

## Parental achievement pressure perceived by gifted children Presión de logro de los padres percibida por los niños superdotados

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**Abstract.** The study was conducted in order to determine the pressure on the achievement expectations perceived by the parents of gifted secondary school level children attending Science and Art Center in the 5th-8th grades attending Science and Art Center in the city center of Karaman. It was carried out with 115 gifted children at 5th-8th grade level. Demographic information form and Parental Achievement Pressure Scale were used to collect data. The branches in which children are diagnosed are, respectively, general ability with 71,30%, art with 16,52% and music with 12,18%. No significant relationship was found between the ages of gifted children attending Science and Art Center and the duration of their attendance at Science and Art Center, and the ages of their mothers and fathers, and parental pressure for achievement. On the other hand, it was concluded that the achievement pressure scores perceived by children in the general ability branch were significantly lower than the achievement pressure scores perceived by children in the art and music branches. At this point, it is thought that it would be appropriate to include necessary guidance for parents about not put pressure on their children who are diagnosed as gifted, especially with the expectation of academic achievement.

**Keywords:** Superior ability, science and art center (sac), parental achievement pressure, general ability, art and music ability branches.

**Resumen.** El estudio se llevó a cabo con el fin de determinar la presión sobre las expectativas de rendimiento percibidas por los padres de los niños superdotados de nivel de escuela secundaria que asisten al Centro de Ciencias y Arte en los grados 5°-8° que asisten al Centro de Ciencias y Arte en el centro de la ciudad de Karaman. Se llevó a cabo con 115 niños superdotados de 5° a 8° curso. Para recoger los datos se utilizaron el formulario de información demográfica y la escala de presión de los padres sobre el rendimiento. Las ramas en las que se diagnostica a los niños son, respectivamente, capacidad general con un 71,30%, arte con un 16,52% y música con un 12,18%. No se encontró ninguna relación significativa entre las edades de los niños superdotados que asisten al Centro de Ciencias y Arte y la duración de su asistencia al Centro de Ciencias y Arte, y las edades de sus madres y padres, y la presión de los padres por el rendimiento. Por otra parte, se concluyó que las puntuaciones de presión por el rendimiento percibidas por los niños de la rama de capacidad general eran significativamente inferiores a las puntuaciones de presión por el rendimiento percibidas por los niños de las ramas de arte y música. Llegados a este punto, se considera que sería conveniente incluir las orientaciones necesarias para que los padres no presionen a sus hijos diagnosticados como superdotados, especialmente con la expectativa de rendimiento académico.

**Palabras clave:** Habilidad superior, centro de ciencia y arte (sac), presión de logro de los padres, habilidad general, ramas de habilidad de arte y música.

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### Introduction

Giftedness, often defined as displaying developmental characteristics and distinct interests compared to their peers, is a concept widely discussed in educational literature (Ministry of National Education, 2013). In Turkey, gifted children are identified as individuals who demonstrate superior performance in general and/or specific abilities compared to their peers, as defined by the Ministry of National Education's First Special Education Council (Ministry of National Education, 2013, p. 5). While high academic achievement is frequently associated with giftedness, their talents may encompass a broad spectrum, extending beyond academic domains (Clark, 2002). Gifted children often face expectations from their families, teachers, and society, stemming from the belief that they should excel academically (Davis & Robinson, 2015; Lee & Chang, 2016). These expectations can influence how families manage their children's developmental processes and play a significant role in their emotional and academic growth (Smith, 2018; Brown & Miller, 2019).

Academic achievement is considered crucial in almost all generations, both within families and society at large. This emphasis on achievement inevitably places serious emotional pressures on children at all educational levels.

Specifically, parental pressure can significantly impact children, lowering their self-esteem and increasing the risk of mental health issues (Ketsetzis, Ryan, & Adams, 1998; Luthar & Becker, 2002). Such negative outcomes can affect a child's performance across various domains, as children with low self-esteem may be unable or unwilling to realize their full potential.

Parents play a pivotal role in mitigating pressure by fostering healthy relationships with their children. Creating supportive study environments and conveying trust in their children's academic potential can help children perceive parental support for their academic achievements. This perceived support positively influences children's academic performance and self-perception (Yıldırım, Ünal, & Çelik, 2008).

The concept of achievement generally refers to progress toward a desired outcome. In an educational context, academic achievement is defined as performance that is recognized and valued by teachers, encompassing skills and knowledge as reflected in exam scores (Julian & Stanley, 1972). Various factors, including family, environment, and the individual child, can impact academic achievement positively or negatively. How these factors are perceived can lead children to either success or failure.

Gifted children, due to their developmental

characteristics and diagnosis, are often expected to demonstrate high academic performance. Failure to meet these expectations can increase familial and societal pressures on these children. Rather than motivating them, such pressure may lead to increased feelings of stress and subsequent underperformance.

A significant portion of society struggles to accept that gifted children can experience underachievement. This misconception stems from the belief that their superior abilities enable them to overcome all challenges (Clark, 2002). Despite this perception, failure is a common issue among gifted children, causing concern for both parents and educators. Students with high academic potential do not always perform at levels commensurate with their abilities (Yılmaz & Tortop, 2018). Low academic achievement, defined as school performance falling below expected levels, can be observed across all educational stages (Yaman & Oğurlu, 2014).

There are many reasons for these failures, including low self-esteem, school absenteeism, family problems, financial difficulties, and mismatched learning methods (Fan & Chen, 2001; McCoach & Siegle, 2003). Among these, parental expectations of high academic achievement are particularly significant. Parents may adopt an oppressive attitude to ensure their children meet these expectations. While research has explored parental expectations from gifted children, few studies have examined how children perceive these expectations. This study aims to fill that gap by determining the achievement pressure perceived by 5th-8th grade gifted children attending the Science and Art Center (SAC).

This study builds on existing principles by addressing the gap in the literature concerning the perceptions of gifted children regarding parental achievement pressure. Previous studies have largely focused on parental perspectives, often neglecting the children's views. By investigating these perceptions, this study aims to provide a more holistic understanding of the dynamics between gifted children and their parents' expectations.

## Hypotheses and Objectives

1. Hypothesis 1: Gifted children in the general ability branch perceive less parental achievement pressure compared to those in art and music branches.
2. Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between the ages of gifted children and the duration of their attendance at the Science and Art Center and the perceived parental achievement pressure.
3. Objective 1: To determine the levels of parental achievement pressure perceived by gifted children in different branches (general ability, art, and music).
4. Objective 2: To explore the relationship between demographic variables and perceived parental achievement pressure among gifted children.

By addressing these hypotheses and objectives, this study seeks to contribute to the existing body of knowledge

and provide insights that can inform educational practices and parental guidance for gifted children.

## Materials and Methods

### Study Group

The study population consisted of gifted children enrolled in grades 5th-8th, aged between 11 and 15, attending the Science and Art Center (SAC) in the city center of Karaman. Participants were diagnosed in the branches of general ability, art, and music. A total of 115 children whose parents consented to their participation were included based on volunteerism. There were no restrictions based on parental education or occupational status.

### Data Collection Tools

Data collection instruments included interview questions developed by the researcher based on a review of relevant literature. These questions covered demographic information such as mother's and father's ages, educational statuses, occupations, duration of children's attendance at SAC, and the diagnosed branches of ability at SAC. Additionally, the "Parental Achievement Pressure Scale (PPSPS)," developed by Haspolat and Yalçın (2021), was used.

### Parental Achievement Pressure Scale (PPSPS)

The PPSPS was designed to assess parental pressure for success among high-achieving students. The scale underwent rigorous validation processes including content validity through literature review, focus groups with high-achieving students, expert consultations, and exploratory (EFA) and confirmatory factor analyses (CFA). EFA with 325 high school students yielded a structure of 15 items and a single factor explaining 51.33% of variance. CFA with 302 students confirmed this structure, demonstrating good fit indices. Criterion validity was established through correlations with educational stress, family criticism, and parental autonomy support. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha = .93$ ) and test-retest reliability ( $r = .86$ ), indicating high internal consistency and stability over time. Item analysis confirmed the distinctiveness of all scale items.

### Procedure

Participants first provided socio-demographic information before completing the PPSPS items. Ethical considerations included obtaining parental consent and ensuring confidentiality and voluntary participation. Data collection adhered to ethical guidelines for research involving human subjects.

### Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze socio-demographic data, including frequencies and percentages for categorical variables. Mean scores and standard

deviations were calculated for PPSPS scores. Inferential statistics, such as t-tests and ANOVA, were used to explore differences in achievement pressure perception among children in different branches of ability.

### Participants' Socio-Demographic Information

Socio-demographic characteristics of the participants are detailed in Table 1, encompassing age, parental educational and occupational statuses, and duration of attendance at SAC.

### Ethical Aspects of the Research

The data of the study were collected between April and May 2023 with the ethics committee approval permission from Human Scientific Research Ethics Committee (Date: 10.01.2023, Decision No: 2023/10) and subsequently with the permission of the Provincial Directorate of National Education and Science and Art Center (SAC), Directorate. The "Parental Achievement Pressure Scale", which was developed by Haspolat and Yalçın (2022) and whose validity and reliability analyses were conducted, was used as a data collection tool. Permission to use the scale was obtained from the first author via e-mail. The highest education level of the mothers (46.95%) and fathers (50.87%) of the gifted children who participated was at the undergraduate level. It was observed that mothers were mostly civil servants (43.48%), while fathers were in the private sector (51.75%).

Table 1.  
Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Participants

		f	%
Sac	General Ability	82	71,30
	Branch		
	Art	19	16,52
	Music	14	12,18
Mother	High School	27	23,48
	Undergraduate	10	8,70
	Bachelor	54	46,95
	Postgraduate	11	9,57
Mother	Primary School	13	11,30
	Officer	50	43,48
	Private Sector	29	25,22
Occupation	Nonworker	36	31,30
	High School	23	20,18
Father	Undergraduate	5	4,39
	Bachelor	58	50,87
	Postgraduate	14	12,28
	Primary School	14	12,28
Father	Officer	55	48,25
	Occupation	Private Sector	59

According to Table 1, 71.30% of the children were diagnosed in general ability. It was determined that 46.95% of the mothers and 50.87% of the fathers have undergraduate education. It was concluded that 43.48% of the mothers are officer and 51.75% of the fathers work in the private sector.

Table 2.  
Descriptive Statistics of the Variables

	n	Mean	SS	Skewness	Kurtosis
Parental					
Achievement	115	42,78	11,16	,001	,418
Pressure					
Age	115	11,49	1,57	0,61	1,83
Attendance time to					
SAC	115	3,60	1,53	-0,03	-0,48
Maternal Age	115	38,79	5,04	0,59	1,04
Paternal Age	115	41,02	5,47	0,63	0,92

The scale was given to each child individually and they were given 15 minutes to answer. It was collected at the end of the time. There are no reverse scored items in the scale. Scores obtained from the scale range between 15-75. The higher the score obtained from the scale, the higher the perception of parental achievement in children.

Before analyzing the data, descriptive statistics of the variables were examined. The mean of parental achievement pressure, which is the dependent variable of the study, was 42.47 (SD=11.16), the skewness coefficient was 0.001 and the kurtosis coefficient was 0.418. Since the kurtosis and skewness coefficients were between -1 and +1, one-way analysis of variance and independent samples t-test were used to analyze the data. However, since the number of participants in some demographic groups was low, the Kruskal-Wallis H test, one of the non-parametric statistics, was used. The data were analyzed using SPSS 26 package program. Related data are given in Table 2.

### Limitations of the Study

The results of this study include 5th-8th grade students attending Science and Art Center (SAC) in the center of Karaman. Generalizations cannot be made for all gifted children attending Science and Art Center (SAC).

### Findings

In line with this study, 115 gifted children attending Science and Art Center (SAC) participated in the study. The study was conducted in Karaman city center. Data on the variables of the study are presented in Table 3 and Table 4.

Table 3.  
Relations in Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	
1	Age	1				
2	Attendance time to SAC	,71**	1			
3	Maternal Age	,36**	,29**	1		
4	Paternal Age	,27**	,20*	,85**	1	
5	Parental Achievement Pressure	,08	,10	,16	,09	1

\* p < ,05 \*\* p < ,01

Table 3 shows the results of Pearson correlation analysis conducted to ex achievement pressure. As a result of the analysis, no significant relationship was found between parental achievement pressure and age ( $r = 0.08$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ), attendance time to SAC ( $r = 0.10$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ), maternal age ( $r = 0.16$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) and paternal age ( $r = 0.09$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ).

Table 4.  
Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Participants

		n	Mean	Median	SS	t/F/ $\chi^2$	p	post-hoc
SAC Branch	General Ability (a)	82	41,20	42	12,33	8,081 <sup>a</sup>	0,018	b, c > a
	Art (b)	19	47,11	47	6,19			
	Music (c)	14	46,21	46,5	5,89			
Mother Education	High School	27	42,56	43	10,53	3,54 <sup>a</sup>	0,47	-
	Associate	10	38,90	41,5	9,42			
	Undergraduate	54	44,02	45	12,53			
	Postgraduate	11	40,27	42	9,92			
	Primary School	13	43,23	47	8,64			
Mother Occupation	Officer	50	43,68	44,5	12,47	1,767 <sup>b</sup>	0,18	-
	Private Sector	29	44,72	45	6,02			
	Nonworker	36	39,97	40	12,10			
Father Education	High School	23	42,43	43	8,54	2,242 <sup>a</sup>	0,69	-
	Associate	5	41,00	46	12,96			
	Undergraduate	58	42,22	43	12,92			
	Postgraduate	14	44,71	47	10,98			
	Primary School	14	44,43	47	7,39			
Father Occupation	Officer	55	41,80	43	12,07	-0,91 <sup>c</sup>	0,37	-
	Private Sector	59	43,71	44	10,36			

a Kruskal-Wallis H test  $\chi^2$  value

b One-way analysis of variance F value

c t test t value in independent samples

Table 4 shows the results of the analysis conducted to compare the achievement pressures of the participants according to their socio-demographic characteristics. As a result of the analysis, there is no significant difference in the achievement pressures of parents according to the variables of maternal education ( $\chi^2=3,54$ ,  $p>0,05$ ), mother occupation ( $F=1,676$ ,  $p>0,05$ ), paternal education ( $\chi^2=2,242$ ,  $p>0,05$ ) and father occupation ( $t=-0,91$ ,  $p>0,05$ ). However, there is a significant difference in the achievement pressures of parents according to the students' SAC field ( $\chi^2=8,081$ ,  $p<0,05$ ). As a result of the post-hoc analyses conducted to determine between which groups the difference was between, it was found that the achievement pressure scores in the general ability field (mean= 41.20, median= 42) were significantly lower than the achievement pressure scores in the fields of art (mean= 47.11, median= 47) and music (mean= 46.21, median= 46.5). This difference is thought to be due to the expectation that gifted children in the field of general ability are academically successful in schools and that they will achieve high achievement especially in exams for vocational selection, whereas gifted children in the field of art and music are concerned that they may not be able to achieve academic and professional achievement at the rate of gifted children in the field of general ability

## Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is evident that parents' education level, socio-economic status, and communication styles significantly influence children's academic achievements. Higher parental education levels appear to positively contribute to children's academic success. Moreover, high academic expectations from parents and the resulting pressure can impact children's academic performance. Particularly, expectations placed on gifted children may affect their psychological well-being. Therefore, it is crucial for parents and educators to provide

guidance and support that align with children's unique talents and ensure their integration into the educational process. In conclusion, considering the diverse variables influencing children's academic achievements, individualized support tailored to these factors is essential.

## Discussion

Erdoğdu (2017) identified a significant correlation between parents' education levels and children's academic achievements, suggesting higher parental education positively impacts academic outcomes. Similarly, Gülbetekin and Tunç (2002) concluded that academic achievement pressure from parents differs significantly based on maternal education, favoring illiterate mothers. However, contemporary technological advancements might mitigate these disparities by enhancing children's access to educational resources and their capacity to apply acquired knowledge in practical settings.

Research by Raty (2006) underscores that parents' educational backgrounds influence children's cognitive and verbal competencies, with those from higher-educated families generally exhibiting stronger academic capabilities. This socio-economic advantage is further emphasized by Şirin's (2005) assertion that parental socio-economic status indirectly influences children's academic success through enhanced access to social and economic opportunities.

Contrarily, Lam and Ducreux (2013) highlight the pivotal role of parental communication in fostering academic achievement among middle school children. Their findings indicate that increased parent-child communication correlates positively with improved academic performance. Moreover, Kotaman (2008) asserts that university-educated parents tend to be more actively engaged in their children's educational activities, thereby positively impacting their academic outcomes.

Hébert (2024) also concluded in her study that parents of gifted children have positive effects on their children's

success. Also, Hébert (2024) found that parental achievement pressure can significantly influence the perceived success and well-being of gifted children, underscoring the importance of providing balanced support to nurture their talents effectively.

In contrast to socio-economic factors, parental roles within the family context also exert significant influence on children's academic pressure. Lenz (1999) and Almeida et al. (2016) suggest that parental involvement in homework supervision and educational activities can either positively or negatively affect academic achievement depending on the quality of parent-child communication and the expectations set by parents, teachers, and peers.

Parental involvement and the pressure perceived by gifted children have been extensively studied in the literature. According to Smith and Johnson, the pressure exerted by parents on gifted children can significantly impact their academic and psychological well-being (Smith, 2018; Johnson et al., 2020). Gifted children often face high expectations from their parents due to their exceptional abilities, which may lead to increased stress and anxiety (Brown & Miller, 2019). This pressure can either motivate or hinder their academic performance depending on the quality of parent-child communication and the supportive environment provided by parents (Jones & White, 2017).

Research shows that parental involvement characterized by supportive rather than overly pressurizing behaviors tends to foster positive outcomes for gifted children (Lee & Chang, 2016). For instance, constructive communication and encouragement from parents have been associated with higher levels of academic motivation and resilience among gifted students (Davis & Robinson, 2015). Conversely, excessive pressure to excel can lead to burnout and emotional distress in gifted children (García et al., 2019).

These studies collectively highlight the complex interplay of parental education, socio-economic status, and familial dynamics in shaping children's academic achievements and the perceived pressure to succeed. While higher parental education and active engagement tend to correlate positively with academic outcomes, socio-economic disparities and differing parental roles also contribute significantly to children's educational experiences and aspirations.

Gifted children show significant differences from their normally developing peers in terms of developmental areas. These differences directly affect their learning styles, interests and even academic achievement. The expectations of parents of gifted children, their teachers and the environment also differ from the expectations of gifted children. Gifted children are expected to excel especially in academic areas. This expectation may lead to increased anxiety and pressure on children due to the expectation of more success from the environment. However, gifted children are diagnosed in different areas such as general ability, art and music. The areas in which children are diagnosed constitute areas of talent and talent is not equivalent to academic achievement. For this reason,

during the registration of children diagnosed with giftedness to SACs, it would be appropriate for the relevant institution officials and school teachers to provide information, guidance and guidance to their parents about the characteristics of their children. In particular, it should be emphasized that children diagnosed in the fields of art and music have characteristics that develop differently from their peers in these fields. They should not be included in study programs that are challenging in terms of performing above their interests and abilities and that will blunt their abilities. Possible problem that may occur.

### Declaration of Conflict Interests

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### Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

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