012) found that moral reasoning did not change by gender and concluded that whereas the moral reasoning powers of women and men are similar, their reasoning styles may differ. Again, Karababa and Dilmaç (2015) found that the level of human value adoption among secondary school students did not change significantly by gender. As the gender roles clearly change as adulthood approaches and during adulthood, the approach to human values may also differ by gender in these periods. The similar level of human value adoption in children in the current study may be attributed to the fact that the roles in question have just begun to take shape. This study was carried out with secondary school students. In order to interpret the human value adoption levels of gifted individuals by gender, a wider perspective can be gained if studies are conducted with high school students, young adults or adults since gender and age variables may be creating a difference together.

Another variable examined in the study is the grade level. The level of human value did not differ significantly among the 6th, 7th and 8th grade students. Although not conducted with gifted students, Özkan and Soylu's (2014) study also found that the basic human values adopted by students did not differ by grade. As gifted students get older, differences in their human value adoption become more pronounced. It may be useful to conduct studies with groups covering wider school types such as primary school, secondary school and high school, rather than grade level, to see whether this change exists and if so at what level. In addition, the current study was carried out with a small group. The data of the current study is limited to the answers of 48 UYEP students. Working with larger samples can also give a better idea about the subject.

To sum up, the human value adoption level of the gifted students was found to be high. It was revealed that the students are at a very high level of moral maturity in values such as tolerance, avoidance

of violence, and love covered by the scale. It is extremely important for gifted students to proceed in the light of human values while transforming their high potential into performance in a cognitive, physical or artistic field. It may help to use the most appropriate approaches in an integrated manner from many different approaches such as realizing, analyzing, character education, moral reasoning, explanation, experiential understanding (Akbaş, 2008). Because the cognitive and reasoning abilities of gifted students are stronger than their peers, it may be more effective to use both cognitive and process-oriented approaches together. In addition, since the acquisition of value may be difficult to see all at once, longitudinal studies with qualitative methods will make significant contributions to the literature on human value development of the gifted. Thus, the variables that positively and negatively affect the human value adoption levels of gifted people can be determined and they can be provided better guidance. Another suggestion for further research would be to examine interactions. In future research, the combined effects of variables such as gender, grade, and age on the level of human value adoption can be investigated by including larger samples.

## Declaration of Contribution Rate of Authors

The study is single authored.

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## Conflict of Interest Declaration

There is no conflict of interest in this study.

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