

## **CHILDREN'S RIGHTS: COMPARISON OF THE CONSCIOUSNESS LEVELS OF GIFTED AND NON-GIFTED CHILDREN**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The study was conducted to examine the consciousness levels of gifted children about children's rights and to compare them with their non-gifted peers. The general survey model was used in this study, in which the consciousness levels of gifted and non-gifted children on children's rights were compared. The study group of the research consists of 63 gifted and 65 non-gifted primary school students studying in a science and art center in Afyonkarahisar. In the research, the "Children's Rights Consciousness Level Determination Scale" developed by Akgül and Çağlayan (2019) was used to determine the consciousness levels of students about children's rights. In the analysis of the collected data, the difference between the groups was examined with the Mann Whitney U test using the data analysis program. As a result of the research, the consciousness level of gifted students about children's rights was found to be significantly higher than their non-gifted peers. In addition, this difference emerged in the "right to information and opinion" dimension of the scale. The unique developmental characteristics of gifted children may have an impact on their knowledge, consciousness and behavior towards children's rights. However, there is a need for comparative and longitudinal large-scale studies based on epidemiological data on the sensitivity of gifted children to children's rights. In addition, educational and behavioral interventions should be made in order to increase the consciousness of gifted children about children's rights, regardless of their educational environment.

**Keywords:** gifted, gifted children, children's rights, consciousness

### **INTRODUCTION**

The concept of “special” is expressed as “having a distinctive quality, different from what is always seen and ordinary” and the concept of “talent” is expressed as “a person's ability to understand or be able to do something, aptitude, ability, power” (Turkish Language Society,

2022). In this case, gifted (special talent) is the person's ability to make sense and do something different from the usual.

Gifted children are defined as children who perform above expectations in one or more of the areas of intelligence, creativity, art, leadership capacity, motivation or special academic fields, according to their peers (Leaño & Malano, 2020; MoNE, 2019; Özçelik & Akgündüz, 2017; Özbey-Gökçe et al., 2021). At the same time, although it is defined with the high potential shown in any field of performance, the term superior and special talent has been used instead of the term gifted in the 21st century (Sak, 2019).

The developmental characteristics of gifted children differ from each other (Kirişçi & Sak, 2018; Sak, 2019). Gifted children are generally more physically developed than their peers, walk and talk early, learn to read and write, and their sense organs are developed (Strengthening the Vocational Education and Training System Project, 2007; Bildiren, 2011). Among the personality characteristics of gifted children are high self-confidence, perfectionist, responsible, cooperative, open to innovations, and high communication skills. At the same time, gifted children are curious, inquisitive, investigative, and have a high level of consciousness of social issues and justice (Strengthening the Vocational Education and Training System Project, 2007; Bildiren, 2011; Davis, 2014).

Another aspect of gifted children that distinguishes them from their non-gifted peers is that they are more sensitive to social problems and injustices (Çağlar, 1972). Problem solving skills of children in primary school differ according to their experiences, understanding and interpretation capacities (İnci Kuzu, 2021). In this sense, the recognition of the rights of gifted children and their consciousness of children's rights are at a high level. However, no research has been found in the literature that aims to determine the level of consciousness of gifted students about children's rights.

Children's rights are the entitlements granted to children by legal rules in order to protect children and prepare them for an independent and responsible adult life (Aktürk, 2006; Tunca Güçlü et al., 2022). The formation of special rights for children came to the fore after the Industrial Revolution when child workers working under heavy conditions and cheaply received criticism. In the 20th century, the idea of child-specific needs became widespread, and the idea of protecting children and giving special rights to children began to develop. In addition, the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child was adopted in 1924 as the first international document for the protection of children's rights. This declaration is the first important document prepared on children's rights (Aktürk, 2006; Erbay, 2009; İnal Kızıltepe, 2020). This declaration explained the rights of the child as a universal concept used to describe all the rights that all children in the world have from birth, whether legally or morally, such as education, health, shelter, protection against physical, psychological or sexual exploitation. (Akyüz, 2000). The idea of protecting children with their own rights has progressed in parallel with the development of human rights. Children are innocent, sensitive and dependent on adults. Children are also vulnerable to neglect and abuse. For this reason, there is a need for rights that protect children who cannot defend themselves (Dönmez, 2022). Children's knowledge, learning and use of these rights affects their future participation in society as active citizens (Gültekin et al., 2016).

Children's rights are the powers granted to children by the rules of law in order to protect children and prepare them for an independent and responsible adult life (Aktürk, 2006). A country's observance of children's rights plays an important role in the development of the

country. At the same time, protecting children's rights is one of the duties of the state. Children's consciousness of their own rights contributes to the development of countries (Keskin Tanriverdi & Tanriverdi, 2021). The consciousness of justice of gifted children, their sensitivity to social issues and their standing against injustices cause them to be aware of their own rights. In addition, since gifted children have leadership characteristics, they direct the society on children's rights. As a matter of fact, leading scientists and statesmen all over the world are among the gifted (Levent, 2011).

There are many studies in the literature to determine the level of knowledge or consciousness of children about their own rights. Akgül and Kartal (2020) examined the level of consciousness of children under the age of 18 regarding children's rights according to the variables of gender, place of residence and whether they have a room of their own. Gültekin et al. (2016) examined children's rights from the eyes of children in their study and determined that children generally emphasize the right to education. In the studies conducted with students, Covell and Howe (1999) determined that children mostly mentioned the right to protection, and Ersoy (2011) determined that they mostly mentioned the right of children to education, play and entertainment. Durualp et al. (2017) also determined in their study that children see play and education as their right and they attribute the duty of protecting themselves to their parents. On the other hand, no study examining the consciousness of gifted students about children's rights has been found in our country. Based on this reason, this study was conducted to examine the consciousness levels of gifted children about children's rights and to compare them with their non-gifted peers.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The general survey model was used in this study, in which the consciousness levels of gifted and non-gifted children on children's rights were compared. In this study, the level of consciousness regarding children's rights was considered as the dependent variable, and being gifted or not was considered as the independent variable.

### **Study Group**

The study group of the research consists of 128 children who attend the Science and Art Center of Afyonkarahisar Provincial Directorate of National Education and primary schools in the fall semester of the 2021-2022 academic year. All 63 children studying at the 3rd and 4th grades at the Science and Art Center were included in the study group. In addition, data were collected from 65 primary school 3rd and 4th grade students who were not gifted by criterion sampling, one of the purposive sampling methods.

Table 1  
Demographic characteristics of the study group.

	f	%
<b>Gifted</b>		
Female	26	41.3
Male	37	58.7
Third grade	32	50.79
Fourth grade	31	49.21
<b>Non Gifted</b>		
Female	27	41.5
Male	38	58.5
Third grade	33	50.76
Fourth grade	32	49.24

41.3% of the gifted students participating in the research were female and 58.7% male; 50.79% of them attend the third and 49.21% of them attend the fourth grade. On the other hand, 41.5% of the students who are not gifted are female and 58.5% are male; 50.76% of them attend the third and 49.24% of them attend the fourth grade (Table 1).

### Data Collection Tool

The "Child Rights Consciousness Level Determination Scale" developed by Akgül and Çağlayan (2019) was used as a data collection tool in the research. The scale consists of 3 dimensions and 18 items: "Right to Protection", "Right to Live Free" and "Right to Obtain Information and Express Opinion". The scale was developed in 3 categories (importance for you at home, at school; The categories were prepared in a 3-point Likert type and scored as 0-1-2. The highest score a participant can get from the scale is 108, and the lowest score is 0. The high scores to be obtained from the scale indicate the high level of consciousness about children's rights. The internal consistency coefficient of the entire scale was .83, and the internal consistency coefficients of the sub-dimensions range from .62 to .82. In current study the internal consistency coefficient of the entire scale was .86, and the internal consistency coefficients of the sub-dimensions range from .69 to .81.

### Analysis of Data

In the study, percentage and frequency distributions were used in the evaluation of demographic characteristics. In the study, the normality of the distribution of the data was examined with the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, kurtosis coefficients and distribution graphs, and it was determined that the data did not show normal distribution ( $p < 0.05$ ). For this reason, the Mann Whitney U Test was used for paired groups, one of the non-parametric tests, when examining the difference between groups. While analyzing the data, the level of significance was accepted as 0.05.

## RESULTS

In the study conducted to compare the consciousness levels of gifted and non-gifted children about children's rights, the results regarding the difference between the groups are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

*The results of the Mann Whitney U Test, which examines the differences in the consciousness of children's rights according to the groups.*

Groups	N	X	sd	Mean	Mann Whitney U	
					U	p
Gifted	63	90,53	11,75	71,52	1605,5	,035*
Non gifted	65	86,23	11,89	57,70		
Total	128	88,35	11,97			

\*p<0,05

The mean score of the children's consciousness level (X=90.53) of the gifted children is higher than the mean score of the non-gifted children (X=86.23) (Table 2). In order to determine the significance of this difference, a significant difference was found in favor of gifted children as a result of the Mann Whitney U test. (U=1605.5, p<0.05).

The results of the Mann Whitney U Test, which examines the differences between the groups according to the categories and dimensions of the scale, are also presented in Table 3. Table 3. The results of the Mann Whitney U Test, in which the differentiation of the groups according to categories and dimensions was examined.

Table 3

*Differences between the groups according to the categories and dimensions of the scale.*

Categories	Dimensions	Group	Mean	sd	Min.	Max.	Mann Whitney U	
							U	p
School	Right to Protection	Gifted	17,6	2,6	6	20	1909	0,498
		Non-Gifted	17,6	3,3	4	20		
		Total	17,6	2,9	4	20		
	Right to Live Free	Gifted	5,9	2,9	0	10	1755,5	0,162
		Non-Gifted	5,2	2,5	0	10		
		Total	5,6	2,7	0	10		
	Right to Obtain Information and Express Opinion	Gifted	4,4	1,5	0	6	1538	0,013*
		Non-Gifted	3,7	1,6	0	6		
		Total	4,0	1,6	0	6		
Home	Right to Protection	Gifted	18,1	2,6	10	20	1664	0,061
		Non-Gifted	17,8	2,1	9	20		
		Total	17,9	2,4	9	20		
	Right to Live Free	Gifted	7,6	1,9	2	10	1972,5	0,716
		Non-Gifted	7,7	1,9	3	10		
		Total	7,7	1,9	2	10		

	Right to Obtain Information and Express Opinion	Gifted	5,2	1,4	0	6	1455	<0,002*
		Non-Gifted	4,4	1,6	0	6		
		Total	4,8	1,5	0	6		
	Right to Protection	Gifted	18,9	1,4	14	20	1701,5	0,081
		Non-Gifted	18,1	2,3	9	20		
		Total	18,5	2,0	9	20		
For you	Right to Live Free	Gifted	7,2	2,7	0	10	1794	0,221
		Non-Gifted	6,7	2,5	1	10		
		Total	6,9	2,6	0	10		
	Right to Obtain Information and Express Opinion	Gifted	5,4	0,9	2	6	1455	0,002*
		Non-Gifted	4,6	1,5	0	6		
		Total	5,0	1,3	0	6		

Consciousness levels of gifted and non-gifted children about children's rights were compared with the Mann Whitney U test (Table 3). Accordingly, there was a statistically significant difference in favor of gifted children in the sub-dimension of the right to obtain information and express opinions of the scale at school, at home and in the categories according to you ( $p < 0.05$ ). In the other sub-dimensions of the scale, although the average score of the gifted children is high, there is no statistically significant difference with the mean scores of the non-gifted children.

## DISCUSSION

The study was conducted to compare the consciousness levels of gifted and non-gifted children about children's rights. According to the results of the study, the consciousness level of gifted students about children's rights is significantly higher than that of non-gifted students. Although there are many studies in the literature comparing the level of consciousness according to different variables (such as gender, class level, place of residence, whether to have an independent room, family income status), no other study was found in which the comparison was made according to the variable of being gifted or not.

The difference between gifted children and others may be due to the sensitivity of gifted children on these issues. Specially gifted children who are cognitively high have a level of influence that will affect or even drag the society (Turgut Yıldırım, 2019). When faced with social problems, gifted children display high-level emotions, behaviors and beliefs on issues related to truth, justice and rights (Guo et al., 2019; Lee & Olszewski-Kubilius, 2006; Sword, 2003). There are various studies in which gifted children have higher emotional intelligence than their non-gifted peers (Abdulla Alabbasi et al., 2021) and are more sensitive to social issues (Kaya et al., 2016; Zeidner et al., 2005). According to Davaslıgil (1990), gifted children are individuals who can stand behind their work and have a higher desire to be a pioneer in events while they are sensitive to current political events compared to non-gifted children. As a result of the democracy education given to gifted and talented children, they tend to be tolerant and prudent, respecting the personal rights of children (Çetinkaya & Kınca, 2014).

Another result obtained from the study is that gifted students have higher scores than their peers in the "right to obtain information and express opinions" sub-dimension of the child rights consciousness scale at school, at home and in the categories according to you. In other sub-dimensions, there was no significant difference between the groups. This difference in the sub-dimension of "the right to obtain information and express opinions" may be due to the fact that gifted students are more curious, inquisitive and more open in expressing their thoughts than their non-gifted peers. As a matter of fact, Webb et al. (2006) state that gifted children have a wide range of interests and a desire to ask unlimited questions with developed curiosity. Özbay (2013) emphasizes that gifted children use a rich language compared to their peers, tend to speak a lot, and insist on expressing themselves and displaying their verbal skills. In addition to these, the difference between "what is" and "what should be" is important in the face of social problems faced by gifted children (Webb et al., 2007). For this reason, gifted children may be sensitive to having a high level of knowledge about children's rights and to express their opinions in line with the information they have acquired.

## CONCLUSION

As a result of the study, the consciousness level of gifted children about children's rights was found to be significantly higher than non-gifted children. The unique developmental characteristics of gifted children may have an impact on their knowledge, consciousness and behavior towards children's rights. However, there is a need for comparative and longitudinal large-scale studies based on epidemiological data on the sensitivity of gifted children to children's rights. In addition, educational and behavioral interventions should be made in order to increase the consciousness of gifted children about children's rights, regardless of their educational environment. The study was conducted with primary school students. The study should be extended with students at different learning levels. The reasons for the difference in the level of consciousness of gifted and non-gifted students about children's rights can be examined in more depth with a qualitative study.

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