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## **GIFTED STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS HISTORY LESSONS BASED ON GENDER AND GRADE LEVEL**

*Hasan SUNGUR\* - Meliha KÖSE\*\**

### **ABSTRACT**

The field of gifted education has a long history. It is also a very crucial issue for the development of societies. Many educators and researchers have been interested in analyzing the high ability students' world. There are many studies conducted to understand gifted students' needs. These students need special programs; and educators should take into consideration their learning styles and abilities when they establish programs and create materials. Conducting attitudes studies provide a good starting point for educators who wish to introduce suitable programs or lessons to students. The purpose of this quantitative study is to investigate the differences on gifted students' attitudes toward history lessons taught in high schools in Turkey based on gender and grade level. The sample consisted of 133 gifted students in grades prep-12 (approximately 14-18 years of age) in TEV İnanc Turkeş High School. It is a boarding school in Turkey that accepts only gifted students for enrollment. Likert attitude scale was designed and used to measure the attitudes towards the study of history in high school students. Before applying this scale on the main target group, a pilot study was carried out in order to test the reliability and validation of the scale. For the statistical analysis of the data, SPSS Statistics 23 (IBM) and SPSS AMOS 23 (IBM) were used. The results of this study indicated that there are no significant differences between gifted female and male students' attitudes towards history lessons. But the grade level of students had a significant effect on attitudes towards history lessons. This study showed that 10<sup>th</sup> grade students show more positive attitudes toward history lessons than the other grades.

**Keywords:** gifted student; attitude; history lesson; Turkey.

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## ÜSTÜN YETENEKLİ ÖĞRENCİLERİN TARİH DERSİNE YÖNELİK TUTUMLARININ CİNSİYET VE SINIF SEVİYESİ BAĞLAMINDA İNCELENMESİ

### ÖZET

Üstün yeteneklilerin eğitimi uzun bir geçmişe sahiptir, aynı zamanda üstünlerin eğitimi meselesi toplumların gelişimi açısından son derece önemlidir. Yıllardır eğitimciler ve araştırmacılar üstün yetenekli çocukların dünyasını incelemeye ilgi duymaktadırlar. Üstün yetenekli öğrencilerin ihtiyaçlarını anlamaya yönelik birçok çalışma vardır. Bu tarz özelliklere sahip olan çocukların gelişimlerine yardımcı olmak için eğitimcilerin üstünlere yönelik programlar geliştirmesi gerekmektedir. Program geliştirirken göz önünde bulundurulması gereken noktalardan biri de öğrencilerin tutumlarıdır. Nitel bir çalışma olan bu araştırmanın amacı üstün yetenekli öğrencilerin Türkiye’de liselerde okutulan tarih dersine yönelik tutumlarını, cinsiyet ve sınıf bazında incelemektir. Araştırmanın örneklem kümesini Türkiye’de üstünlere yönelik lise düzeyinde eğitim veren ve bu alanda tek okul olan TEV İnanç Türkeş lisesinde okuyan 133 üstün yetenekli öğrenci oluşturmaktadır. Öğrencilerin durumlarını ölçmek için Likert ölçeği kullanılmıştır. Hedef gruba uygulanmadan önce, Ölçeğin geçerlilik ve güvenilirliği test etmek amacıyla pilot bir çalışma gerçekleştirilmiş ve elde edilen veriler SPSS 23 (IBM) ve SPSS AMOS 23 (IBM) ile analiz edilmiştir. Araştırmada cinsiyet bağlamında üstün yetenekli kız ve erkek öğrencilerin tarih dersine yönelik tutumlarında önemli farklılıkların olmadığı tespit edilmiştir. Sınıf bazında baktığımızda 10. Sınıf öğrencilerinin tarih dersine yönelik tutumlarının diğer sınıf seviyelerine göre daha olumlu olduğu tespit edilmiştir.

### STRUCTURED ABSTRACT

**Problem statement:** Each individual is unique in the sense that he/she has unique physical, mental, social, and personal characteristics that distinguish him/her from other people. In the case of gifted and talented individuals, identification and enrichment of distinctions such as advanced learning rate, memory capacity, creativity and comprehension have a significant value for education systems that aim for full efficiency. What do we think about the notions of “gifted” and “talented”? For years researchers have been trying to figure out how they should identify and educate such students; but, as educators, we still do not have an agreement on how we should identify such students, which features we should look for, or what we mean by such terms. There are many studies conducted to understand gifted students’ needs. These students need special programs; and educators should take into consideration their learning styles and abilities when they establish programs and create materials. Conducting attitudes studies provide a good starting point for educators who wish to introduce suitable programs or lessons to students.

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**Purpose of Study:** The purpose of this quantitative study is to investigate the differences on gifted students' attitudes toward history lessons taught in high schools in Turkey based on gender and grade level.

**Method:** This study aims to measure the attitudes of gifted students towards history lessons taught in a high school in Turkey based on gender and grade level. The sample consisted of 133 gifted students in grades prep–12 (approximately 14–18 years of age) in TEV Inanç Turkeş High School. It is a boarding school in Turkey that accepts only gifted students for enrollment. Likert attitude scale was designed and used to measure the attitudes towards the study of history in high school students. Before applying this scale on the main target group, a pilot study was carried out in order to test the reliability and validation of the scale. Participants were asked to indicate whether they strongly agree, agree, are uncertain, disagree, or strongly disagree with test statements. Participants to the scale questions were scored from one to five with the most positive response assigned the lowest value, e.g., one considered most favorable. For the statistical analysis of the data, SPSS Statistics 23 (IBM) and SPSS AMOS 23 (IBM) were used.

**Results:** The results of this study indicated that there are no significant differences between gifted female and male students' attitudes towards history lessons. But the grade level of students had a significant effect on attitudes towards history lessons. This study showed that 10<sup>th</sup> grade students show more positive attitudes toward history lessons than the other grades.

**Conclusion and Recommendation:** The objective of this research was to investigate the differences on gifted students' attitudes toward history lessons taught in high schools in Turkey based on gender and grade level. It was carried out at TEV Inanc Turkes High School which is unique school in Turkey for gifted education at high school level. Results indicated that grade 10<sup>th</sup> students were generally more positive about history lesson than the other grades. In addition, significant gender differences toward history lesson were not found in this study. Since this is the first study performed for the history lesson attitudes of gifted students at high school, to the authors' best knowledge, the results were only compared with the studies conducted in science and the other social lessons. Although the studies showed significant gender differences in science areas in the literature, this study results showed that there is no significant gender difference. This study is important as the being the first study to measure the attitude of the gifted student towards history lesson at high school level and it can be a starting point for the further studies for the social science lessons. As it was indicated in this study, determining the attitudes of the gifted students toward the lessons is critical to develop target strategies for the gifted education programs. Thus, more studies are needed in order to first improve our knowledge about the gifted students' attitudes and then provide the necessary programs for the gifted students to reach their full potential.

**Keywords:** gifted student, attitude, history lesson, Turkey.

## 1. Introduction

Each individual is unique in the sense that he/she has unique physical, mental, social, and personal characteristics that distinguish him/her from other people. In the case of gifted and talented individuals, identification and enrichment of distinctions such as advanced learning rate, memory capacity, creativity and comprehension have a significant value for education systems that aim for full efficiency. What do we think about the notions of “gifted” and “talented”? For years researchers have been trying to figure out how they should identify and educate such students; but, as educators, we still do not have an agreement on how we should identify such students, which features we should look for, or what we mean by such terms. Despite the highly recognized nature of giftedness, debates on such questions are still going on among psychologists and educators. In short, there exists no universal definition for giftedness (Davis & Rimm, 2004).

Intelligence tests are the traditional method of identifying gifted individuals. Stanford Binet Intelligence Test, which was designed by Terman in the beginning of the Twentieth Century for the purpose of identifying gifted individuals, is one of the first examples of such tests (Konstantopoulos, Modi, & Hedges, 2001). Although Terman’s (1926) studies were a starting point for other studies, his work was soon subject to various criticisms. The essence of the criticism was the fact that intelligence tests were too simple for the task at hand, and therefore they were insufficient. According to Terman’s measure, people who got scores more than 132 would be identified as talented. The argument was that such people would require special programs for their education in order to realize their full potential. The definitions and theories regarding the gifted and talented individuals started to change with the emphasis of new studies in 1970s on multidimensional structures and environmental factors. In 1972, Sidney Marland, U.S. Commissioner of Education, published the Marland Report that presented the results of a research on the programs provided for gifted individuals (Davis & Rimm, 2004). The most significant contribution of the Marland Report was the comprehensive definitions it provided for the notion of giftedness (Vaughn, S., Bos, C. S., & Schumm, J. S. 2003).

Renzulli (1978, 1988) investigated the results of various notable researchers (Sternberg, 1985; Terman, 1926). Renzulli’s three ring understanding of giftedness focused on the interaction between over the average ability, creativity and task commitment. Renzulli and his team conducted various research projects in order to verify the validity of the model (Delisle & Renzulli, 1982; Gubbins, 1982). The most significant contribution of the model was the fact that it was one of the first endeavours to establish creative production as a goal of the education of gifted students.

Around the same time with Renzulli’s strong influence on the subject, Gardner (1983) published the Theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI Theory), and Sternberg (1988, 1996) published Triarchic Theory of Successful Intelligence. Like Renzulli’s three ring model, these models appealed to educators who desired an expansion of notions regarding the identification of gifted students. In short, these studies not only revealed new ways of comprehending giftedness, but also showed the significance of sociocultural context for the definition, identification and enrichment of gifted individuals.

### 1.1. The Education of Gifted Students and Social Sciences

The responsibility of the education system is to provide instruction that meets the needs of children in order for them to achieve their full potential. Given that the needs of gifted students are different than other students, they can become bored or frustrated if they do not receive appropriate learning experiences. Unfortunately, such needs of gifted children are usually neglected.

According to Winebrenner (2001), gifted children whose learning needs are not met may be perceived as children with behavior, motivation, or attitude problems. That is to say, they need a differentiated instruction than their peers are taking in ordinary institutions. Indeed, differentiated instruction is not a new approach. Carolyn Tomlinson and other educators have recommended using differentiated instruction in different types of classrooms, such as inclusive classrooms (Tomlinson, 1999). Various strategies of differentiated instruction can be successfully applied not only to gifted and talented, but to all students. Tomlinson (2003) has defined differentiation as, "responsive teaching, [that] stems from a teacher's solid (and growing) understanding of how teaching and learning occur, and responds to varied learners' needs for more practice or greater challenge, a more active or less active approach to learning, and so on." (p.2)

Differentiated instruction allows teachers to reach all students' unique learning needs (Tomlinson, 2001). It encourages the adoption of various strategies that provide the same curriculum in a way which is appropriate for the needs of the student. It has been established that differentiated instruction is appropriate, especially for gifted and talented students (Betts, 2004), as it augments their advanced thinking skills with the enhanced instruction it provides.

The National Association for Gifted Children has stated that gifted and talented students from prekindergarten through high school require a differentiated curriculum in all subject areas to maximize their abilities (Landrum, Callahan, & Shaklee, 2001; National Association for Gifted Children, 2010). Yet, the programs focusing on the domain of social studies are limited. Moreover, the studies that examined the curriculum models designed for the instruction of gifted students in social sciences indicated that such programs were not efficacious.

Engaging students in critical thinking and problem solving is an essential part of the learning processes that are especially differentiated for gifted students (Avery & Zuo, 2003; Kaplan, 2005; Little & Ellis, 2003). Challenging gifted learners in the social studies also demands that students learn skills of critical reasoning (Caron, 2004; Little et al., 2007; Sandling, 2003) including the type of historical analysis described by Greene (1994), and S. Wineburg (1991).

Content depth and complexity are accomplished by the organization of curricula around concepts rather than a mass of facts, the focus on significant problems, and the consideration of multiple perspectives (Caron, 2004; National Council for the Social Studies, 2008; Sandling, 2003). In addition, primary source documents and other materials may prove to be helpful in providing advanced content to the gifted students (Little, Feng, VanTassel-Baska, Rogers, & Avery, 2007; Mayer, 2006).

Attitude is an important factor for the academic success and it also has been found to be crucial component which affects the way in which students deal with the challenges that face with their future life (Kelly, 1986). An attitude may be defined as a predisposition to respond in a favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to a given attitude object (Oskamp & Schultz, 2005, p.8). The attitude object can be anything, such as history, math, and chemistry lessons. Conducting attitudes studies provides a good starting point for educators who wish to introduce suitable programs or lessons to students. Fortunately, there are plenty of studies which aim to express the gifted students' attitudes towards science such as math, chemistry although at present, there is no published study to explain the attitudes of gifted students towards history lessons taught at high school. The main purpose of this study is to measure the attitudes of gifted students towards history lessons taught in high schools in Turkey based on gender and grade level.

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## 2. Method

### 2.1. Evaluation instrument

Daniel R. Stryker (1996) developed a Likert attitude scale to measure the attitudes towards the study of history in high school students. Its final version contained 55 items. In this study, this scale was used as a model to measure gifted students attitudes towards history lessons after evaluation of the scale. Six items that did not completely meet the criteria were left out the Scale. Before applying this scale on the main target group, a pilot study was carried out in order to test the reliability and validation of the scale. Participants were asked to indicate whether they strongly agree, agree, are uncertain, disagree, or strongly disagree with test statements. Participants to the scale questions were scored from one to five with the most positive response assigned the lowest value, e.g., one considered most favorable.

### 2.2. Data analysis methods

This pilot study was performed on survey data collected from a total of 233 students from science high schools in different regions of Turkey. The pilot study was carried on these schools because all students have to pass exam by gaining high scores thus these students profiles are more close to gifted students. For the statistical analysis of the data, SPSS Statistics 23 (IBM) and SPSS AMOS 23 (IBM) were used. According to the law of large numbers, as number of samples increases, the sample mean approaches the theoretical mean, and the sample distribution approaches the normal distribution. (İnal H. C., & Günay S., 2002, p.264) To develop the attitude scale, first, exploratory factor analysis was applied to the data using SPSS Statistics 23. Then the developed attitude scale was subjected to confirmatory factor analysis on SPSS AMOS 23, and the reliability of the scale was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha values.

#### 2.2.1. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) for the development of the attitude scale

In order to determine a reliable attitude scale for the data collected from 233 students, exploratory factor analysis was performed on the data set using the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) method. There were no limitations on the number of factors extracted, and factor loadings over 0.5 were considered. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value of 0.898 (the degree of common variance is "meritorious", bordering "marvelous") suggests that the factors extracted as a result of this factor analysis adequately account for the majority of the variance in the data set (Table 1).

**Table 1. KMO and Bartlett analysis results**

|                            |       |                 |
|----------------------------|-------|-----------------|
| Kasiyer Meyer Olkin (KMO)  |       | 0,898           |
|                            | $x^2$ | 1936,597        |
| Bartlett's Sphericity Test | Sd    | 231             |
|                            | $p$   | <b>0,000***</b> |

\*: $p < 0,05$  \*\*: $p < 0,01$  \*\*\*: $p < 0,001$

Bartlett's sphericity test results show that there are high correlational relations among variables overall (correlational matrix differs significantly from the identity matrix), and therefore factors extracted by the principal component analysis (PCA) analysis are useful ( $x^2$ : 1936,597, sd:231,  $p < 0,001$ ). As a result of the exploratory factor analysis, the number of items was reduced from 49 to 22. By content validity, these 22 items fall under 3 main factors, and the loading of each factor is over 0.5 (Table 2). %26.901 of the overall variance is explained by the sub-category "Attitude towards history and self-motivation", %12.220 by "Influence of external factors on self-motivation", and %11.002 by "Enjoyment". These three factors in total account for %50.123 of the overall variance in the data set. (Table 2).

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**Table 2. Attitude scale factors**

|  | <b>Factor loading</b> | <b>Variance %</b> | <b>Eigenvalue</b> |
|--|-----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Attitude towards history and self-motivation</b>  |                       | <b>26,901</b>     | <b>5,918</b>      |
| History helps me to understand myself better.  | 0,744                 |                   |                   |
| Thinking about the past fascinates me.   | 0,722                 |                   |                   |
| I like history.  | 0,718                 |                   |                   |
| History relates to my life now.  | 0,711                 |                   |                   |
| History will help me in any career I go into.  | 0,703                 |                   |                   |
| If history courses were not taught in high schools, I would go to the library to find information about history. | 0,663                 |                   |                   |
| I will be a better person for what I am learning in history.   | 0,645                 |                   |                   |
| History helps me to think more logically.  | 0,640                 |                   |                   |
| I sometimes read history on my own.  | 0,631                 |                   |                   |
| History is important because it covers all of the other courses that I take.                                     | 0,614                 |                   |                   |
| I believe that history should be learned, even if one does not enjoy it.   | 0,594                 |                   |                   |
| History is boring.   | 0,591                 |                   |                   |
| <b>Influence of external factors on self-motivation</b>  |                       | <b>12,220</b>     | <b>2,688</b>      |
| I don't like it when the history teacher talks about things that won't be on the test.                           | 0,625                 |                   |                   |
| Pleasing the teacher is more important to me than learning.  | 0,606                 |                   |                   |
| I have no curiosity about what happened in the past.   | 0,596                 |                   |                   |
| One of the main reasons that I study history is to keep my parents happy.  | 0,591                 |                   |                   |
| I care about what my history teacher thinks, but I'm not interested in history.                                  | 0,576                 |                   |                   |
| The grade is the most important thing to me in history.  | 0,575                 |                   |                   |
| <b>Enjoyment</b>   |                       | <b>11,002</b>     | <b>2,420</b>      |
| Lectures can be interesting when I can participate.  | 0,718                 |                   |                   |
| Whether or not I like history depends on how it is taught.   | 0,706                 |                   |                   |
| Lectures can be interesting when I can give my opinion.  | 0,595                 |                   |                   |
| I enjoy history when the teacher teaches it like a story.  | 0,558                 |                   |                   |
| <b>Total</b>   |                       | <b>50,123</b>     | <b>11,027</b>     |

### 2.2.2. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)

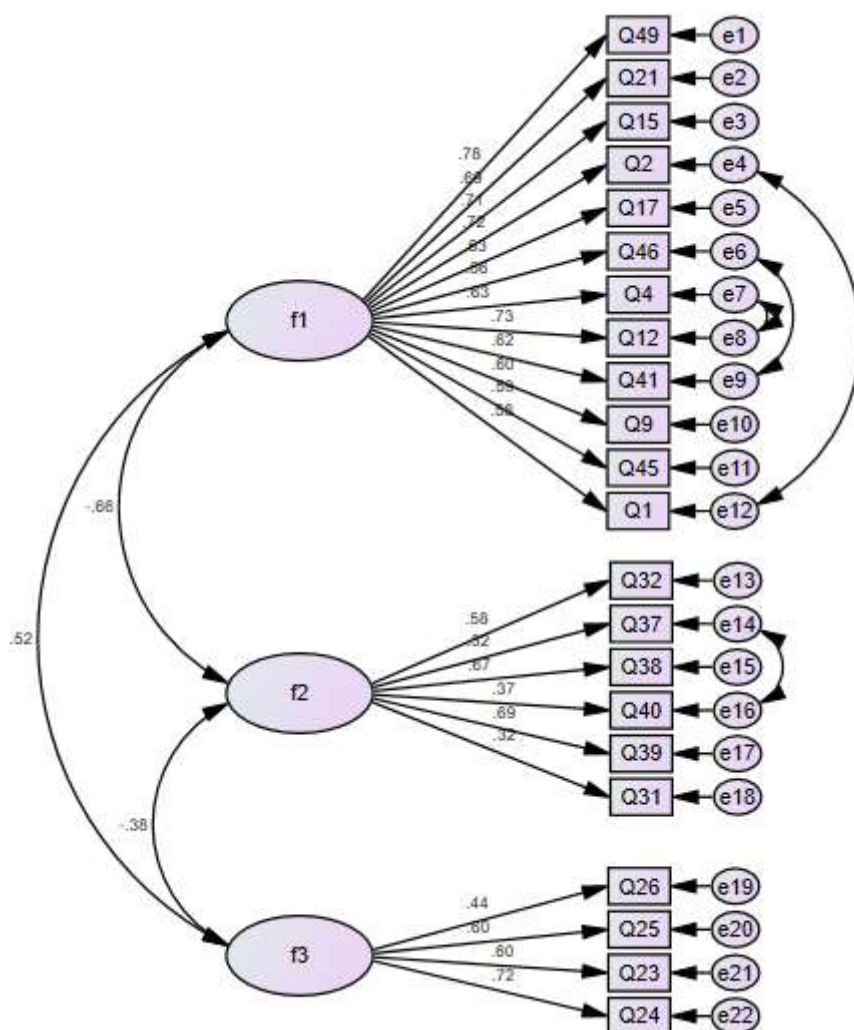
Confirmatory factor analysis was performed on data collected from 233 participants using SPSS AMOS 23 (IBM) statistical software. First, a first-degree CFA was constructed where the three main factors discovered from EFA are the latent variables, and the items that fall under these categories are the observed variables. Since the latent variables are not numeric, in order to estimate their parameter values, one can assign the paths from latent variables to observed variables a loading value of 1. Alternatively, the variance of the latent variables can be given a value (traditionally 1) (Hair et al., 2005:791).

Second, maximum likelihood estimation was used to estimate the parameters of the model such as the error in observed variables, the variance in latent variables, and the regression coefficients

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of the paths. This method is commonly used in structural equation modeling as it performs well even when the data set does not have a normal distribution. In order to improve the fit indices, bidirectional paths were established between variables with the highest modification indices in the attitude scale: between “History is boring” and “I like history”, “I sometimes read history on my own.” and “If history courses were not taught in high schools, I would go to the library to find information about history”, “I will be a better person for what I am learning in history.” and “History helps me to think more logically”, and finally “Pleasing the teacher is more important to me than learning” and “One of the main reasons that I study history is to keep my parents happy.” For the calculation of estimated covariance matrices, correlational relationships were also established between the three factors (Figure 1).

**Figure 1. The 3-factor first-degree CFA model of the attitude scale**



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Fit indices for this 3-factor first-degree CFA model (Table 3) indicate that the model is a good fit overall.  $\chi^2/df$ , IFI, CFI, RMSEA and SRMR values suggest adequate fit, and only GFI and TLI values suggest less-than-adequate fit. (Meydan, H. C. & Şeşen, H., 2011, 37; Hu, L. T., & Bentler, P. M. 1999, 27; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001) Therefore, the attitude scale developed here is overall an adequate model.

**Table 3. Fit indices of the CFA model**

| $\chi^2/df$ | GFI   | IFI   | TLI   | CFI   | RMSEA | SRMR   |
|-------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|
| 1,822       | 0,871 | 0,908 | 0,893 | 0,906 | 0,060 | 0,0731 |

The regression and covariance analysis were performed and given in Table 4 and 5, respectively. Covariance analysis between the three factors identified a moderate positive correlation (0.516,  $p < 0.05$ ) between "Attitude towards history and self-motivation" and "Enjoyment", a weak negative correlation (-0.376,  $p < 0.05$ ) between "Influence of external factors on self-motivation" and "Enjoyment", and a moderate negative correlation (-0.655,  $p < 0.05$ ) between "Attitude towards history and self-motivation" and "Influence of external factors on self-motivation" (Table 5).

**Table 4. Standard regression coefficients**

|     |      |  | Standart Regresyon Coefficients |
|-----|------|--|---------------------------------|
| Q49 | <--- | Attitude towards history and self-motivation     | 0,784***                        |
| Q21 | <--- | Attitude towards history and self-motivation     | 0,692***                        |
| Q15 | <--- | Attitude towards history and self-motivation     | 0,707***                        |
| Q2  | <--- | Attitude towards history and self-motivation     | 0,716***                        |
| Q17 | <--- | Attitude towards history and self-motivation     | 0,633***                        |
| Q46 | <--- | Attitude towards history and self-motivation     | 0,563***                        |
| Q4  | <--- | Attitude towards history and self-motivation     | 0,633***                        |
| Q12 | <--- | Attitude towards history and self-motivation     | 0,725***                        |
| Q41 | <--- | Attitude towards history and self-motivation     | 0,620***                        |
| Q9  | <--- | Attitude towards history and self-motivation     | 0,603***                        |
| Q45 | <--- | Attitude towards history and self-motivation     | 0,587***                        |
| Q1  | <--- | Attitude towards history and self-motivation     | 0,576***                        |
| Q32 | <--- | Influence of external factors on self-motivation | 0,581***                        |
| Q37 | <--- | Influence of external factors on self-motivation | 0,325***                        |
| Q38 | <--- | Influence of external factors on self-motivation | 0,674***                        |
| Q40 | <--- | Influence of external factors on self-motivation | 0,368***                        |
| Q39 | <--- | Influence of external factors on self-motivation | 0,693***                        |
| Q31 | <--- | Influence of external factors on self-motivation | 0,319***                        |
| Q26 | <--- | Enjoyment  | 0,442***                        |
| Q25 | <--- | Enjoyment  | 0,600***                        |
| Q23 | <--- | Enjoyment  | 0,596***                        |
| Q24 | <--- | Enjoyment  | 0,716***                        |

\*: $p < 0,05$  \*\*: $p < 0,01$  \*\*\*: $p < 0,001$ ; Q: Question

**Table 5. Correlational relationships between the factors**

|  |          |  | Correlation      |
|--|----------|--|------------------|
| Attitude towards history and self-motivation     | <--<br>> | Enjoyment  | <b>0,516***</b>  |
| Influence of external factors on self-motivation | <--<br>> | Enjoyment  | <b>-0,376***</b> |
| Attitude towards history and self-motivation     | <--<br>> | Influence of external factors on self-motivation | <b>-0,655***</b> |

### 2.2.3. Reliability of the attitude scale and the factors

Cronbach alpha, a measure of internal consistency, was used to calculate reliability of the three factors of the attitude scale and introduced in Table 6. Reliability coefficient of all the variables combined exceed 0.70 (which is traditionally considered “acceptable” (Nunnally, 1978: 245-246). However it should be noted that reliability coefficients of each factor alone are rather moderate.

**Table 6. Reliability measures of the attitude scale and the factors**

|                |  | Cronbach's Alfa |      |
|----------------|--|-----------------|------|
| Attitude Scale | Attitude towards history and self-motivation     | 90,1            | 74,6 |
|                | Influence of external factors on self-motivation | 69,8            |      |
|                | Enjoyment  | 66,6            |      |

### 2.3. Statistical analysis methods

Target study was performed on survey data collected from a total of 133 gifted students in grades prep–12 (approximately 14–18 years of age) in TEV Inanc Turkes High School. The students come from various cities of Turkey and they have to pass multiple steps involving aptitude test, second screening and summer camp to admission. Table 7 indicates that %60.2 of the students were male, and %39.2 were female. 12% of the students were in prep year, %37.6 in 9th grade, %10.5 in 10th grade, %34.6 in 11th grade, and %5.3 in 12th grade (Table 8).

**Table 7. Distribution of the samples based on gender**

|              | Number     | %            |
|--------------|------------|--------------|
| Female       | 53         | 39,8         |
| Male         | 80         | 60,2         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>133</b> | <b>100,0</b> |

**Table 8. Distribution of the samples based on grade**

|              | Number     | %            |
|--------------|------------|--------------|
| Prep class   | 16         | 12,0         |
| 9th Grade    | 50         | 37,6         |
| 10th Grade   | 14         | 10,5         |
| 11th Grade   | 46         | 34,6         |
| 12th Grade   | 7          | 5,3          |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>133</b> | <b>100,0</b> |

Significance of differences in the numeric values of the answers to the survey questions was calculated by student's t-test, if two groups were being considered (in the case of “gender of the student”), and by one-way ANOVA test, if there were more than 2 groups (in the case of “grade of

the student"). Homogeneity of variance across different groups was tested by Levene's test. In the cases where the groups showed equal variances, Tukey's test was used for assessing the difference between the groups. In unequal variance cases, Tamhane's T2 was employed instead.

### 3. Results

The survey based on Likert scale was performed for 133 gifted students at TEV Inanc Turkes High School and the distribution of the responses to the attitude scale survey questions was tabulated in Table 9. Table 9 shows that overwhelmingly, with a 1.97 mean on scales, the gifted students proclaimed that they enjoy history lesson but it depends on how it is taught. Especially when they explain their opinions during lesson they enjoy the lesson much more. In general, history was viewed positively and most of participants stated that history is not boring with a 3.61 mean but they did not perceive history as important for their future careers with a 3.02 mean under the subscale attitude towards history and self-motivation. The participants' answers to the questions on the attitude scale did not differ based on the gender of the participant ( $p > 0.05$ , student's t-test) (Table 10).

**Table 9. Distributions of the responses to the attitude scale questions on the survey**

|  | Min.        | Max.        | Mean        | Std. Deviation |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|
| <b>Attitude towards history and self-motivation</b>  | <b>1,00</b> | <b>4,33</b> | <b>2,58</b> | <b>0,757</b>   |
| History helps me to understand myself better.  | 1           | 5           | 2,41        | 1,155          |
| Thinking about the past fascinates me.   | 1           | 5           | 2,97        | 1,141          |
| I like history.  | 1           | 5           | 2,44        | 1,047          |
| History relates to my life now.  | 1           | 5           | 2,25        | 1,040          |
| History will help me in any career I go into.  | 1           | 5           | 3,02        | 1,174          |
| If history courses were not taught in high schools, I would go to the library to find information about history. | 1           | 5           | 2,88        | 1,213          |
| I will be a better person for what I am learning in history.   | 1           | 5           | 2,36        | 1,137          |
| History helps me to think more logically.  | 1           | 5           | 2,31        | 0,955          |
| I sometimes read history on my own..   | 1           | 5           | 2,25        | 1,131          |
| History is important because it covers all of the other courses that I take.                                     | 1           | 5           | 2,93        | 1,143          |
| I believe that history should be learned, even if one does not enjoy it.   | 1           | 5           | 2,76        | 1,149          |
| History is boring.   | 1           | 5           | 3,61        | 1,160          |
| <b>Influence of external factors on self-motivation</b>  | <b>1,17</b> | <b>5,00</b> | <b>4,01</b> | <b>0,704</b>   |
| I don't like it when the history teacher talks about things that won't be on the test.                           | 1           | 5           | 4,09        | 1,048          |
| Pleasing the teacher is more important to me than learning.  | 1           | 5           | 4,13        | 1,062          |
| I have no curiosity about what happened in the past.   | 1           | 5           | 4,14        | 1,031          |
| One of the main reasons that I study history is to keep my parents happy.  | 1           | 5           | 4,47        | 0,901          |
| I care about what my history teacher thinks, but I'm not interested in history..                                 | 1           | 5           | 3,65        | 1,187          |
| The grade is the most important thing to me in history.  | 1           | 5           | 3,59        | 1,142          |
| <b>Enjoyment</b>   | <b>1,00</b> | <b>4,50</b> | <b>1,97</b> | <b>0,667</b>   |
| Lectures can be interesting when I can participate.  | 1           | 5           | 2,23        | 1,205          |
| Whether or not I like history depends on how it is taught.   | 1           | 5           | 1,98        | 0,996          |
| Lectures can be interesting when I can give my opinion.  | 1           | 5           | 1,77        | 0,999          |
| I enjoy history when the teacher teaches it like a story.  | 1           | 5           | 1,89        | 0,873          |
| <b>Attitude scale</b>  | <b>1,95</b> | <b>4,00</b> | <b>2,86</b> | <b>0,405</b>   |

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**Table 10. Differences in overall responses to the scale and factor questions based on the gender of the participants**

|  |        | N  | Mean | Std. Deviation | t      | p     |
|--|--------|----|------|----------------|--------|-------|
| Attitude scale                                   | Female | 53 | 2,91 | 0,353          | 1,151  | 0,252 |
|  | Male   | 80 | 2,83 | 0,434          |        |       |
| Attitude towards history and self-motivation     | Female | 53 | 2,70 | 0,353          | 1,489  | 0,139 |
|  | Male   | 80 | 2,50 | 0,434          |        |       |
| Influence of external factors on self-motivation | Female | 53 | 4,03 | 0,588          | 0,209  | 0,834 |
|  | Male   | 80 | 4,00 | 0,775          |        |       |
| Enjoyment  | Female | 53 | 1,86 | 0,597          | -1,551 | 0,123 |
|  | Male   | 80 | 2,04 | 0,703          |        |       |

There was no statistically significant difference in the participants' answers to the questions in the "Influence of external factors on self-motivation", "Interest and joy" categories, or in the attitude scale overall, based on their grade. However, in the "Attitude towards history and self-motivation" category, the average score of the answers were significantly higher in 10th grade students than in prep-year students. ( $p < 0.05$ , one-way ANOVA) (Table 11).

**Table 11. Differences in overall responses to the scale and factor questions based on the grade of the participants**

|  |            | N   | Mean | Std. Deviation | F     | P             | Fark |
|--|------------|-----|------|----------------|-------|---------------|------|
| Attitude scale                                   | Prep Class | 16  | 2,67 | 0,372          | 2,197 | 0,073         | -    |
|  | 9th Grade  | 50  | 2,87 | 0,419          |       |               |      |
|  | 10th Grade | 14  | 3,07 | 0,317          |       |               |      |
|  | 11th Grade | 46  | 2,87 | 0,404          |       |               |      |
|  | 12th Grade | 7   | 2,70 | 0,384          |       |               |      |
|  | Total      | 133 | 2,86 | 0,405          |       |               |      |
| Attitude towards history and self-motivation     | Prep Class | 16  | 2,11 | 0,522          | 1,654 | <b>0,019*</b> | 1-3  |
|  | 9th Grade  | 50  | 2,69 | 0,800          |       |               |      |
|  | 10th Grade | 14  | 2,95 | 0,678          |       |               |      |
|  | 11th Grade | 46  | 2,55 | 0,761          |       |               |      |
|  | 12th Grade | 7   | 2,31 | 0,504          |       |               |      |
|  | Total      | 133 | 2,58 | 0,757          |       |               |      |
| Influence of external factors on self-motivation | Prep Class | 16  | 4,36 | 0,562          | 2,153 | 0,078         | -    |
|  | 9th Grade  | 50  | 3,83 | 0,713          |       |               |      |
|  | 10th Grade | 14  | 3,96 | 0,582          |       |               |      |
|  | 11th Grade | 46  | 4,11 | 0,615          |       |               |      |
|  | 12th Grade | 7   | 3,93 | 1,312          |       |               |      |
|  | Total      | 133 | 4,01 | 0,704          |       |               |      |
| Enjoyment  | Prep Class | 16  | 1,83 | 0,597          | 0,328 | 0,859         | -    |
|  | 9th Grade  | 50  | 1,98 | 0,732          |       |               |      |
|  | 10th Grade | 14  | 2,11 | 0,732          |       |               |      |
|  | 11th Grade | 46  | 1,96 | 0,637          |       |               |      |
|  | 12th Grade | 7   | 2,00 | 0,456          |       |               |      |
|  | Total      | 133 | 1,97 | 0,667          |       |               |      |

\*: $p < 0,05$  \*\*: $p < 0,01$  \*\*\*: $p < 0,001$

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#### 4. Discussions

A number of studies have conducted gender and age differences in the attitudes of gifted students in different areas especially science like math (Benbow & Minor, 1986; Paula Olszewski-Kubilius & Dana Turner, 2002; Gallagher & Kaufmann, 2005; Heller & Ziegler, 1996; Lubinski, Benbow, & Morelock, 2000). Many studies indicated that girls show more positive attitudes toward verbally oriented areas such as English, writing, foreign languages (Olszewski-Kubilius & Yasumoto, 1995; Olszewski-Kubilius & Dana Turner, 2002; Terwilliger & Titus, 1995) and toward school in general (Benbow & Stanley, 1982), whereas boys show more positive attitudes toward computers and science, especially math lesson (Benbow & Minor, 1986; Fox, 1982; Olszewski-Kubilius & Yasumoto, 1995).

Since this study is conducted at high school level, the studies performed at high school level in different countries have been taken into consideration in order to make more reliable discussion around the topic. Unfortunately, studies focusing on gender differences among gifted students at high school age are rare in the literature. One of them is Joan Freeman's (2003) article from the United Kingdom. She compared gifted students in Britain with the gifted students in US in terms of gender differences. Findings of her research is that there seems to be an important difference between American and British gender accomplishments. In America overall mathematics scores of male students are higher than female students' scores, whereas in Britain female students' mathematics scores are higher than male's scores. Lupart et al. (2004) found that male students showed a significantly higher interest in the science area. While male students asserted that they are good at math and science, female students believe that they are good in English/language and arts. Another study indicated that there were more high achieving males than females in both the math and science groups of talented students (Sally M. Reis & Sunghye Park, 2001).

According to the studies in different countries that have been discussed above, the results mainly showed that male students have more positive attitudes and interests than female students on science. As a result of these studies it is clear that they all found significant difference based on gender. However, this study did not indicate significant gender difference in attitude of gifted students toward history lessons.

In Turkey there are several studies that have explored the attitudes of gifted students who attended SAC (Science and Art Centers) which are belong to government institutions. The students attending these centers are generally younger than age 14. In these centers students are educated outside the school time in specific areas such as creativity, leadership and some academic areas. Almost all of the studies in Turkey focus on the attitudes of gifted students who attended the SAC towards different fields like Turkish Lesson (Okur, Alpaslan & Özsoy, Yusuf, 2013). They concluded that there is a large meaningful difference depending on gender in the students' attitudes towards Turkish lesson and the girls indicated more positive attitudes than boys. Result of this study supports that gifted girls show more positive attitudes toward verbally oriented areas. Metin Orbay et al. (2010) research aimed to investigate the science attitudes of gifted students attending the science and art centers (SAC) in Turkey. They found that there is no significant difference between the total science attitude scores of students by gender. Findings of this study differs from the above-mentioned studies. General results related to science indicated that there is gender difference towards science among gifted students.

Most of the studies in Turkey investigated the attitudes of gifted students younger than age 14. Limited number of researches were carried out on high school level students. There are only two studies which investigated the attitudes of gifted students at the high school level based on gender and grade level. One of them is in the field of geography. Artvinli et al. (2010) conducted research

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about the attitudes of gifted students who attended the TEV Inanc Turkes High School towards the geography lessons in Turkey. They found that there are no significant differences between female and male gifted students' attitudes towards geography lessons. Results of this research support our findings (Table 10). They also found that 9<sup>th</sup> grade students showed a more positive attitude towards geography lessons than the other grades. In the field of Science Curebal (2004) conducted a study to measure the attitude of gifted students in high school based on gender and grade level. She found that grade level of students had a significant effect on attitudes towards science. Her study indicated that lower-grade students show more positive attitudes toward science than the students at higher-grade level. Her study also indicated that there are no significant differences between female and male students' scores on attitudes towards science. The results of these two studies are very similar with this study (Table 10).

## 5. Conclusions

The objective of this research was to investigate the differences on gifted students' attitudes toward history lessons taught in high schools in Turkey based on gender and grade level. It was carried out at TEV Inanc Turkes High School which is unique school in Turkey for gifted education at high school level. Results indicated that grade 10<sup>th</sup> students were generally more positive about history lesson than the other grades. In addition, significant gender differences toward history lesson were not found in this study. Since this is the first study performed for the history lesson attitudes of gifted students at high school, to the authors' best knowledge, the results were only compared with the studies conducted in science and the other social lessons. Although the studies showed significant gender differences in science areas in the literature, this study results showed that there is no significant gender difference.

As the findings indicates variability in different gifted educated schools and lessons, more studies should be performed in order to fill the lack of information in especially social lessons attitudes of gifted students at high school level. This study is important as the being the first study to measure the attitude of the gifted student towards history lesson at high school level and it can be a starting point for the further studies for the social science lessons. As it was indicated in this study, determining the attitudes of the gifted students toward the lessons is critical to develop target strategies for the gifted education programs. Thus, more studies are needed in order to first improve our knowledge about the gifted students' attitudes and then provide the necessary programs for the gifted students to reach their full potential.

At finally, there are some limitations that should be noted in this study. One of them is that this study only performed on the basis of gender and grade level in order to find out the influence of these parameters on the attitudes of gifted students towards history lessons. Thus, many other factors (such as environmental and social factors, etc.) that might have effect on their attitudes should be taken under consideration. Another limitation is that all data was collected from one school because there is only one gifted school in Turkey at high school level. In order to achieve more significant results, the participants number should be increased may be by doing the similar survey for different years at this school or applying the similar survey at the schools in different countries. Once the studies will increase around that topic, it will be helpful for making strong comparisons around world and for understanding deeply their attitudes towards the history lessons which is important for the educators to prepare special techniques, materials, etc.

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