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**AESTHETIC IN EARLY CHILDHOOD:
DOES EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE
AFFECT THE AESTHETIC JUDGMENT OF
SIX-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN ATTENDING
PRESCHOOL?**

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Aesthetic judgment and emotional intelligence are two important elements supporting children’s socio-emotional development. What we need in the Information Age is individuals with high aesthetic judgment who can perceive and are sensitive to the beauties and ugliness around them, and those with high creative and emotional intelligence who can see existing problems in a new light. Therefore, identifying aesthetic judgment and emotional intelligence in early childhood would be a first step towards gathering information about and supporting children’s early aesthetic judgment and emotional intelligence. This study aims to show whether there is a relationship between the aesthetic judgment and emotional intelligence of six-year-old preschool children. At the same time, the effects of the number of siblings and parents’ age and professions on this relationship were also investigated. The sample of the study comprised 200 children attending the six-year-old groups of independent preschools in the city center of Ankara. “Taylor-Helmstadter Pair Comparison Scale of Aesthetic Judgment” was used in order to identify children’s aesthetic judgment and “Sullivan Emotional Intelligence Scale for Children” was used to measure children’s emotional intelligence. The results showed no relationship between children’s aesthetic judgment and emotional intelligence. Suggestions were made in light of the findings obtained.

INTRODUCTION

The term aesthetics was used for the first time by the German philosopher Alexander Baumgarten in the mid-eighteenth century to mean “the science of beauty”. Being a concept about senses, aesthetics is derived from the Greek word *aisthetikos* which means sensitivity. This word also means sense and perception. Aesthetics is thus considered to be the science of sensory perception and the knowledge that comes with senses (Bergmann, 1993; Atan, 1996; Tunalı, 2001; Linderman, 1997; Duncum, 2005; Lankford, 1990; Sörbom, 1993; Okan, 2002). Additionally, aesthetics involves a search for beauty and love in all walks of life such as art, music, and the nature (Schirmacher, 1988).

In our modern Information Age, what we need is creative individuals with a highly developed aesthetic judgment who are sensitive to and can perceive the beauty around

them, and who can approach problems with a new point of view (Senemoğlu & Genç, 2001). Aesthetic judgment refers to a non-universal developmental area. The reason why aesthetic judgment is not universal is because common processes such as critical skills and judgment criteria vary according to culture (Goldsmith & Feldman, 1988; Herberholz & Hanson, 1985). Aesthetic judgment happens as a result of the acquisition of aesthetic skills. Preparing educational environments and programs which are conducive to the acquisition of aesthetic skills makes children successful in this process (Aylward et.al., 1993).

When the relationship between aesthetic and beauty and the pleasure one derives at the face of beauty is taken into account, it becomes obvious that the environments and programs offered to children should appeal to their senses. Children interact emotionally with both themselves and the people around throughout their development to understand and control their emotions through positive or negative experiences.

Emotional intelligence consists of skills such as recognizing, understanding and managing emotions, as well as establishing empathy. There has been an increase in the interest that people have in emotional intelligence due to social problems such as weakening interpersonal relationships, increasing competition, psychological discontentment, violence and conflicts (Shapiro, 2000; Atabek, 2000; Pfeiffer, 2001). The very first emotional tie that a baby establishes with others is the meeting of needs by the mother. Children start from infancy to recognize, distinguish and understand feelings. As they grow older, they start to control their emotions much better. The quality of the increasing interaction that children have with their parents, siblings, friends and teachers may support or hinder the development of their emotional intelligence (Saarni, 1999:81; Sullivan, 1999; Ashiabi, 2000; Shapiro, 2000; Houtmeyers, 2000; Eren-Yavuz, 2002). In our day, children come face to face with numerous social problems, among which there is poverty, violence and racism. For children to be able to cope with these negativities, they need to be equipped both cognitively and emotionally (Stone-McCown et.al., 1998).

This study aims to show whether there is a relationship between the aesthetic judgment and emotional intelligence of six-year-old preschool children, and determine whether variables such as the number of siblings and parents' age and professions affect this relationship.

II. METHOD

The study population included six-year-old children attending independent preschools of the Ministry of Education in Ankara city center during the 2006-2007 academic year. Two hundred children comprised the study sample, taking into consideration the 0.99 confidence and 0.04 tolerance levels (Çingi, 1994).

The researchers used a personal information form in order to collect data, the Taylor-Helmstadter Pair Comparative Scale of Aesthetic Judgment in order to determine children's aesthetic judgment, and the Sullivan Emotional Intelligence Scale for Children, Sullivan Short Empathy Scale and Sullivan Children's Emotional Intelligence Assessment Scale for Teachers to measure general emotional intelligence.

The personal information form collected data about children's number of siblings, and the age and profession of fathers.

Developed by Taylor and Helmstadter, the Pair Comparison Scale of Aesthetic Judgment is based on Gestalt theory. It aims to measure aesthetic judgment in everyone over 4 years old and is applied individually. The validity and reliability studies of the scale have been undertaken by Acer (2006). The validity studies have shown that the α value was .60, and the test-retest value was .65.

The Sullivan Emotional Intelligence Scale for Children (1999) takes as its basis several emotional intelligence abilities such as recognizing, understanding and managing emotions. It is divided into sections called Faces, Stories, Understanding and Management. The validity and reliability studies of the scale were undertaken by Ulutaş (2005). As a result of the validity studies, it was found that the item total correlation was $\alpha=0.68$ in the General Emotional Intelligence Scale Faces test, $\alpha=0.54$ in the Stories test, $\alpha=.57$ in the Understanding test, $\alpha=0.76$ in the Management test, $\alpha=0.67$ in the Short Empathy Scale and $\alpha=0.90$ in the Children's Emotional Intelligence Assessment Scale for Teachers. The test-retest correlation was .97 in the Faces test, .97 in the Stories test, .98 in the Understanding test, .99 in the Management test, .99 in the Short Empathy Scale and .99 in the Children's Emotional Intelligence Assessment Scale for Teachers.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The demographic characteristics of the six-year-old children were analyzed as percentages and the following was seen: 44.0% of the children included in the study were single children, 47.5% had one sibling, 8.5% had two or more siblings. An examination of mothers' age showed that 41.0% were between 36-40, 34.5% were between 31-35, 19.0% were between 26-30, and 5.5% were between 21-25. Among the fathers, 61.0% were between 36-40, 30.5% were between 31-35, and 8.5% were between 26-30. It was also found that 47.5% of mothers were housewives, 26.0% were professionals such as teachers, doctors or engineers, 17.0% worked in professions like health personnel or technician and 9.5% had unqualified jobs such as worker or civil servant. Of the fathers, 50.0% worked in unqualified jobs such as worker or civil servant, 35.5% were professionals such as teachers, doctors or engineers, and 14.5% worked in professions like health personnel or technician.

Findings obtained from the study about children's emotional intelligence and aesthetic judgment are given below in tables.

Table 1. Variance analysis results of participating children's mean scores with respect to the number of siblings

	Number of siblings	N	Mean	SD	F	p
Sullivan Emotional Intelligence Scale Grand Totals	Single child	88	30,28	4,10	,652	p>.05
	Two siblings	95	29,84	3,68		
	Three siblings	17	30,88	3,70		
1. Recognizing Emotions a. Faces Section	Single child	88	14,94	2,11	,520	p>.05
	Two siblings	95	15,18	2,09		
	Three siblings	17	15,41	2,06		
b. Stories Section	Single child	88	2,86	1,16	,472	p>.05
	Two siblings	95	2,86	1,07		
	Three siblings	17	2,58	1,06		
2. Understanding Section	Single child	88	7,82	1,40	2,396	p>.05
	Two siblings	95	7,64	1,50		
	Three siblings	17	8,47	1,37		
3. Management Section	Single child	88	4,42	1,60	,873	p>.05
	Two siblings	95	4,09	1,82		
	Three siblings	17	4,41	1,87		
Brief Empathy Scale	Single child	88	9,35	,98	,101	p>.05
	Two siblings	95	9,32	,98		
	Three siblings	17	9,23	1,03		
Children's Emotional Intelligence Assessment Scale for Teachers	Single child	88	33,77	7,97	1,230	p>.05
	Two siblings	95	31,93	8,15		
	Three siblings	17	33,00	6,05		
Aesthetic Judgment Scale	Single child	88	7,38	2,52	,065	p>.05
	Two siblings	95	7,50	2,80		
	Three siblings	17	7,58	3,04		

As shown in Table 1, there is no meaningful difference between children's emotional intelligence section grand totals and aesthetic judgment scale mean scores with respect to

the number of siblings ($p>.05$). In the literature too, it is possible to come across studies where the number of siblings has been concluded to be inconsequential. In one of these, Arı and Seçer (2004) studied the effects of a number of variables on preschool children's recognition skills of emotional gestures, and found that the number of siblings had no effect on these skills.

Table 2. Variance analysis results of participating children's mean scores with respect to fathers' age

	Age	N	Mean	SD	F	p
Sullivan Emotional Intelligence Scale Grand Totals	26-30	17	29,23	4,29	1,076	$p>.05$
	31-35	61	29,77	3,90		
	36-40	122	30,42	3,78		
1. Recognizing Emotions a. Faces Section	26-30	17	15,05	2,48	3,391	$p<.05$
	31-35	61	14,54	2,19		
	36-40	122	15,38	1,93		
b. Stories Section	26-30	17	2,58	1,00	,477	$p>.05$
	31-35	61	2,85	1,20		
	36-40	122	2,86	1,08		
2. Understanding Section	26-30	17	7,70	1,49	,126	$p>.05$
	31-35	61	7,73	1,36		
	36-40	122	7,83	1,51		
3. Management Section	26-30	17	3,76	1,82	1,187	$p>.05$
	31-35	61	4,47	1,65		
	36-40	122	4,22	1,75		
Brief Empathy Scale	26-30	17	9,47	1,06	,211	$p>.05$
	31-35	61	9,29	,98		
	36-40	122	9,32	,97		
Children's Emotional Intelligence Assessment Scale for Teachers	26-30	17	29,94	10,02	1,785	$p>.05$
	31-35	61	32,24	7,98		
	36-40	122	33,53	7,53		
Aesthetic Judgment Scale	26-30	17	7,35	3,29	,243	$p>.05$
	31-35	61	7,27	2,55		
	36-40	122	7,56	2,69		

Table 2 shows that there is no meaningful difference between the emotional intelligence scale grand totals, stories, understanding and management sections, brief empathy scale, children's emotional intelligence assessment scale for teachers and the aesthetic judgment scale mean scores of the participating children with respect to their fathers' age ($p>.05$). In the faces section of the emotional intelligence scale, a meaningful difference was found between the means ($p<.05$). In order to investigate the source of this difference found in the variance analysis, Tukey test was performed on the data as a post hoc test. Tukey analyses showed that there was a meaningful difference between the mean scores of children whose fathers was 31-35 years old and those whose fathers were 36-40 years old ($I-J=.8443$; $p=.025$). Fathers are as influential as mothers in the development of children's emotional intelligence. For emotionally healthy babies, they need to be

attached to both their mother and their father. Especially in the control of emotions such as anger, fathers can be more effective role models for children (Berk, 2002). We found in this study that children who had 36-40 year old fathers had higher mean scores than other groups on the recognizing emotions section of the emotional intelligence scale, which may be due to more mature behavior on the part of fathers who are older than others.

Table 3. Variance analysis results of participating children's mean scores with respect to fathers' profession

	Profession	N	Mean	SD	F	p
Sullivan Emotional Intelligence Scale Grand Totals	Professional	71	30,09	3,82	,076	p>.05
	Technician	29	29,89	4,27		
	Unqualified	100	30,21	3,81		
1. Recognizing Emotions a. Faces Section	Professional	71	15,19	1,79	,120	p>.05
	Technician	29	15,06	2,28		
	Unqualified	100	15,04	2,24		
b. Stories Section	Professional	71	2,84	1,12	,192	p>.05
	Technician	29	2,72	1,19		
	Unqualified	100	2,87	1,08		
2. Understanding Section	Professional	71	7,57	1,35	1,288	p>.05
	Technician	29	8,00	1,53		
	Unqualified	100	7,89	1,50		
3. Management Section	Professional	71	4,15	1,60	,527	p>.05
	Technician	29	4,10	2,05		
	Unqualified	100	4,39	1,72		
Brief Empathy Scale	Professional	71	9,39	,88	,383	p>.05
	Technician	29	9,20	1,08		
	Unqualified	100	9,32	1,02		
Children's Emotional Intelligence Assessment Scale for Teachers	Professional	71	33,28	8,64	,299	p>.05
	Technician	29	33,24	6,92		
	Unqualified	100	32,40	7,72		
Aesthetic Judgment Scale	Professional	71	7,63	2,51	1,532	p>.05
	Technician	29	6,65	2,39		
	Unqualified	100	7,57	2,87		

Table 3 indicates that there is no meaningful difference between the children's emotional intelligence grand totals and sections and the aesthetic judgment scale mean scores with respect to fathers' profession (p>.05). Acer (2006) found in her study about aesthetic and preschool children that fathers' education level does not affect six-year-olds aesthetic judgment. Regardless of the jobs the parents may hold, it is believed that aesthetic judgment and emotional intelligence levels may affect children's acquisitions and skills related to these two concepts. The concepts of aesthetic and emotional intelligence in preschool and the skills related to their acquisition were only added in 2006 to the Ministry of Education's new Preschool Curriculum. Therefore, both concepts

are new to Turkey's preschool education. It may thus be correct that the parents of our participating children were not supported adequately and consciously in the areas of aesthetics and emotional intelligence when they themselves were children. This possibility may explain why fathers' profession does not create a meaningful difference.

Table 4. Variance analysis results of participating children's mean scores with respect to mothers' profession

	Profession	N	Mean	SD	F	p
Sullivan Emotional Intelligence Scale Grand Totals	Professional	52	30,21	4,34	,856	p>.05
	Technician	19	31,10	3,05		
	Unqualified	34	30,52	4,60		
	Housewife	95	29,73	3,44		
1. Recognizing Emotions a. Faces Section	Professional	52	14,98	1,91	,127	p>.05
	Technician	19	15,00	2,53		
	Unqualified	34	15,08	2,37		
	Housewife	95	15,18	2,01		
b. Stories Section	Professional	52	2,90	1,05	3,159	p<.05
	Technician	19	3,00	1,05		
	Unqualified	34	3,26	1,10		
	Housewife	95	2,62	1,12		
2. Understanding Section	Professional	52	7,76	1,45	,988	p>.05
	Technician	19	8,31	1,41		
	Unqualified	34	7,61	1,70		
	Housewife	95	7,76	1,37		
3.Management Section	Professional	52	4,11	1,71	1,214	p>.05
	Technician	19	4,78	1,51		
	Unqualified	34	4,55	1,63		
	Housewife	95	4,13	1,80		
Brief Empathy Scale	Professional	52	9,40	,95	,712	p>.05
	Technician	19	9,57	,83		
	Unqualified	34	9,29	1,03		
	Housewife	95	9,25	1,01		
Children's Emotional Intelligence Assessment Scale for Teachers	Professional	52	32,75	8,88	,552	p>.05
	Technician	19	30,78	7,38		
	Unqualified	34	33,64	6,91		
	Housewife	95	33,00	7,87		
Aesthetic Judgment Scale	Professional	52	7,34	2,69	,554	p>.05
	Technician	19	6,78	2,46		
	Unqualified	34	7,67	2,74		
	Housewife	95	7,57	2,73		

Table 4 shows the distribution of the scores that participating children's mothers obtained on their scales with respect to their profession. According to this, there is no meaningful difference between emotional intelligence scale grand totals, faces, understanding and management sections, brief empathy scale, children's emotional intelligence assessment scale for teachers and aesthetic judgment scale mean scores (p>.05). In the stories section

of the emotional intelligence scale, the difference between mean scores has been found to be meaningful ($p < .05$). In order to investigate the source of this difference found in the variance analysis, Tukey test was performed on the data as a post hoc test. Tukey analyses showed that there was a meaningful difference between the mean scores of children of mothers with qualified and unqualified professions ($I-J = .6437$; $p = .021$). In the stories section of the scale, children were told some stories and asked to guess the emotions of the heroes in them. It is therefore not surprising that there should be a meaningful difference with respect to mothers' profession. Even though they may have unqualified jobs, mothers working outside the home still have a significant effect on children's scores on the scale. In the literature too; Ari and Seçer's (2004) study about the effects of certain variables on preschool children's recognition of emotional gestures concluded that mothers' education level had a significant effect on children's ability to recognize emotional gestures.

Table 5. Variance analysis results of participating children's mean scores with respect to mothers' age

	Age	N	Mean	SD	F	p
Sullivan Emotional Intelligence Scale Grand Totals	21-25	11	29,36	5,25	2,330	p>.05
	26-30	38	28,84	3,68		
	31-35	69	30,81	3,88		
	36-40	82	30,24	3,63		
1. Recognizing Emotions a. Faces Section	21-25	11	14,63	2,94	,741	p>.05
	26-30	38	14,76	2,53		
	31-35	69	15,13	2,11		
	36-40	82	15,29	1,81		
b. Stories Section	21-25	11	2,36	,92	1,068	p>.05
	26-30	38	2,71	1,20		
	31-35	69	2,94	1,10		
	36-40	82	2,87	1,09		
2. Understanding Section	21-25	11	8,27	1,27	1,486	p>.05
	26-30	38	7,47	1,40		
	31-35	69	7,69	1,39		
	36-40	82	7,96	1,54		
3. Management Section	21-25	11	3,90	1,86	2,986	p<.05
	26-30	38	3,89	1,68		
	31-35	69	4,75	1,52		
	36-40	82	4,07	1,83		
Brief Empathy Scale	21-25	11	9,36	1,02	1,133	p>.05
	26-30	38	9,15	1,12		
	31-35	69	9,49	,81		
	36-40	82	9,26	1,03		
Children's Emotional Intelligence Assessment Scale for Teachers	21-25	11	28,27	10,81	3,508	p<.05
	26-30	38	30,81	8,01		
	31-35	69	34,75	7,41		
	36-40	82	32,76	7,53		
Aesthetic Judgment	21-25	11	8,00	3,34	,642	p>.05

Scale	26-30	38	7,02	2,80		
	31-35	69	7,37	2,77		
	36-40	82	7,65	2,50		

Table 5 shows that meaningful difference was obtained on the management section of the emotional intelligence scale and children's emotional intelligence assessment scale for teachers scores ($p < .05$). It was found that the highest mean scores were obtained by children whose mothers were between 31-35 (Management=4.75, children's emotional intelligence assessment scale for teachers=34.75). Earlier studies have shown that children's emotions are directly affected by their interaction with their parents. Children whose mothers use emotional statements when they talk give more positive reactions to their surrounding and possess better emotional understanding abilities. On the other hand, children of parents who solve problems aggressively and frequently feel angry have weak emotional control (Bruno et.al. 2002). Laible and Thompson (1998) found in a study about the relationship between preschool children's levels of bonding with their mothers and their understanding of emotions that bonding levels significantly affect children's understanding of emotions, and particularly help them understand negative emotions. Management of emotions is one of these. The reason why teachers' scale for assessment of children's emotional intelligence displayed a meaningful difference with respect to mothers' age may have been due to objective assessment by teachers. Such objective assessment may have stemmed from the fact that both children's mothers and teachers were around the ages 31-35.

Table 6. Correlation results between emotional intelligence and aesthetic judgment

		Emotional intelligence	Aesthetic judgment
Emotional intelligence	Pearson Correlation	1	-,009
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,895
	N	200	200
Aesthetic judgment	Pearson Correlation	-,009	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,895	
	N	200	200

As shown in Table 6, the correlation coefficient between aesthetic judgment and emotional intelligence was - ,009. Even though it seems to be negative, this value is actually almost neutral. Therefore, a relationship, albeit neutral, exists between emotional intelligence and aesthetic judgment. This is evidence that an increase in either aesthetic judgment or emotional intelligence does not guarantee an increase in the other. In other words, it is not guaranteed that a child with high aesthetic judgment will also have high emotional intelligence.

IV. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

As a result of the current study which aimed to display the relationship between the aesthetic judgment and emotional intelligence of six-year-old preschool children, it was found that parents' age and mothers' profession affect the mean points pertaining to the faces, stories and management sections of the emotional intelligence scale and the scale for the assessment of children's emotional intelligence ($p < .05$). On the other hand, the number of siblings and parents' age and profession do not lead to a meaningful difference between children's emotional intelligence sections and grand totals and the mean scores of aesthetic judgment scale ($p > .05$). Additionally, a near-neutral relationship has been found between children's aesthetic judgment and emotional intelligence. Put differently; an increase in either aesthetic judgment or emotional intelligence does not necessarily mean an increase in the other.

Acquiring emotional abilities in the early years of childhood may help people to use their emotions as a tool for success in their adulthood. Additionally, as children need to be well-equipped both cognitively and emotionally for success in life, it becomes especially important to support their emotional development in early childhood. In the light of this, the following may be suggested to educators and parents:

Children take their parents and then their teachers as their role models. Therefore, educators need to comfort children with their conversations, behaviors and gestures. Using an emotional language and offering emotional support to children would turn teachers into effective role models.

Additionally, educators may take daily spontaneous opportunities to help children understand and manage their emotions. By incorporating artistic activities such as painting, music or drama into the daily program, teachers can support children's expression of their feelings and their aesthetic judgment.

A baby concept yet, emotional intelligence may be unfamiliar to Turkish teachers. Therefore, they may be supported with in-service training about emotional intelligence and aesthetic.

Emotional intelligence is as important in an individual's life as academic intelligence. Just as parents strive to support their children's academic intelligence, they should also try to stimulate their children's emotional intelligence and aesthetic judgment. They may play games, read stories or use puppets to stimulate children's emotions. Additionally, parents may also try and establish empathy with children by making them talk about how they feel when faced with negative events, how others may feel, how they behave upon negative events, and how this behavior may affect others. In order to support their children's aesthetic judgment, parents may encourage them to participate in artistic activities such as theater, ballet or dance. Another way of supporting aesthetic judgment may be to hang reproductions of great paintings in children's bedrooms. They may take care that the toys they buy for their children appeal to all five senses. They may take children on a picnic or to the country and encourage them to observe the environment, touch the trunks of trees, listen to birds singing and make stories from the clouds in the sky.

Studies may be conducted to raise parent awareness about emotional intelligence and aesthetics. Visual and print media tools may be utilized, and educational seminars may be held at schools. As both parents generally work in our day and they both suffer from lack of free time, their institutions may hold emotional intelligence and aesthetics-related seminars and education programs. This would also help the work environment to benefit from emotional intelligence and increase efficiency.

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